

## EARTH DAY 2021: WAYS YOU CAN GET INVOLVED IN THE FLORIDA KEYS

By **Tiffany Duong** - April 21, 2021

**E**very year, Earth Day celebrates all things wild on this big blue planet of ours. Here in the Keys, there's no shortage of amazing places and animals. From our turquoise blue seas to our hardy mangrove forests, our resilient coral reefs to our incredible chain of misfit islands, there is so much beauty to behold and protect.

Here are some of our favorite ways to get involved on this Earth Day and beyond:

### UPPER KEYS

#### **1. Apr. 22 – 24 at Rainbow Reef Dive Center (100 Ocean Dr., Key Largo) – Earth Day Eco Fair and Conservation Dives:**

**– Apr. 22 at 8:30 a.m. – Coral Restoration Foundation coral outplanting scuba diving:** CRF and Rainbow Reef will outplant critically endangered corals back onto the Florida Reef Tract. Learn about corals and help restore them with your own two hands. All tools and necessary education will be provided.

**– Apr. 23 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. – Earth Day Eco Fair:** Free EcoFair at Rainbow Reef featuring Project Aware, Scuba Diving Magazine, Hülya Swim, BeautyCounter, Lionfish Jewelry, and more.

**– Apr. 23 at 12:45 p.m. – Dive Against Debris scuba diving:** Rainbow Reef's regular Dives Against Debris scuba charter. Marine debris is one of the biggest threats to ocean health and coral reef recovery. Help by removing it.

**– Apr. 24 at 8 a.m. and 12:45 p.m. – Lionfish Derby scuba diving:** Rainbow Reef will participate in REEF's Lionfish Derby, and divers can catch invasive lionfish to participate.

– Reservations required for all dives. Call Rainbow Reef at 305-451-7171.



Rainbow Reef – Rainbow Reef Dive Center has a weekend of activities planned around conservation. RAINBOW REEF/Contributed

**2. Apr. 22 from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Key Dives (79851 Overseas Hwy., Islamorada) – Upcycled Marine Debris Paint & Sip:** Key Dives has been collecting thousands of pounds of Marine Debris from our oceans. This Earth Day, they're putting all that trash to good use – as a canvas for an Earth Day Paint & Sip. The event is free. Paint, brushes, and canvas provided. Just BYOB! Donations will benefit the non-profit I.CARE. Contact Alyssa Panzer at 305-664-2211 or email [conservation@keydives.com](mailto:conservation@keydives.com) to sign up.



Key Dives will host a paint & sip using upcycled marine debris on Apr. 22. KEY DIVES/Contributed

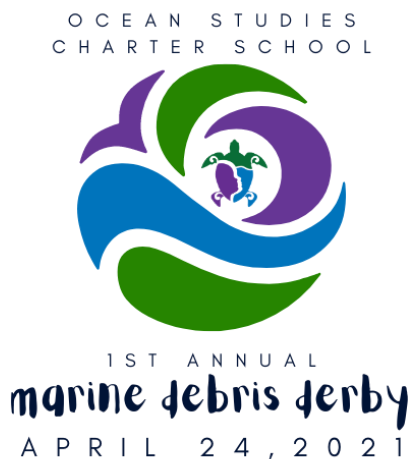
**3. Apr. 23 – 25 at REEF Headquarters (98300 Overseas Hwy., Key Largo) – REEF's Earth Day Lionfish Derby:** The 8th annual Florida Keys "Locals" Lionfish Derby has been designed to encourage safe social distancing while still facilitating removing lionfish from our reefs. Fishing is allowed in Monroe County waters only. Local dive shops are offering lionfish charters. Sharkey's Pub will offer lionfish tastings and drink tickets through the weekend. For more information, visit <https://www.REEF.org/events/earth-day-lionfish-derby> or email [lionfish@REEF.org](mailto:lionfish@REEF.org).



REEF will host it's 8th Annual Lionfish Derby over Earth Day weekend. Divers will collect invasive lionfish off local reefs.  
REEF/Contributed

**4. Apr. 23 at 8 a.m. at Publix (101437 Overseas Hwy., Key Largo) – Community Cleanup:** Meet at Publix for a community cleanup. Starts at 8 a.m. Gloves, sanitizer and other supplies will be on hand. Please bring a mask. For more information, contact [mailservice@dacdb.net](mailto:mailservice@dacdb.net).

**5. Apr. 24 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Harry Harris Park and Pennekamp State Park – 1st Annual Marine Debris Derby:** Help collect marine debris in a fishing-style derby benefitting Ocean Studies Charter School and inspired by former student, Pascal Weisberger. Kickoff at 9 a.m. at Ocean Studies with a free breakfast from The Juice House, and then come clean our coasts. Come back to Ocean Studies at noon for the weigh-in, prizes, a large native plant donation sale, recycled art auction, interactive painting for Kids, food trucks, music and more. Students receive pledge donations based on how much trash they collect and money benefits the Middle School Expansion project. Social distancing and masks required on school grounds. For more information, contact [Jessica.Martinez@keysschools.com](mailto:Jessica.Martinez@keysschools.com).



