

12 Days of Christmas: Microscopes help Florida Oceanographic Society show lagoon close up

Tyler Treadway Treasure Coast Newspapers

Published 7:00 a.m. ET Jan. 4, 2021

If you think of blue-green algae only as the massive guacamole blooms that can cover the St. Lucie River and wreak havoc on the area's ecosystem, economy and health of nearby residents, the Florida Oceanographic Society would like you to take a closer look.

To do that, the FOS staffers are making a "12 Days of Christmas" wish for three digital microscopes.

"We use microscopes in all our educational programs," said Zack Jud, the FOS education director. "We'll use them to look at lots of stuff. There are lots of microscopic organisms in the Indian River Lagoon, like plankton and algae."



Florida Oceanographic Society's Loraé Simpson, director of research, and Samantha Smith, research technician, examine an oyster restoration site during a monthly check for oyster spat in the Indian River Lagoon on Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020, at Indian RiverSide Park in Jensen Beach. The team traveled to six sites in the lagoon and the St. Lucie River on Wednesday, with the different salinity levels in the two rivers providing an opportunity for them to gather a variety of information. LEAH VOSS/TCPALM

FOS has some traditional microscopes, Jud said, “but they’re aging, on their last legs. They’re older than some of our educational staff members. We’d like to get with the times and have the ability to use technology in our teaching.”

Digital microscopes are a great tool because they eliminate the learning curve of having to teach people how to use a traditional microscope, Jud said.

After COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, Jud said, “we anticipate having classrooms come to visit us on field trips again, and microscopes are a vital part of those lessons.”

Staffers also would be able to use the microscopes in the nonprofit’s Frances Langford Visitor Center, part of the 57-acre Coastal Center on Hutchinson Island in Stuart that features nature trails and display areas featuring stingrays, sea stars and sea turtles centered around a 750,000-gallon lagoon stocked with sharks, game fish and turtles.

“The digital microscopes we want not only show images on their own small screens that one person can see,” Jud said. “They can project images onto a large screen that everyone in the room can see.”

How to help

Who: Florida Oceanographic Society

Wish: 3 digital microscopes

Cost: \$800 each

How to donate: Contact Abigail Flood at 772-225-0505, ext. 108

About this series

Treasure Coast groups that research, protect and restore the Indian River Lagoon need more than holiday cheer to continue their mission of saving area waterways. Find out what they need — and how you can help them — to continue their work as TCPalm.com highlights a different organization each day from Dec. 25 to Jan. 5, the traditional 12 Days of Christmas.