

Friends of MacArthur  
Beach State Park  
Annual Report | **2023**





## **OUR MISSION:**

To generate supplemental resources to preserve, restore, and interpret the natural and cultural assets of the Park for present and future generations.

*Photo provided by Ranger O'Brien  
Cover Photo provided by Ranger Kardos*



# A Letter from Our Leaders

*a message from the President of the Board of Directors and CEO*

Dear Patron,

Time and time again we learned the power of community, especially our MacBeach supporters, was not to be underestimated. We are touched by how many community members continue to support this Park. With their backing, Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park accomplished big things in 2023.

Over the years, our mission to share and preserve the Park with our community not only remains the same, but our impact is stronger than ever. With your unprecedented support we enhanced our conservation efforts, community reach, and hosted more special events. Volunteers (from individuals to 100-person groups) cleaned and beautified the Park, shared their expertise on committees, and provided visitor services. More students attended our summer camps, field trips and other in-person events as part of our environmental education curriculum.

The year began on a high note with our local community voting us "Best Beach" in a contest sponsored by *The Palm Beach Post*.

Summer brought us a record-breaking sea turtle nesting season on our 1.6 miles of beach. We are now seeing the benefits of conservation practices that were put in place 20-30 years ago. Last year's nesting season infers there are numerous, healthy adults in both the loggerhead and green turtle populations. The countless beach cleanups are so important to our Park and keep our beach in pristine condition for nesting season.

In the fall, we added new programming and special events such as our Bird Talk and Walk, inaugural Pumpkin Stroll, Snake Talks, and the Holiday Sip and Shop. These events provided something for every age and interest -- thank you for your support and attendance!

2023 concluded with the opening of our new playground, an area that encourages free play, adventure, and access to a different way to connect with nature. We are thrilled to offer another family-friendly activity to our littlest Park visitors.

Of course, while the year had many highlights, it's the great things that happen at the Park every day that have the greatest impact. The Park staff and Friends staff continue to be a resourceful, imaginative, and dedicated team, keeping our organization running smoothly, and our guest experiences impactful. Most of the photos used in this report were submitted by our talented Park Rangers.

We hope you enjoy this look back at the many accomplishments of 2023 and celebrate your role in making them happen. None of this could have been accomplished without the generosity of our partners, donors, members, and volunteers. These highlights are a testament to your dedication to preserving a place you love most: John D. MacArthur Beach State Park.

Sincerely,

Latimer Farr  
Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park  
Board of Directors President

Veronica Frehm  
CEO Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park

## 2023 Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park Board of Directors

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A wide-angle photograph capturing a vast flock of birds, likely terns, in flight against a clear sky transitioning from a pale blue at the top to a warm, golden-orange glow near the horizon. The birds are scattered across the upper two-thirds of the frame, their silhouettes and light-colored wings catching the low light. Below the horizon line, the calm sea stretches to the horizon, where a single large ship is visible. The foreground shows a dark, pebbly beach with some sparse, dry grass. The overall mood is serene and natural.

2023 | *A Year In Review*

*Photo provided by Ranger Elliott*

# 2023 BY THE NUMBERS

**4,734**

sea turtle nests recorded on our 1.6 miles of beach during 2023's record breaking sea turtle nesting season

**556**

pounds of microplastics cleaned off our beach by our Citizen Science Marine Debris Program

**49** articles in the press and media

**3,231** members of Friends of MacArthur Beach

**360** students transported to the Park by charter bus thanks to grant funding

**8** interns completed our internship program

**38** educators reached during professional development workshops

**106** campers spent the summer learning at our summer camps

**4,235** students attended field experiences at the Park



**2,621**

single-use water bottles saved since the installation of our new water bottle refilling station in August

**16** minute documentary about the Park, "An Island in Time" released



**67**

pumpkins carved for our inaugural pumpkin stroll event



**3**

Park volunteers were recognized for their achievements and dedication to MacBeach at the Florida State Parks District 5 Awards Ceremony

**2,460**

gallons in our newly renovated Reef and Mangrove Tank Marine Exhibits in the Nature Center, which models the Park's Rock Reef and Estuary habitat and houses tropical fish and invertebrates

**1,500+**

baseball fans who learned about MacBeach and ocean conservation during "All About the Ocean" night at The Ballpark of the Palm Beaches

**2,000+**

visitors attended Nature Fest, our annual outdoor festival after a 2-year hiatus

**475**

moonlight concert attendees

**10**

members of our playground planning committee (kids ages 4-12) who ensured we picked the most exciting features for our littlest Park visitors at our brand new playground





MacBeach was voted the best beach in Palm Beach County for 2023 and we couldn't agree more! By popular vote the Park won as part of a four-round "beach madness" bracketed contest sponsored by *The Palm Beach Post* that started with 16 area beaches in March 2023.

