Jack & Anne Rudloe reach millions in battle to save North Florida wetlands
Jack and Anne Rudloe have spent 50 years fighting to preserve North Florida wetlands and promoting the importance of estuarine ecosystems. The activist couple led the push for legislative protections in the state when none existed and contributed to the conservation of more than 35,000 acres of wetlands habitat.

Jack Rudloe continues today to battle moneyed interests that threaten to repeal established laws protecting wetlands, even as new studies show the devastating impact of disappearing wetland habitat nationwide.

Their work is cited in nearly 100 scholarly articles related to wetlands research. Universities across the country rely on their unique knowledge of coastal and inland aquatic ecosystems to support both life-saving research and the education of budding marine scientists. Their literary accomplishments draw attention to the significance and endangered status of wetland habitats.

Holding the state’s oldest sea turtle rehabilitation license, the Rudloes’ non-profit marine lab specializes in rescue and education regarding the world’s most endangered sea turtle species, the Kemps Ridley. Frequenting Florida’s Gulf waters, the turtle feeds in shallow wetland areas which underscores the importance of preserving coastal wetland habitats. Additionally, GSML was the site of Project Noah’s Arc, brainchild of Jack Rudloe, an effort to rescue the many wetland-dwelling animals at risk from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010. The project received network news coverage and was broadcast around the world.

Through their nationally-recognized educational center, Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratory and Aquarium (GSML), the Rudloes have engaged the general public with innovative awareness techniques that prompt ecological stewardship and preservation of area rivers, swamps, marshes and shallow bays.

Recognized for their dedication to wetlands conservation, the Rudloes are recipients of the National EPA Award (2003) and the ChevronTexaco Conservationist of the Year (2005). Unique in its public mission, GSML specializes in wetland animal life, the small crustaceans and invertebrates that support the better known animals farther up the food chain. More than a quarter million people have passed through their doors, leaving with a greater understanding and deeper connection to the wetland flora and fauna that play a vital role in the health of our planet.
Area of Detail: Wetland Acquisitions
Made/Influenced by Rudloes

St. Mark's Refuge Corridor: 900 acres
North Dickerson Bay: 33 acres
Otter Creek: 5 acres
Alligator Lake: 18 acres
Evans Creek South Dickerson Bay: 1120 acres
Mashes Island: 552 acres
Piney Island: 800 acres
Fiddler's Point: 600 acres
Bald Point State Park: 4,066 acres

35312 Acres
Saved with Jack & Anne Rudloe's assistance
"Remember the Land of Oz? Maybe we could help to colonize the World of In. It is more fantastic than the moon and little known than Mars and it has the curious advantage of being here."

In the winter of 1962 I began a correspondence with John Steinbeck, one of America's most famous novelists. Among his most noted works were The Grapes of Wrath, East of Eden, Tortilla Flat and many others. But at the time, two of his works, "Cannery Row" and the "Log of the Sea of Cortez" were the most important to me because I was starting in business of collecting marine life in Panacea.

Long before I ever picked up the books, people were telling me I was Doc in Cannery Row. Doc was a biologist who had a small commercial laboratory that sold pickled sea creatures, embalmed cats and rattlesnakes to schools and research laboratories. Next door to "Western Biological" was a whore house, a sardine cannery, and a Chinese Grocery store. Doc was a real person, Edward F. Ricketts, owner of Pacific Biological Laboratories and John Steinbeck was a partner at one point in time and his wife Carol was Ed's secretary. Together Ricketts and Steinbeck wrote the Log of the Sea of Cortez about their expedition into the Gulf of California to collect marine invertebrates and bring them back to study. They were traveling around uncharted ground at the time in a purse seiner called the "Western Flyer."

I read both books, and I was particularly interested in the difficulties they encountered with academia. At the time I was having my troubles with Florida State University, having just been booted out, and I wrote Steinbeck a letter telling him that things hadn't changed since the book was written in 1941, that some of the professors were still antagonistic to individual scientific pursuits outside of the university and hostile to entrepreneurs. I was nineteen years old, my esteem was at its lowest point ever. I didn't expect an answer because I knew he got tons of mail, but it was the beginning of a long correspondence. Through his letters, and during our visits John Steinbeck encouraged me to go on with my dream, to build Gulf Specimen Marine Lab and go on with my writing.

