

APRIL 2026

Conservation Newsletter

UWF CONSERVATION PROGRAM

The UWF Conservation Program, founded in Summer 2024, is dedicated to managing and protecting the UWF Conservation areas while engaging and educating our community. It envisions a future where UWF is a local leader in conservation efforts and education.

Read further in this newsletter to find out what the UWF Conservation Program has been getting up to and ways you can get involved!

Program Milestones

Conservation at UWF has grown and impacted our community in some pretty incredible ways throughout the first half of 2026. Here are just a few of these successes:

- We held the inaugural **West Florida Fire and Nature Festival**, drawing **over 2,300** attendees
- AC2 held its first event, the **Great Popcorn Hunt**
- UWF Conservation has hired its first full time staff member, the **Senior Coordinator for Conservation**



Chasidy Hobbs and Julianne Jones light a prescribed burn at the West Florida Fire and Nature Festival.

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Recent Events and Projects

UWF Conservation and related programs have had some pretty incredible projects and events this year. Check them out below!

West Florida Fire and Nature Festival

The inaugural West Florida Fire and Nature Festival was a resounding success, drawing over 2,300 attendees to learn about the importance of prescribed fire to our local ecosystems! Thank you to all of our incredible volunteers who helped make this happen. Check out the next page of this newsletter for some exciting, related news...

UWF Archeology Institute Discovery

While conducting an archeological survey on the UWF campus, faculty and students discovered artifacts associated with multiple pre-Columbian Native American cultures, with the oldest likely dating between A.D. 600 and 900. [Learn more here!](#)

Great Popcorn Hunt

Argos Conservation Corps had its first event in March 2026. Student volunteers gathered to hike the UWF trails to document and remove invasive species such as Chinese tallow (also known as the Popcorn Tree) and enjoy some freshly popped kernels together.

A family learns more about local birds from an exhibitor at the Fire and Nature Festival.



A team conducting an archeological survey on the UWF Campus.



Students removing kudzu during the Popcorn Hunt.



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What's New at UWF Conservation?

Annual West Florida Fire and Nature Festival

The inaugural West Florida Fire & Nature Festival was such an incredible success that the University of West Florida will be hosting this event every year from here on out, on the first weekend of March. Be sure to keep an eye out for this event again in 2027, especially if you weren't able to make it this year.



Hired: Senior Coordinator for Conservation

Amber Borden has been hired as the UWF Senior Coordinator for Conservation. In this role, she is responsible for fundraising efforts to support the program. Amber brings valuable skills and experience to this position. At her former role as Grant Coordinator, she secured over \$53,000,000 in grants for the ECAT system - which includes a new facility, hybrid buses, new bus shelters, and more! We are thrilled that she is choosing to pursue her passion for conservation as a part of this team, and we can't wait to see how she helps this program grow.

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UWF Forest Canopy Value: i-Tree Report

What is i-Tree? Why is this information important?

i-Tree is a collection of tools made by the USDA Forest Service for assessing and managing forests and community trees. According to its website (<https://canopy.itreetools.org/>), i-Tree Canopy is specifically designed to “classify land and tree cover across a given area using random sampling of aerial imagery” and uses this information to calculate a tree canopy’s value based on the ecosystem services it provides. These values are based on peer-reviewed research.

How We Used i-Tree

Three UWF students worked as a team to learn to use the i-Tree tool and apply it to the UWF Main Campus. (Thank you, Max and Isaac!) Over 1,000 sampling points were evaluated for their cover class so the tool could estimate the percentage of canopy coverage at UWF and estimate its value.

The UWF Main Campus Canopy Value

Once we followed the above process, the i-Tree tool provided a final report of our canopy’s overall value. Our total annual value was... drum roll, please...

Ecosystem Service:	CO2 Sequestered Annually	CO2 Stored in Trees (Not Annual)	Air Pollutants Removed Annually	Runoff Avoided Annually
Estimated Value:	\$1,217,148	\$18,707,101	\$127,769	\$74,680

... Nearly **\$1.5 million!** That’s not all - the report also provides a stationary, non-annual estimated monetary value of the carbon stored by the trees themselves. For UWF, that carbon sequestration value is estimated to be **over \$18 million**. These numbers demonstrate just how imperative it is to continue protecting the UWF Conservation Areas.

