

# Rookery Bay Research Reserve Education is Change on the Ground



2022

## Connect



25,481 visitors to Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center

4,980 guided boat or kayak tours



## Prepare

4,441 participated in special event or workshop

474 students engaged

1,896 student contact hours

## Improve



311 volunteers

17,571 volunteer hours



Stellar volunteer Therese Schmidt, leader of the Butterfly Garden volunteer team, donated all of the plants for a beautiful and educational pollinator garden that was once an empty space behind the Environmental Learning Center.



## Lives on the Line - Rookery Bay Reaches Out to Beachgoers and Boaters

For more than two years, Rookery Bay's "Lives on the Line" outreach members have hit the sand with important information for beachgoers and boaters on Rookery Bay's most popular and heavily trafficked beaches – Keewaydin Island. The team spreads the word about thoughtful, respectful beach going and boating as well as the danger of leaving fishing line and marine debris behind after a day at the beach. The Rookery Bay "Lives on the Line" campaign is an opportunity for Rookery Bay staff and volunteers to engage with visitors in a family-friendly way and inform them of the importance of debris removal.

To kick off the 2023 tourism season, staffers Morgan Zeleny, Gabriel Leal and Donna Young and volunteers from Rookery Bay's Team OCEAN boater outreach program connected with more than 100 people. Some kids played a casting game with staff and information was shared about the dangers of fishing line left behind to birds and marine mammals such as manatees and dolphins. Wildlife often mistake fishing line for food and ingest it becoming seriously ill. Pelicans and other birds can become entangled in line and be unable to fly.

## Rookery Bay Research Reserve Environmental Education Program Spotlited in Collier County Public Schools' Promotion

Collier County Public Schools (CCPS) captured Rookery Bay educators and students from Highlands Elementary on film during the popular and longstanding 4th grade Estuary Explorer program. Education Coordinator Sarah Falkowski answered questions from the CCPS reporter and narrated the action as the education team led students through activities including a search for critters in an oyster cluster, examination of tiny plankton under a microscope and taking water samples from the overlook bridge.

After more than two years without field trips, Collier County Public Schools was excited to get back to Rookery Bay and have the opportunity to film the hands-on science of the students. They will also be taping field trips on the beaches and water with the 7th grade Survivors program soon as well as high school marine sciences classes. Collier County Schools plans to promote the programs on social media and throughout the school system to encourage teachers to bring their classes to the Reserve to learn more about estuaries, the local wildlife and waters of coastal Collier County.



Florida's Rookery Bay Reserve is one of 30 sites in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. Each site is a state federal partnership that combines research, monitoring, and education to advance the understanding and management of estuarine environments.

# National Estuarine Research Reserve Education Change on the Ground in 2022

## Connects

People to Estuaries

**1 million+**  
**ACRES**

of natural classrooms & living laboratories with



**26 INTERPRETIVE CENTERS**



**296,131 VISITORS**

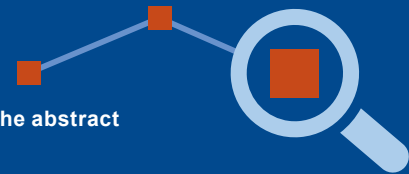
learn about estuaries through Research Reserve outreach & education

## Prepares

the Next Generation

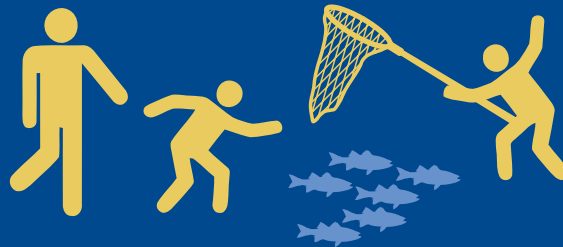
**54,773 STUDENTS**

take learning out of the abstract & into the outdoors



**4,347 TEACHERS**

are trained in the estuary & supported in the classroom



### SKILLS BUILT

- ✓ Observation
- ✓ Asking research questions
- ✓ Problem solving
- ✓ Data driven decision making

ESTUARY SCIENCE

LOCAL DATA

LAB WORK

FIELD INVESTIGATION

## Improves

the Environment

**10,570 CITIZENS**

are trained & inspired to protect their coasts & estuaries



### VOLUNTEER ACTIONS

- ✓ Protect wildlife
- ✓ Monitor water quality
- ✓ Plant native species
- ✓ Clean up the coasts

**30 RESEARCH RESERVE EDUCATORS**

lead programs that foster coastal stewardship in communities in 25 states



Creating value through education  
37,371 volunteer hours = \$1,119,261\*