From *The Palm Beach Post*: "John D. MacArthur State Park's popularity is due to the breadth of its charms that make it so much more than just another oceanfront beach. It's a two-sided park that features trails linking its ocean and Intracoastal Waterway sides. Visitors can explore nature trails or walk on a 1,600-foot boardwalk, choosing between swimming in the ocean or paddleboarding to unspoiled islands from its Intracoastal side. Visitors there can rent kayaks for aquatic explorations or binoculars to make nature and bird walks more enjoyable. The park is also a venue for environmental education for students as well as membership opportunities that provide discounts for moonlight concerts and turtle walks."

Thank you for choosing us as your best beach!

Protecting the environment is a collective responsibility, our Park is made even better through the energy and commitment provided by our volunteers and community



## Thank you for keeping the “best beach” in Palm Beach County in healthy condition!

On Saturday, April 15th, MacBeach volunteers joined thousands across America to take part in the 2023 Great American Cleanup by removing hundreds of pounds of litter and marine debris from our beach. Also that week, staff from the Southeast District of Florida Department of Environmental Protection conducted an Earth Week beach cleanup at our park. The team was able to collect over 60lbs of debris during the 2-hour cleanup.

MacArthur Beach State Park hosted over 180 participants on September 21st, 2023 for International Coastal Cleanup Day! Over 123lbs of trash, mostly microplastics, was collected off our beach, and AmeriCorps members removed 218lbs of trash from the mangroves.

In November, the Florida Power and Light (FPL) environmental group conducted a mangrove and beach cleanup at the Park. Close to 50 FPL employees volunteered their time and collected 653lbs of marine debris.

Beach cleanups are so important to our Park and help remove trash that might otherwise endanger sea turtles, shorebirds, and other marine life.

Thank you to all the individuals and groups who volunteer their time to keep our beach clean all year long!



## 2023 was an exciting, record-breaking season for sea turtle nesting at John D. MacArthur Beach State Park!

During the nesting season, our dedicated rangers and volunteers survey our 1.6 miles of beach daily, checking for turtle tracks and recording each crawl, identifying the species, whether the turtle nested, and hatch-out activity. This year, we broke our all-time records for loggerhead and green sea turtle nests at MacBeach. We recorded a total of:

- 2,153 Loggerhead Sea Turtle Nests**
- 2,525 Green Sea Turtle Nests and**
- 56 Leatherback Sea Turtle Nests**

We are now seeing the benefits of conservation practices that were put in place 20-30 years ago. This year's nesting season infers that there are numerous, healthy adults in both the loggerhead and green sea turtle populations.

Our Citizen Scientist Nest Excavation Program, led by MacBeach staff and volunteers, marked 90 loggerhead sea turtle nests for excavation. Three to five days after the first signs of the turtles hatching and leaving the nest, following the FWC's strict regulations and protocols on turtle nest excavation, the citizen scientists hand dig into the egg chamber until they reach the clutch. Once they find the clutch, they sort the contents into various categories, and record their findings. This data tells us about a nest's productivity and gives us more information about this beach's hatchling success. Data collected by our citizen scientists suggests an estimate of over 710,000 hatchlings hatched out from the nests on MacBeach in 2023.



**This year the Park offered more programming than ever with new and returning events and activities, we had something for everyone in our community to enjoy!**



*Team MacBeach at "All About The Ocean" night at The Ballpark of The Palm Beaches*

## Take Me Out to the Ballgame

Last summer, through a new partnership with Roger Dean Chevrolet Stadium we brought our mission to sports fans! MacArthur Beach State Park was proud to sponsor “All About the Ocean” night, dedicated to ocean conservation and education, on August 5th at The Ballpark of the Palm Beaches. Friends staff and volunteers provided activities for attendees including ocean-themed crafts and games, animal artifacts to see up close, scientific fun with microscopes, a chance to test out your ocean knowledge with our trivia game and prize wheel, and we shared the importance of taking care of our beaches with our marine debris display.