But one time when I was visiting him in New York, I complained about how hard it is to get published. He got angry. "Don't give me that crap, Jack. If you're worth a damn you'll get published, it may take a long time but sooner or later you will. And if you're not, you won't."

The Steinbeck Letters

Jack’s First Letter to Steinbeck
Steinbeck’s Reply

Rudloe to Steinbeck 4/9/63

Steinbeck’s Reply 5/16/63

Steinbeck’s first postcard to Jack

Rudloe to Stienbeck 8/19/63

Steinbeck to Rudloe Delivered in Person 9/25/63

Steinbeck to Rudloe 2/7/64

Rudloe to Steinbeck 11/24/64

Steinbeck to Rudloe 2/17/65

Rudloe to Steinbeck 2/28/65

Steinbeck to Rudloe 3/19/65

Rudloe to Steinbeck 3/22/65

Steinbeck to Rudloe 4/10/65

Rudloe to Steinbeck 4/26/65

Steinbeck to Rudloe 9/22/65

Steinbeck to Rudloe 4/?/?/65

Rudloe to Steinbeck 1/21/66

Steinbeck’s postcard to Rudloe 3/5/66

Steinbeck to Rudloe 3/18/66

Steinbeck’s postcard to Rudloe 5/24/66

Steinbeck’s postcard to Rudloe 6/3/66

Steinbeck’s final postcard to Rudloe

Rudloe to Steinbeck 9/11/67

Steinbeck’s final letter to Jack 9/14/67
In 1968 I was only seven years old when my dad was studying at Florida State University. We had moved from our home in Dunedin and were far away from the beach that I loved. My dad discovered the Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratory and brought me here for a visit one weekend. What a day that was! Jack Rudloe showed me sea squirts and pulled creatures from the tanks fueling my imagination. It was a lasting and impressionable experience. I would pour over the Rudloe’s book, “The Sea Brings Forth for years to come.

We returned to the Tampa Bay area where I pursued my love for art. After studying at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and in Europe I decided to return to Florida. Now some 40 years later when I heard about the oil spill, I rushed to the Florida panhandle to paint the endangered coastline. On my trip back I was passing through Panacea and saw a once familiar sign and made a stop here.

When I walked into the Gulf Specimen Aquarium and saw the touch tanks and met the founders Anne and Jack Rudloe, all of those memories came back. I realized that the trip to the Laboratory as a child had a great impact on my life. Many of the details in recent works are still distant memories of that day. I decided with the Rudloes that my artwork should be a part of this very special place. So with the concern and generosity of Jimmy Buffet, we made reproductions of the artwork before you. The originals can be viewed in the Florida House of Representatives in Tallahassee and the Sandpearl Resort in Clearwater.
MISSION or CRUSADE?
Rudloe Angers Developers

“Everybody has a favorite cause, but for some people the cause becomes an all consuming effort. Sometimes, these people are just tilting at windmills: sometimes they end up changing a nation.”

- “Lonely Causes,” Wall Street Journal

Click images to read full articles
Jack Rudloe is the poet of Florida’s waters and wetlands. *The Wilderness Coast* is a marvelous gathering of marine adventures exploring the shallows and estuaries of Florida’s northwest Gulf Coast. Anyone who loves life in its bewildering and fascinating forms will treasure this book.” —James Dickey

**Shrimp: The Endless Quest for Pink Gold** is a deep and expert look not only at an important human food source but also of the fragile complexity of the ecosystem in which it is created. —E. O. Wilson

We had been involved in endless controversies over the years to slow down the conversion of our wilderness coast into condominiums and trailer parks. The swamp represented 14 acres where the concrete, steel and asphalt could not follow.