Ocean Studies Charter School will host the first ever Marine Debris Derby on Apr. 22. OCEAN STUDIES CHARTER SCHOOL/Contributed

**6. Apr. 30 to May 2 from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Windley Key State Park – 2021 City Nature Challenge:** Help South Florida and Windley Key State Park participate in this

annual challenge to find and document nature. Download the iNaturalist app and make wildlife observations. Rangers at Windley Key can answer questions and give hints.



## MIDDLE KEYS

**1. Apr. 22, at 9 a.m. at Sombrero Beach in Marathon – Turtle Release:** The Turtle Hospital in Marathon will release Sparb, a sub-adult loggerhead sea turtle that was rescued off Sombrero Beach at the end of January. She was in critical condition and not expected to survive, but has miraculously made a full recovery. Now, she's ready to return to her ocean home. Join us at Sombrero Beach at 9 a.m. to celebrate her recovery. She will be released at 9:15 a.m. sharp.



*Sparb will be released from Sombrero Beach on Earth Day. THE TURTLE HOSPITAL/Contributed*

**2. Apr. 22 at 10 a.m. at Captain Hook's Big Pine (29675 Overseas Hwy., Big Pine) – Reef Relief USA coral restoration scuba diving:** Join Captain Hooks to visit an actual coral restoration nursery for critical maintenance. Help keep endangered corals healthy with your own two hands. All required training and tools will be provided. Call 305-872-9863 to book.

**3. Apr. 22 at 5:30 p.m at Sunset Park in Key Colony Beach – Earth Day 5k/10k Run or Walk:** Hapynkeys Running is hosting an in-person and a virtual 5k or 10k on Earth Day to conserve, protect and recycle for our planet. Help the planet while staying healthy and safe. The event is free. For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/hapynkeys/>.

## KEY WEST

**1. Apr. 22, 12 p.m to 2 p.m. at the Reef Relief Center (631 Greene St., Key West) – Cigarette Cleanup Challenge:** Cigarette butts are some of the most common marine pollutants. Help by going into your neighborhood and collecting as many discarded cigarettes as possible. Turn them in on Earth Day at the Reef Relief Center. There are prizes



for the top participants. For more information, email [reefrelief@gmail.com](mailto:reefrelief@gmail.com) or visit <https://www.facebook.com/events/507413053758487>.



*Reef Relief's cigarette collection contest will end on Earth Day. Bring cigarettes to the center for tallying. REEF RELIEF/Contributed.*

**2. Apr. 22, 5 p.m. at the Coffee Butler Amphitheater – Earth Day Jam with That Hippie Band:** “It will be like Woodstock without the mud.” Celebrate the glorious 51st Earth Day with Key West’s own fugitive band of Hippies from the '60s. Local nonprofits Reef Relief, Conch Republic Marine Army and the Key West Parrot Heads will be there to join band members in celebrating the planet. as they help you remember all the songs from when the environmental era first began: The Beatles, Grateful Dead, Rolling Stones, Jefferson Starship, Crosby, Stills, & Nash and more. Wear some Hippie clothes, get back into the groove with The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Grateful Dead, and more.



Key West will host an Earth Day Jam at Coffee Butler Amphitheatre featuring That Hippy Band. CONTRIBUTED

**3. April 22, Earth Day at Key West Tropical Forest & Botanical Garden:** Enjoy extended hours and free admission. The Garden is extending its closing time and offering free admission between the hours of 4 – 6 p.m. The Key West Tropical Forest, established in 1936, is celebrating its 86th anniversary and is honored to be the steward of protecting the environment in its 15-acre endangered ecosystem. The Garden is located at 5210 College Road on Stock Island.

## VIRTUAL/MONROE COUNTY

**1. Apr. 28 from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. – 30th Annual “Delicate Balance of Nature” lecture series:** The Parks Friend Group will feature Dr. Frank Ridgley, DVM, head of Zoo Miami’s Conservation and Research Department and a research associate at Florida International University. The free, virtual discussion of “The Florida Panther” will divulge this apex predator’s secrets, explain why its survival remains at risk and discuss what we can do. To attend, register online <https://flpanther.eventbrite.com> or visit <https://www.facebook.com/PennekampCSO>.

**2. May 1 to 9 – FWC’s Florida WildQuest:** Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is hosting the first **Florida WildQuest**, a unique scavenger hunt experience on wildlife management areas throughout the state. Grab your mobile phone and go on a wild adventure to discover some of Florida’s best wilderness. Prizes available. Visit <https://floridanaturetrackers.com/>.



Citizen-science experiences  
educate and amuse  
August 11, 2020



On Friday and Saturday,  
June...  
June 2, 2019



DIVE REPORT: WINDY EARTH  
DAY WEEKEND?  
April 22, 2021



### TIFFANY DUONG

<http://tiffanyduong.com>

Tiff Duong is a self-made mermaid who loves all things cheesy (romantic and dairy) and thrives in the 3 am hour. She believes in leaving it all on the field and has never met a (mis)adventure she didn't love.



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