## Bird Talk and Walk

On the first Saturday of the month from November - April Park Rangers led a bird walk and talk for birding enthusiasts. Visitors explored seasonal and resident birds of the Park during low tide. Over 220 species of birds call MacArthur Beach State Park home.

## Secret Lives of Snakes

Visitors had an opportunity to meet our snake ambassadors up close and learn about their habits and habitats from one of our Animal Care Specialists every first Sunday of the month.



## Nature Fest 2023

On March 4th Nature Fest, our annual outdoor festival, returned to the Park after a two-year hiatus. This event is truly about bringing the community together and celebrating all the Park has to offer.

We welcomed 2,000 visitors and over 40 vendors and exhibitors to the Park that day.

During the family friendly event, activities included live music, kayaking, local shops and environmental exhibitors, a native plant sale, food trucks, and more.

Young environmental enthusiasts of all ages enjoyed activities in the Kids Zone, including face painting, arts and crafts, and a scavenger hunt. Families also joined in a beach cleanup and watched a live animal show presented by Busch Wildlife Sanctuary.

Event attendees strolled in a relaxed environment around our beautiful park while supporting local businesses.

Visitors enjoyed the picturesque views of the estuary while listening to a performance from the North Palm Youth Symphony followed by live music performed by local reggae-rock musicians Joey Calderaio Duo.

**We hope this new playground becomes a destination for our neighbors and all visitors to use. This area encourages free play, adventure, and another way to connect with nature at the Park.**



## New Playground Opens!

Our new, upgraded children's playground is now open! The new playscape includes a nature inspired playground that encourages free play and is made with renewable, natural materials that allows children to connect to nature.

We consulted members of our playground planning committee (kids ages 4-12) to ensure we picked the most exciting features for families. The expert committee helped us create our new playground blueprint by choosing between slides, bridges, seating, climbing options and all things fun.

To celebrate the opening of the playground, the Friends and Park staff held a ribbon-cutting ceremony in December. Many children came out to enjoy the new playground, which includes three structures connected by bridges. New features include climbing walls, 3 slides, monkey bars, rope ladders and so much more! There is something for kids of all ages to enjoy. The playground is located at the North end of the Park, near picnic tables and the Satinleaf Trail.



## Ambassador Sea Turtles

Thanks to funding from The Freed Foundation we were excited to welcome two sea turtle ambassadors in 2023 into our newly renovated outdoor tank and indoor tank. We receive our turtles from the Florida Atlantic University Research Gallery, located at the Gumbo Limbo Nature Center. MacArthur Beach State Park is a Marine Turtle Permit Holder under the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Under our permit we are able to keep up to two juvenile loggerhead sea turtles at our facility for educational purposes. While the turtles are housed with us, they are the heart of our Educational Sea Turtle Ambassador Program.

### Myrtle

On August 13th, 2023 our sea turtle ambassador, Myrtle, was released off the coast of Florida! One of our animal care rangers, Kelly Snyder, made the trip with her to ensure she returned safely to the ocean. Myrtle had been here at the Park since October 2022 and during those 10 months she educated thousands of visitors about sea turtles and conservation. It is these personal interactions that can truly spark people's interests and can help them on their way to becoming life-long sea turtle advocates.

### Veronica

Our second sea turtle ambassador, Veronica, arrived at MacBeach on Halloween. She is a juvenile loggerhead and resides in the newly refurbished outdoor turtle tank, right outside the gift shop. Veronica was named by the Reed Family in honor of our CEO, Veronica Frehm! The Reed's were the generous winners of the auction held at our annual fundraiser last spring to "name the next sea turtle ambassador."



**Volunteer Appreciation Awards**  
February 23, 2023



**Magic of MacBeach Fundraiser**  
March 30, 2023

MacArthur Beach State Park attended the Florida State Parks District 5 Volunteer Appreciation Day where three of the park's volunteers were recognized for their achievements and dedication including: 20 Years of Service - Bruce Kay, Youth Volunteer of the Year - Kya Small-Brush, and Historical Long Project - Rafael Noriega.



In March, supporters of MacArthur Beach State Park attended the Park's annual fundraiser, the Magic of MacBeach, at the North Palm Country Club. The event was filled with cocktails, dinner, auction, music and a live painting from local artist, Sarah LaPierre.



# Pumpkin Stroll and Moonlight Concert

October 28, 2023



**Santa at MacBeach**  
December 9, 2023

In October, we held our first moonlight concert of the season and our inaugural pumpkin stroll! Over 60 carved pumpkins were contributed from members of our community, it was an incredible night thanks to all the community support. Special thank you to Trader Joe's Palm Beach Gardens for donating pumpkins!