— *Jack & Anne Rudloe, “Why We Sank Our Money Into a Swamp”*
“We consider the vital role of marshes as nursery habitat and look at how tides control the way marshes grow.” - Gulf Specimen Marine Lab’s Aquarium Brochure

55,000 Gallons

“Unlike most public aquariums, we specialize in invertebrates and other small living treasures of the North Florida coast.”

Videos

“Your willingness to nurture our students’ curiosity about nature and helping them become good stewards of the environment has had positive impact on their views about the natural environment.” - Jackie High, Principal, Riversink Elementary School, Wakulla County FL
“Five large touch-tanks containing safe to handle colorful starfish, conchs, sea urchins, sponges, hermit crabs and other creatures provide the ultimate hands-on experience.”

- Sea Mobile Field Trip Brochure

“This is not ‘extra stuff.’ ... It is critical to impart to our children ways they can help out now to avoid problems in the future. Our students want to be proactive, not reactive. They are realizing that the world they will inherit will need help.”

Pam Bridges, 5th Grade Science
Seminole Elementary, Donaldson GA

Gulf Specimen Marine Lab’s SeaMobile
Gulf Specimen Aquarist Intern Program

The Aquarist internship is an on-the-job training type internship that explores biological supply, marine life educational programs and sea turtle rehabilitation. Our goal is to expose the interns to all aspects of the operations of the aquarium and prepare them for their chosen career path.

From the album: 2017-2013 Aquarist Interns
By Gulf Specimen Marine Lab

Chelsea graduated from the Florida State University with a double degree in Psychology and History. She has been a part of Gulf Specimens since 2012 and loves to give aquarium tours and play with the stingrays. Her future plans include interning in January 2014 for the Marine Mammal Department at the John G. Shedd Aquarium. She is shown tagging a Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle after a hook was removed before release.

From the album: Spring 2014 Aquarist Interns
By Gulf Specimen Marine Lab

Sophie Owens is one of our new interns from Pensacola, FL. She currently attends Florida State University and is majoring in psychology with a minor in biology. Her dream job is to work with dolphins. She loves learning about marine animals and wants to help educate kids about why the oceans and its inhabitants are so important.

From the album: Spring 2014 Aquarist Interns
By Gulf Specimen Marine Lab

Sam helping measure a rescue Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle. Sam is a Senior at Leon High School, Tallahassee, FL. This will be her 2nd semester interning with us and we appreciate all of her hard work and the great job she does as a guide.

From the album: Spring 2014 Aquarist Interns
By Gulf Specimen Marine Lab

Katie tagging a nurse shark in the Gulf of Mexico.

Katie Chandler, one of our new interns currently lives in Tallahassee, FL and is attending Florida State University. She is majoring in Environmental Science with the hope of conducting her own research on water quality in the Apalachicola Bay through stable isotope analysis. She has a passion for shark research and hopes to obtain an internship with Mote Marine Laboratory after graduating.

From the album: Spring 2014 Aquarist Interns
By Gulf Specimen Marine Lab

Taylor Swanson, one of our new interns recently returned from a month in Bali working with sea turtles.

From the album: Spring 2014 Aquarist Interns
By Gulf Specimen Marine Lab

Feeding an Ocellated Moray Eel. This will be her 3rd semester interning with us. She is great with the animals and guests. Janice lives in Thomasville, GA and is studying Veterinary Technology at Southwest Georgia Technical College. She has enjoyed working hands-on with our veterinarians and will continue to intern next semester. She has a passion to help sea turtles and plans to intern in May at St. George Island.
New species of jellyfish type known as “sea wasp” found in Madagascar mangroves, named for Jack Rudloe: *Chiropsella rudloei*

“The specific name was chosen to honor Jack Rudloe for his dedication to the study and protection of the marine environment and its inhabitants.” - Bastian Bentlage, Univ of Maryland

[Marine Biodiversity Records, accepted 8 October 2013, Smithsonian Institution]

“The services of Gulf Specimen support research funded by NSF, NIH and the Office of Naval Research and are thus important to our national science infrastructure.”

