

# SWFLATODAY

Updated news online  
naplesnews.com

## Chinese wetlands officials visit Corkscrew to learn

By Maria Perez  
maria.perez@naplesnews.com; 239-213-5326

Jason Lauritsen brings his buggy to a stop in the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, pausing to explain to Chinese wetlands management officials how the Audubon Society is restoring and managing the land. Lauritsen, the sanctuary director, tells them about invasive flora species, how the sanctuary staff has tried to increase the population of wood storks and how its officials acquired the land to preserve it. Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary was Saturday's stop in a weeklong trip for the Chinese officials, organized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The visit, part of a long-established exchange program between the two countries, helped show the Chinese officials

“I want to learn how to implement some projects of restoration and tourism, as well as public education.”

**Zhong Mingchuan**, wetlands conservation division chief in Yunnan province in southwestern China

how the wetlands are managed, monitored and preserved in Florida.

“I see this as an opportunity to share ideas,” Lauritsen said. “I recognize conservation issues are global.”

The five Chinese officials asked questions, offered comments and took photos

See CHINESE, 11A



Zhong Mingchuan looks at the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary from a swamp buggy during her visit with four other Chinese officials Saturday. MARIA PEREZ/STAFF

## Naples Bay boat parade



DOROTHY EDWARDS/STAFF (2)

People wave Saturday as the first boat, the Naples Princess, floats past the Naples City Dock during the Christmas Boat Parade on Naples Bay.

## Christmas joy afloat for parade's 26th year

By Melissa Gomez  
melissa.gomez@naplesnews.com  
239-213-6066

The Naples City Dock was showered in holiday spirit Saturday night, with the lampposts wrapped in Christmas lights and a boat playing “Let It Snow.” Along the dock, hundreds of people lined up to watch the 26th annual Marine Industries Christmas Boat Parade, where about 30 boats of all sizes showed off Christmas and patriotic decorations matching this year's theme: “Stars and Stripes.” “Everyone loves being a part of it. It's something they want to be a part of every year,” said

See PARADE, 8A



People watch the Christmas Boat Parade at the City Dock on Saturday. To secure an unblocked view, some parade fans arrived about 5:30 p.m., an hour before the boats started arriving.

inthe239.com  
See more photos of the boat parade.



OPINION

## Gambling deal could aid tracks, doom Lee's

There is a lot of uncertainty surrounding the new gambling compact between Gov. Rick Scott and the Seminole Tribe.

But one thing is certain, according to Izzy Havenick. If it passes as drafted, the Naples-Fort Myers Greyhound Track will cease to exist.

The compact signed Dec. 7 makes no provision to add slot machines at the greyhound track, which is located in neither Naples nor Fort Myers but Bonita Springs.

The name itself hints at the longevity of the business, founded 58 years ago by Havenick's grandfather when Bonita Springs was just a waypoint between the two more famous towns.

But that history won't go on, predicted Havenick, now the vice president for public affairs for the family's handful of gambling-related businesses.

“The governor just killed a business and put 300 people out of work,” he said.

The Bonita operation is conspicuous by its absence from the compact.

Under its provisions, dog and horse tracks in Florida that already have slot machines can keep them.

Although Lee County voters in 2012 approved the idea of slots at Bonita, the state has yet to authorize them, and nothing in the deal addresses that.

In addition, as many as eight tracks, known as

See BATTEN, 14A



MARIA PEREZ/STAFF

Jessica DeFrance, 16, waits Saturday to hand out the gift baskets she prepared for families at the neonatal intensive care unit of the Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida in Fort Myers.

## Teens' gifts bring smiles to new moms

By Maria Perez  
maria.perez@naplesnews.com; 239-213-5326

Kelli Dunlap's baby boy, Cash, was born three weeks early in September, and since then, he has undergone three surgeries, the last on Thursday.

Cash now is doing well, Dunlap said, and she is excited. But she also is exhausted.

On Saturday, Dunlap received a gift that brought a smile to her face at Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida in Fort Myers, where Cash remains in the neonatal intensive care unit.

Jessica DeFrance, an 11th-grade student from Cape Coral, brought baskets with handmade baby blankets, gift cards, hot chocolate and Christian music CDs to Dunlap and 11 other families with babies in the unit.

Dunlap, 33, said she loved that a teenage girl such as Jessica would care about them.

“Oh, my God! It's just so wonderful. It's heartwarming,” Dunlap said, gift basket in hand.

This is the second year that Jessica has brought gift baskets before Christmas to the families with children in the unit.

The 16-year-old said the inspiration came from two sources — a book about teenagers doing unexpected things, and a church youth group meeting where the kids were given \$1 and talked about unselfishness.

Jessica started to add money to the single dollar.

Last November, she was volunteering at the pediatrics unit at the hospital and saw there were special celebrations prepared there. But she hadn't heard of anything organized at the neonatal intensive care unit, she said.

See TEEN'S GIFTS, 14A

## South Florida Seller can't confirm gun's link to Paris attacks

Associated Press

DELRAY BEACH — A Florida-based online arms seller said it can't confirm a gun it sold is linked to Islamic militants in the Paris attacks.

The head of a Serbian arms factory told The Associated Press this week the M92 semi-automatic pistol's serial number matched one delivered to Century Arms, of Delray Beach, in May 2013.

According to a statement posted Friday on its website, Century Arms is cooperating with investigators but is "unable to

confirm" the gun it sold has been linked to the Nov. 13 attacks that killed 130.

The statement said the company "expects the firearms it ships to licensed firearms dealers in the United States to be sold in strict compliance with the law."

Ginger Colbrun, a spokeswoman for the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, said in an email to the AP on Saturday, "Serial numbers of firearms are not always unique when manufactured in other countries. However, no firearm(s) used in the Paris attacks have been traced by ATF."



MARIA PEREZ/STAFF

Jason Lauritsen, director of the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, shows a turtle to Chinese officials who visited the site Saturday to learn about restoring and managing wetlands.

### CHINESE from 7A

as they rode through the sanctuary.

Among pines and palm trees, they saw herons, a big turtle and baby alligators with their mother.

Zhong Mingchuan, a wetlands conservation division chief in the Yunnan province in southwestern China, said her country has a large area of wetlands. She is interested in learning the technical

skills needed to manage the wetlands, as well as how to attract and keep volunteers.

"I want to learn how to implement some projects of restoration and tourism, as well as public education," Mingchuan said.

Lauritsen said he was pleased with the interest shown in wetlands mitigation banking and the transfer of development rights, with an aim at preserving wetlands ecosystems.

He said the programs have proved successful

here, and if they can share stories of challenges and triumphs, it could help preservation efforts in Asia.

Damon Yeh, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intern accompanying Chinese officials on the trip, said Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary was chosen because of its unique ecosystem and to show how a nonprofit organization — as opposed to a government agency — can manage wetlands.

"Hopefully, they can take some ideas," Yeh said.

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