

Insights into Owls

Story and Photos by Rich Peine

Owls are arguably the most interesting and enigmatic of the winged creatures. There are over 150 species of owls living on all continents except Antarctica.

The smallest is the elf owl, which is about the size of a sparrow. The largest is the Eurasian Eagle owl, whoooo measures 23 to 30 inches long. Most owls hunt during nighttime, pursuing rodents and other small mammals. Owls' eyesight and hearing are excellent, and they can rotate their head 270 degrees.

The Wild Bird Center in Tavernier is the permanent home of six owls, all of which have been rescued and can't be released in the wild due to injuries. Samson and Delilah are a bonded pair of great horned owls who have served as foster parents, raising orphaned babies brought to the center. There is another great horned named Guardian, who was rescued in Miami. Also in residence are Bart the barred owl, Miss Prissy the screech owl, and

Gypsy, a barn owl.

For all you esoteric buffs, the Native Americans believe the owl is a magical creature that can see the truth where others can not. If the owl is your spirit guide, you cannot be deceived by others, and people may be afraid of you because of your insights.

The holidays are upon us, so if you want a unique gift, stop by the Wild Bird Center at MM 93.6. They have items that can only be found there. Laura Quinn, the director, has created some beautiful carvings of birds, and there are hand painted tiles with lobster trap frames made by Nadine and Glenn Lahti. There's also plenty of neat jewelry and stuffed animals just to name a few.

For more information visit www.fkwbc.org or call 305-852-4486. All proceeds go to support the Wild Birds Center. So stop by and have a personal encounter with the wild life. Remember your camera.



Guardian the Great Horned Owl



Gypsy the Barn Owl.



Miss Prissy the Screech Owl.

REEF Announces Annual Open House

REEF (REEF Environmental Education Foundation) is holding an open house and the grand opening of their retail store on December 11, 2008 from 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM.

The open house will be held at The REEF House, one of the oldest buildings in Key Largo located at MM 98.3 in the median. Parking is on the northbound side. Learn more about REEF and its mission, visit with REEF Staff, board members and volunteers and pick up some fun fish holiday decorations, gifts and the acclaimed Reef Fish ID Books.

Attending the REEF Open House will be marine life authors Paul Humann and Ned DeLoach where visitors will have the opportunity to their spectacular books autographed and personalized. Also on hand will be Anna DeLoach the award winning videographer who has produced pieces for national Geographic, training materials and magazines. She has made a handful of original marine life clay ornaments that will only be available at this event.

REEF is Key Largo's home grown, ocean environmental organization that uses divers and snorkelers to collect scientifically valid data about fish population density and diversity. REEF runs Fish Survey Trips, seminars and conducts research throughout the Caribbean the Atlantic coast of the US as well as the Pacific coast, Galapagos and Hawaii.

For additional information on the annual REEF Open House, contact Lisa Mitchell or Janet Bartnicki at 305-852-0030.

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Bartender of the Month Gloria Elder



It isn't even happy hour yet and the outside patio bar at the Ocean View Lounge is hopping, standing room only. Why? It has to be the beautiful and talented bartender Gloria. She is one of the few bartenders I've met that can carry on a conversation while working the bar with experience and speed. Judy and Tracy stopped in for one of Gloria's martinis and remarked "Bartender of the month? Gloria should be bartender of the year!"



years. What keeps her there? "My boss Gary Dunn is the greatest. He is a former Pittsburgh Steeler Super bowl winner and is a big pussy cat," she says with pride. "The customers are super people too. The food is great. What's not to love? We keep things real here, and we think Jimmy Buffett is a jerk!" Gloria is happy to explain how Hurricane Donna moved the bar to its current location in 1960. It no longer has a view of the ocean but it's hard to beat the view of the bay. She explains all this while she mixes up a "dirty monkey" which is a mudslide with a little banana in it, delicious! Stop in and try one for yourself. Gloria works Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays during the day.

Gloria has been a bartender since she moved to the Keys 23 years ago from Queens, N.Y. Her first gig was at the old Lagoon Saloon at Plantation Yacht Harbor. She then went on to work at Smuggler's Cove for 17 years and has been with the OV for the last three