



## **2023-2024 Grant Finalist Summary**

### **Busch Wildlife Sanctuary | Rehabilitation Flight Cages for Large Birds**

#### **Impact Focus Area: Environment**

#### **The Organization**

For 40 years, Busch Wildlife Sanctuary has been dedicated to the conservation of Florida's wildlife and natural resources through its mission of wildlife rehabilitation and environmental education. Each year, the agency treats 6,000 injured, sick and orphaned wildlife, and over 50% are avian species. The Sanctuary also provides over 500 free educational classes to more than 220,000 visitors. In October 2023, the agency opened a new 19.4-acre site in Jupiter Farms. The facility is free and open to the public.

#### **The Project**

Busch Wildlife Sanctuary seeks funding for the construction of five modernized and expanded flight cages at its newly established facility. Flight cages play a pivotal role in rehabilitating large native birds, such as owls, falcons, and other key species by providing a secure enclosure where birds can practice flying, gradually regaining muscle strength until they reach a point where they are strong enough to be released back into their natural habitats. The four flight cages at the previous facility were 20 years old, outdated, and not transferred to the new facility. Currently, injured birds are being transferred to other facilities. The five new state-of-the-art cages were designed with the help of a Master Falconer, and will be 18 ft. tall, 120 ft. long, and 50 ft. wide and built to hurricane code. The cages will require concrete work, fencing, masonry, wood working to build perching, plumbing, utilities, landscaping, and gates for the enclosures. The cages will include cameras with technology for live streaming on social media, YouTube channels, and website. The live streaming technology will encourage more ecotourists to visit the Sanctuary and expand the Sanctuary's capacity to educate audiences about the rehabilitation process, which in turn will help people become more invested in the vital role birds play in keeping our ecosystem healthy. The project would begin in May 2024 and be completed by February 2025.

#### **How will this program impact Palm Beach County?**

Since 2017, the Sanctuary has seen a 25% increase in the number of animals in need of care. This is due largely to urbanization and development, as 90% of the injuries the agency treats are caused by human interaction (car accidents, poisoning, electrocutions, fishing line entanglement, attacks by pets, etc.). In 2023, 2,473 birds were treated. The Sanctuary hopes to mitigate the negative effects of development on our environment through conservation efforts and environmental education. The combination of upgraded flight cages and live-streaming technology addresses both needs directly. Once the birds are ready to be released from the flight cages, the Sanctuary will collaborate with partners at Palm Beach County Environmental Resources Management (ERM) to identify natural areas that have experienced species depletion, and releases will be conducted in these specific locations. By actively participating in repopulating these areas, the Sanctuary contributes to the preservation of ecological balance and the protection of vital water resources, which are of critical importance to our environment. Live streaming will help educate the community about the importance of environmental conservation and the work being done to care for these animals. The goal is to allow those tuning in to make connections with wildlife and inspire them to make environmental conservation a priority. Live streaming also reduces barriers to residents who cannot physically visit the Sanctuary.

#### **Measurable Outcomes**

- Number of birds being treated = Approximately 2,400 – 2,500 annually
- Number of successful releases of birds into the wild = 33% or 808 birds
- Number of birds from other organizations using the Sanctuary's enclosures = Conservative estimate of 25 birds
- Number of views generated through live-streaming = 7,000 views generated through live-streaming
- Number of visitors who attend public releases of the birds = 200 visitors based on 1 public release per quarter

#### **How will Impact Palm Beaches grant be used?**

\$30,000 plumbing for the cages; \$15,000 on roofing for the cages; \$5,000 substrate surface material; \$20,000 on electric for the cages; and \$30,000 on video technology for the cages.