- Marc Weissberg, Ph.D., Biology, Georgia Institute of Technology

“I know of no other institute along the Gulf’s shores that has done more to heighten this awareness, both by direct educational work and by facilitating the instructional efforts of others.”

- Michael Hellberg, Ph.D., Biology, LSU

“I also use fiddler crabs from GSML in my research program, a program that is aimed at understanding how salt transport proteins function. These proteins are important in human health and disease (for example, hypertension). Again, having a reliable source of healthy animals is needed if this important research is to continue, and as such GSML is providing a very important service to the research community.”

- Chris Gillen, Asst. Professor Biology, Kenyon College
Local & National Recognition For Rudloe’s Conservation Efforts

“Protecting the earth gives meaning and wholeness and a sense that you are contributing to a greater good. This earth should not be allowed to disappear. Now it is your turn.”

Anna Rudloe, Co-Founder of Gulf Specimen Marine Lab, in a speech upon receiving the 50th Annual ChevronTexaco Environmental Award in 2005.

Gulf Specimen Gets National EPA Award

Jack and Anne Rudloe, owners of Gulf Specimen Marine Lab in Panama City Beach, recently learned that the lab has received national recognition as an award winner in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Gulf of Mexico Program.

The Rudloes were notified that Gulf Specimen Marine Lab is the third place winner of the Gulf Guardian Award for 2003 in the Youth and Education Category. The award will be presented at the Southern States Environmental Conference in Biloxi, Mississippi.

GSML named ChevronTexaco Conservationist of the Year 2004

American Association of University Women
2009 Outstanding Community Women Awards Luncheon

Anne Rudloe, Ph.D.

Dr. Rudloe lives in Panama City Beach, Florida where she and her husband own the Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratory. She is the Managing Director of the Lab where she has led its transformation into an award-winning non-profit environmental research and educational center.

She is the author of 8 scientific research publications in the field of animal behavior, marine ecology, and endocrinology.

Gulf Specimen Receives Environmental Award

The Wakulla County Chamber of Commerce awarded the first annual Environmental Stewardship Award on Monday, Sept. 26, to Gulf Specimen Marine Laboratories, Inc. The award was accepted by Jack Rudloe, vice president, and Anne Rudloe, president.
Tribute: Anne Activist/Educator

Anne Rudloe’s courage and unwavering commitment to the environment, her family, the many students that found enthusiasm for preserving vital wetlands due to her guidance and instruction, is unmatched. Her legacy lives in literary work, scientific research and the educational center she helped found and directed until her death in 2012.

“We slog through marshes, pull beach seines, snorkel in sea grass meadows, hike across barrier islands, go down the watershed of an undeveloped estuary, and discover the rare, endemic wildflowers blooming in the globally endangered longleaf pine forests that grow behind the salt marshes,’ she wrote in the 2002 spring issue of FSU’s marine lab newsletter. ‘The professor of record—me—is often upstaged by the real teachers of this class—the land and sea themselves.’”

- Anne Rudloe quoted by Elizabeth Bettendorf in “A Place, A Purpose, A Panacea,” Florida State University Research in Review Summer 2009 (link to full article)
“Still in the Fight”

Read the full article and other letters @ Save Our Wetlands

“To a mullet foraging among the marsh grass on an incoming tide, there is no such thing as ‘mean high water.’”
- Jack Rudloe, “Why Save Wetlands” 1/26/13

“Laden with the author’s customary blend of humor and unapologetic candor, the book chronicles Rudloe’s capers on behalf of his beloved coastal wilderness. Expected release Summer 2014, Panacea Prophecy whispers with the ghosts of dredged marshland begging us this time to take heed.”
- Preprint Book Summary

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IN ACTION

Gulf Specimen "Through the Years"
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDSX4tTWx4

Tides and Marshes
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1cxUGEqNk

The Estuary
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1XBG_bj0ws

Mud is Good Stuff
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAWbIMFjNtI

Sea Grasses
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHTIuEXoEXQ

Seamobile
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JidGwow0Dj0