



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Earth Day Volunteer Opportunity for Area Kayakers:

SBEP'S BAY GUARDIANS TO REMOVE INVASIVE PLANTS AND DEBRIS AT BOWLEES CREEK ISLAND AUDUBON SANCTUARY APRIL 16

SARASOTA, FL – The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program's Bay Guardian volunteers will be working with Around the Bend Nature Tours, Sarasota Bay Watch volunteers, and Audubon of Florida staff and chapter volunteers to remove invasive plants and debris at Bowlees Creek Island Audubon Sanctuary on Saturday, April 16. The volunteer effort begins at 8:45 a.m. and runs through 11:30 a.m. The effort supports an island-wide habitat restoration project funded by the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program and carried out by Stantec/Wilson-Miller. Funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Audubon Society also contributed to the restoration project design, coordinated by the SBEP, Audubon's Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries, and Scheda Ecological Services.

Bowlees Creek Island Audubon Sanctuary is a small, handsome mangrove island surrounded by luxuriant seagrass beds and healthy oyster bars located near the mouth of Bowlees Creek on the northeast side of Sarasota Bay in Manatee County. The Sanctuary provides foraging and roosting bird habitat for wading birds and migrant songbirds. Audubon manages the island to protect the mangroves, seagrasses, and oyster bars that are used by fish, crabs, birds, and other Sarasota Bay animals.

Volunteers will need to bring their own kayak or canoe to paddle a half mile to reach the island. The kayaks will depart at 8:45 a.m. from the launch located at 100 Whitfield Avenue. Volunteers are encouraged to wear close-toed shoes, long sleeved shirts and

long pants that can get wet and dirty, and work gloves. New volunteers will receive a tee shirt featuring the Bay Guardians logo.

Sarasota Bay Guardians is a family-friendly volunteer program that SBEP manages in partnership with Around the Bend Nature Tours. The program was established to attract volunteers interested in helping restore Sarasota Bay's habitat. The Bay Guardians program is a fun way to volunteer while learning more about the Bay.

Registration is required and it can be made through the SBEP website at sarasotabay.org. Inquires about Bay Guardians are welcome at 941-955-8085 or sara@sarasotabay.org.

***The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program** is dedicated to restoring the area's greatest natural asset—Sarasota Bay. Its unique program strives to improve water quality, increase habitat and enhance the natural resources of the area for use and enjoyment by the public. Sarasota Bay is one of 28 estuaries in the United States that have been named by the U.S. Congress as an "estuary of national significance." Partners include Sarasota County, Manatee County, City of Sarasota, City of Bradenton, Town of Longboat Key, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Southwest Florida Water Management District, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.*

***Audubon** is dedicated to protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitat that supports them. Our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in conservation. For more information, visit audubon.org or audubonofflorida.org. Local chapters include Manatee County Audubon manateeaudubon.org and Sarasota Audubon sarasotaaudubon.org.*

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