



# EcoWatch

## Good and bad eco news

■ BY DELORES SAVAS

“Better to have bad news that’s true than good news that is made up.”  
*Eric Ries,*  
*American Entrepreneur*  
*and author of the Lean Start Up*

Yes, it is that time again when Eco Watch will feature a Good and Bad column, as there is so much news it is hard to keep up with all that is occurring every day.

We will start with good news, as that is always a picker-upper. However, bad news, according to John C. Maxwell, Author, Speaker, and Pastor once said, “Don’t hide bad news, multiple information channels are available, bad news always becomes known. Be candid right from the start,” and sorry to say bad news will be the bane of this column. Let’s start with good news.

Some good news for Floridians, House Bill 321 which bans the intentional release of balloons and classifies released balloons as litter will soon become law. The Senate passed the bill by both chambers with overwhelming bipartisan support which will go into effect July 1, 2024. The bill will go before Governor Ron DeSantis to be signed into law.

Now many new Floridians have no idea why such a bill was passed, however, be aware that every year hundreds of endangered sea turtles and hatchlings die by ingesting balloons and their plastic ribbons, tie-off disks, clips, and other attachments. Many turtles mistake the balloons for jellyfish, one of their favorite foods. Seabirds and other ocean wildlife are also impacted by the release of balloons that often wind up on shore. Hopefully, this new bill will protect the creatures of the sea.

Another piece of good news. Many Floridians may be wondering if Florida is on the pathway for earthquakes as news of a 4.8 magnitude earthquake occurred in New Jersey



that shook some Floridians on the East Coast of the state with a 4.0 rare magnitude that made residents a little shook up on February 9. Many have become a little nervous as earthquakes seem to be becoming more active recently. The good news is that Florida does get earthquakes but it is considered a rare occurrence. Go to: Florida today- By Samantha Neely, Title - “4.0 earthquake off the coast of Florida: How to stay safe when, and if, it happens again” for more information to help you feel safe and get prepared if necessary.

Now for some Bad news, and it is bad. Burmese Pythons are here. Yes, the monstrous snakes that have greatly impacted the Everglades have made it to Charlotte County, Florida. It is not believed that this snake that devours everything that moves that includes dogs and cats, came to this area on its own. It had to have been transported here. That is illegal, and they cannot be kept as pets. A story

in the Herald-Tribune on April 5, 2024, by Christian Casale, “Burmese Pythons: Officials warn Charlotte County residents to watch for big snakes.”

Now some residents on Gasparilla Island may wonder if this snake can arrive on the island. It is not impossible. It is a good swimmer, and will not have to worry about the toll. Hopefully this will never occur. However, the iguana arrived on the island many years ago, and not on its own. More articles on the Burmese Pythons in a near future article.

For more information on this species go to FWC My Florida Burmese Pythons.

Another creature, the Right Whale, that has been featured in Eco Watch for the past years is again in the news. Whale #1950 was found dead off the coast of Virginia according to a report in Oceana story, “Another North Atlantic Right Whale Dead.” Officials now say that a boat strike

was likely the cause of death. Oceana officials said, “We cannot help but think about the deadly consequences this will have for her newborn calf, which cannot survive on its own.”

There are less than 340 individual North Atlantic right whales left in the world. According to an article in Mongabay written by Elizabeth Claire Alberts in 2023, “The U.S. government has denied two petitions to immediately protect critically endangered North Atlantic right whales during the species calving season, raising concerns that this species population of whales will continue to decline without intervention. And it has.

Guidelines have been put into effect, with laws regulating speed in the whale’s location, have been ignored by fishing vessels who are not subjected to fines or sanctions. It seems that officials do not care. We need another Sea Sheppard fleet in the area or at least Greenpeace. Where are they? This is a species that will die off if action is not taken on their behalf.

You can help by going to the site of Oceana <[wavemaker@oceana.org](mailto:wavemaker@oceana.org)> and see how you can help.

We have problems right in our own backyard. Yes, manatees continue to die, mind you not a horrendous amount, but enough to start worrying again about their future numbers. The state had 800 manatee deaths in 2022, followed by 518 in 2023. As of March 28, 160 have died this year. Many caused by speeding boat strikes. And yet, the USFWS is dragging their feet to place them back on the Endangered Species list. More on the plight of our State Symbol in a future article.

There is a host of bad news to report, but hopefully in the next issue of Good and Bad news, we will have more good news to share with readers.

email: [gaiasvigil@gmail.com](mailto:gaiasvigil@gmail.com)

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