Santa came back to MacBeach for the second Santa at MacBeach event in December. Families enjoyed pictures with Santa, holiday crafts, and storytime with a ranger.





## Community Partnerships

In 2023, we forged new partnerships and built stronger collaborations from previous funders.



**VoLo Foundation** helped support education and transportation costs for Palm Beach County students to come to the Park to experience our environmental education programs.

**The Sharkey Family Foundation** supported education programming and the internship program, allowing undergraduates and recent graduates to come from all over the country to participate in our internship program. This program provides students the unique opportunity to live onsite and gain hands-on experience in the areas of environmental education, park management, and learn what it means to work at and run a nonprofit.

In partnership with the **Florida State Parks Foundation**, **The Freed Foundation** and the **Fleming Family Foundation** provided the park funding to replace the needed aging hardware for our Nature Center Mangrove and Rock Reef tanks. This funding allowed a full re-design and install for the 600-gallon Reef Tank Marine Exhibit including all related filtration equipment, needed PVC parts, life support systems, acrylic polishing and Reef rebuild.

**The Sea Turtle Grants Program** provided the Park with two Sea Turtle Education Kits and a new John Deere utility vehicle (UTV) to be used for Sea Turtle Data Collection during the Park's morning turtle nesting beach surveys.

A partnership with the **Palm Beach County School District**, the **Robert and Mary Pew Public Education Fund** and **The Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties** provided teachers with summer time professional development workshops, extended field experiences to the park during the year for their classes, and materials for their classrooms to connect the students to nature.

Thank you to **Lost Tree Foundation** for their dedication and generosity to strengthen our ability to fulfill our mission and enrich the lives of our community members.

Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park is proud to be one of the recipients of **The REI Cooperative Action Fund**, a community-supported public charity bringing together the collective strength of the community to support organizations that are improving the well-being of all people through time outside.

**The Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties** awarded Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park the 2023 Community Impact Grant to support Friends operations and overhead costs to continue our meaningful work.

**Duke Energy Florida** provided a \$175,000 grant to help with the purchase and installation of 121 water bottle refilling stations at 85 Florida State Parks including the new bottle refilling station at MacBeach. This project was also funded through revenue generated by the Florida State Parks Foundation's "Explore Our State Parks" specialty license plate.

## Together, we can do so much more.

As a nonprofit organization, we rely on volunteers, donations, grants, and memberships to continue our important work. Your contribution directly supports programs and services that make our Park the best it can be. Thank you for being a member, for donating, and for loving our Park as much as we do! The Park continues to thrive and is a beloved destination, center for learning, and place of beauty, thanks to your generosity.



## Get Involved with Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park

Looking for ways to impact Palm Beach County's only state park? Here are some ways you can support our mission.

### VISIT

Stop by and spend some time kayaking, standup paddle boarding, relaxing on the beach, snorkeling the rock reef, or hiking one of our trails.

### VOLUNTEER

We are always looking for new volunteers! Meet new people, gain experience, and use your talents to help preserve our natural resources.

### SPONSOR

There is no better place for your company to be seen than at MacArthur Beach State Park. We offer a wide variety of opportunities to meet your marketing and charitable goals.

### MEMBERSHIP

Your annual Membership supports the programs and activities at the Park.

### ATTEND

Join us at one of our many Park events, there is a little something for everyone.

### LIKE

Like us on Facebook and follow us on Instagram @macarthurbeach to stay up to date with our latest news, photos, and events.

### INDIVIDUAL GIVING

Give a gift of any any size from yourself or on behalf of your family. Annual or monthly giving plans are also available.

### PLANNED GIVING

The long-term commitment of a planned gift is a way to create a personal legacy supporting MacArthur Beach. Planned gifts take many forms and may include IRA contributions, real estate, life insurance and personal bequests.

### GIFTS OF STOCK

Donating stocks and other securities is one of the most tax-efficient ways to give.



Scan here to donate

For more ways to get involved, email us at [friends@macarthurbeach.org](mailto:friends@macarthurbeach.org) or call us at 561-776-7449





John D. MacArthur Beach State Park  
10900 Jack Nicklaus Drive  
North Palm Beach, FL 33408  
[www.macarthurbeach.org](http://www.macarthurbeach.org)  
@macarthurbeach