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Stay Involved

Donate to UWF Conservation

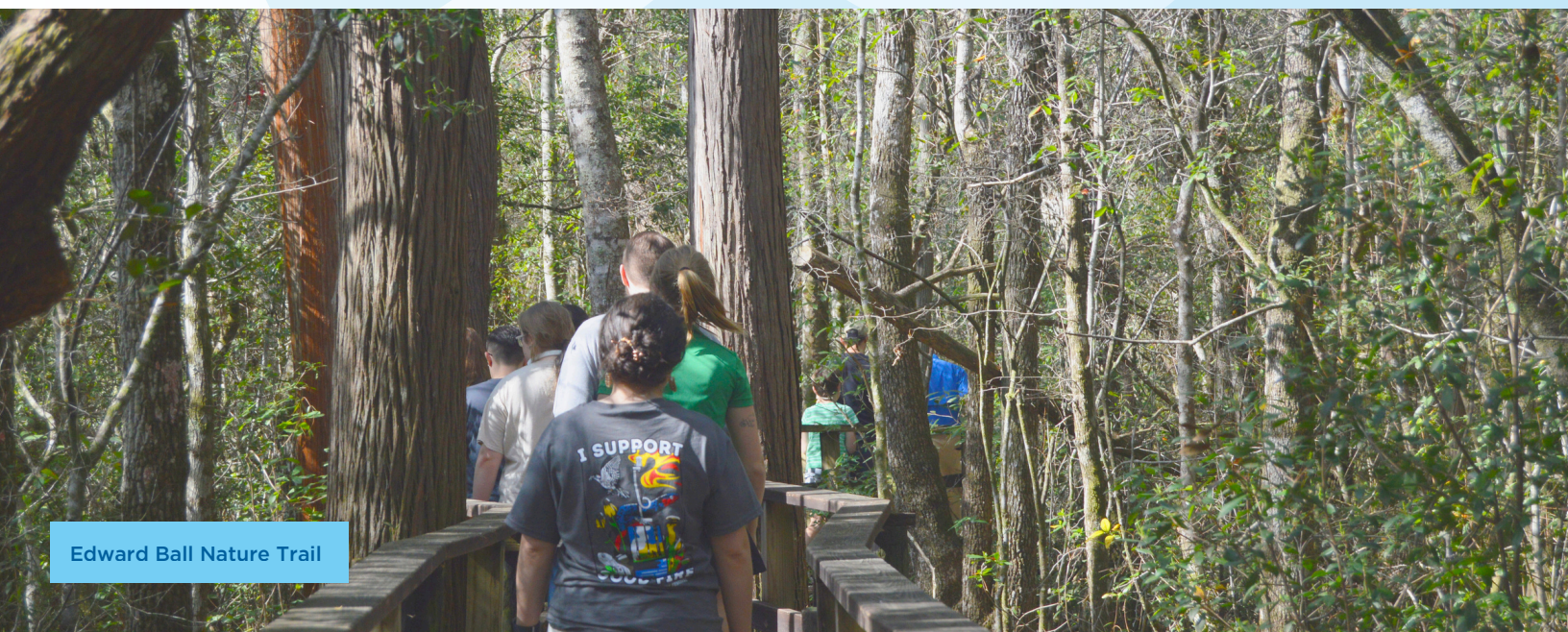
Donate to the UWF Conservation Program to support more programming like those found in this newsletter! Our donation page is found here: <https://uwf.edu/university-advancement/departments/development/give-now/donate/alphabetical-index-of-funds/?BBFund=149>

Staying Up to Date

If you haven't already subscribed to our biannual newsletter, you can do so by completing this form: <https://forms.gle/HLbeJVeLZk2w2wox8>

Check Out Our Website

As of the end of Fall 2025, we have a webpage on the UWF website. Check it out here: <https://uwf.edu/hmcse/departments/earth-and-environmental-sciences/conservation-program/>



Edward Ball Nature Trail