



**255 Live Oak Drive  
Vero Beach, FL 32963  
(772) 589-5050  
[www.DiscoverELC.org](http://www.DiscoverELC.org)**

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Contact: Holly Dill, Executive Director  
[holly@DiscoverELC.org](mailto:holly@DiscoverELC.org)

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### **NEW DIRECTION FOR ELC PROGRAMS**

WABASSO ISLAND, Fla. The Environmental Learning Center (ELC) has released its 2008-2009 Program Guide with many completely new or revamped offerings. Notable are activities designed for adults, highlighted by a series of evening lectures co-sponsored by the Indian River Land Trust. Other categories include green workshops, land encounters, water excursions, family outings, junior naturalists and annual events, anchored by Ecofest on March 1 and “Glitter on the River,” the always popular gala, on April 25. The new Guide detailing all the programs can be obtained without cost by calling the ELC at 772-589-5050 or emailing [info@DiscoverELC.org](mailto:info@DiscoverELC.org). All programs are listed on ELC’s website [www.DiscoverELC.org](http://www.DiscoverELC.org).

The new offerings are the product of months of work by Heather Stapleton, the ELC Education Coordinator and the volunteer Education Committee, led by Board member Eileen Connelly. It brings new life to ELC activities and focuses on what the organization has to offer in facilities, talent and mission.

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The lecture series begins November 5 and runs through May 6 with seven presentations ranging from green roofs and biofuels to a roundtable of local farmers, ranchers and harvesters discussing locally grown/raised foods. Following each of the lectures there will be a wine and locally grown fruit and vegetable reception.

Green living workshops teach topics from clean boating to edible landscaping. The number and destinations of the popular pontoon cruises has been increased to include northern lagoon and southern lagoon as well as both the north and south prongs of the St. Sebastian River.

Land encounters will be guided on a number of occasions by a master naturalist at Captain Forster Hammock Preserve and the St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park. The Indian River Land Trust, a non-profit organization focusing on the conservation of our land and water, entered into a conservation easement agreement with the Padgett Branch ranch owners. This agreement protected 1,600 acres of working ranch lands where a “Vanishing Florida” tour will feature a swamp-buggy ride through woods and wetlands on the property.

A four-part biological research program and grandparents days have been added to the family outings, and a wide variety of experiences have been designed for junior naturalists from ages 3 to 16.

For serious students of the ecology a 40-hour Master Naturalist program on Florida’s ecosystems will be offered in conjunction with the University of Florida, and the course will include field trips as well as classroom instruction at the ELC.

The Environmental Learning Center is located north of Vero Beach off County Road 510 at the western edge of the Wabasso Bridge. Its 64-acre island campus includes exhibit areas, native plant gardens, picnic facilities, gift shop and visitor center.

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