



As Sanctuary Director, Keith Laakkonen oversees the management of the 13,000-acre sanctuary and its 25 full- and part-time staff responsible for land conservation, research, policy, and public engagement.

SANCTUARY DIRECTOR

KEITH LAAKKONEN

Laakkonen is charged with advancing Audubon's science-based conservation mission to protect the Sanctuary and its watershed. He serves as a key Audubon spokesperson for the conservation of the Western Everglades and collaborates with Audubon Florida leadership to achieve Audubon's conservation goals in the region.

He and his team are maintaining and expanding Corkscrew's facilities, staff, and programming, while simultaneously restoring and protecting land and water. To ensure the Sanctuary's financial stability and continued expansion, he works closely with the development team to identify, cultivate, and solicit donors, and with center staff to maximize earned income and manage expenses.

Laakkonen, with more than 20 years of environmental management experience as a public servant, most recently worked for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection as Director at the 110,000-acre

Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Naples and as regional administrator for the Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection. In his prior position as Environmental Sciences Coordinator for the Town of Fort Myers Beach, he earned the Guy Bradley award from Audubon Florida for his work protecting beach-nesting birds.

Laakkonen is a Southwest Florida native, an avid birder, and a longtime member of Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. A graduate of the University of Florida with a Bachelor of Science in wildlife ecology, Laakkonen completed his master's degree at Florida Gulf Coast University with a focus on sea-level rise policy. His interests include watershed management, environmental policy, wildlife ecology, prescribed fire management, hydrologic restoration, exotic plant and animal management, and environmental education and outreach.