
EUGENE P. ODUM AWARD

The Eugene P. Odum Award for Excellence in Ecology Education recognizes an ecologist for outstanding teaching, research, and mentoring activities, and for demonstrated ability in relating basic ecological principles to human affairs. The winner of the 2013 Odum Award is Dr. Martin B. Main, Professor in the Wildlife Ecology Department at the University of Florida. Among his many accomplishments as an ecologist, educator, and researcher is the fact that Dr. Main developed the highly innovative and successful Florida Master Naturalist Program (FMNP). That program is a self-sustaining statewide environmental education initiative for professionals and laypeople. It provides science-based environmental information in an enjoyable, consistent, and interesting format.



The rapid growth and reach of the FMNP program is remarkable—despite the fact that Dr. Main had to overcome early hurdles and skeptics to fulfill his vision. In the past 10 years, the number of courses offered annually has grown to 66, and the number of graduates to >1000. In total, the program has awarded >7000 Master Naturalist graduate certificates within the State of Florida. The program's effectiveness and sustainability are made possible by Dr. Main's ability to recruit and train over 140 instructors, who then take a key role in delivering the content to the enrollees.

Thanks to Dr. Main's creativity and tireless efforts, the FMNP relies on a diverse array of innovative and effective curricular materials that he had a strong role in producing. Among those materials are 12 videos and 16 presentations, each covering topics relating to upland, coastal, and wetland habitats. In addition, the program features 12 workshops covering conservation science, environmental interpretation, wildlife monitoring, and habitat evaluation. Their efforts have been recognized with awards from organizations like the Florida Association of Environmental Professionals, the Environmental Law Institute, and the National Association for Communication Excellence.

The FMNP has documented numerous secondary benefits of their program. For example, graduates perform >160,000 hours of volunteer service related to environmental education, monitoring, and restoration. They remain active learners, involving themselves in other environmental education opportunities. Moreover, he consults with other universities and environmental training programs outside of Florida.

Aside from his work with the FMNP, Dr. Main provides education leadership with other organizations, including the Society for Conservation Biology, the Wildlife Society, the Florida Native Plant Society, and the North American Association for Environmental Education.