

FLORIDA CHAPTER THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Influential Woman in Wildlife Award

The Florida Chapter of The Wildlife Society is pleased to announce that **Dr. Karen Bjorndal** is the recipient of the 2024 Influential Woman in Wildlife Award.



After her junior year at Occidental College in Los Angeles, Karen spent six months on the Galápagos Islands studying land iguanas. Upon her return, and completion of her degree, she was convinced she wanted to write her PhD dissertation on sea turtles. However, Dr. Archie Carr refused to accept doctoral students who wished to focus on sea turtles as he felt that was too broad of a topic. After camping outside his house, penning letters, and digitizing his data, she convinced him to chair her doctoral committee. After publishing her research “Nutrition and Grazing Behavior of the Green Turtle, *Chelonia mydas*, a Seagrass Herbivore” she worked alongside Dr. Carr and took over his efforts at the Center for Sea Turtle Research after he died (Adapted from Wikipedia, citing books by James Spotila and Fritz Davis).

In addition to serving as the director of the Center, Karen is a distinguished professor in the Department of Biology at the University of Florida. Her research focuses on nutritional ecology and demography of sea turtles, with an emphasis on the roles of sea turtles in marine ecosystems and how these ecosystems have changed in response to major shifts in abundance of sea turtle populations. She has authored more than 260 scientific papers. She served as chair of the Marine Turtle Specialist Group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature for 12 years and is active in international sea turtle conservation.

As in her nomination letter, “Karen was blessed to have her late husband, Alan Bolten, as her partner in sea turtle research around the world, Archie Carr as her mentor, and her graduate students (25 for doctorates and 12 for masters) as continual sources of inspiration, and a network of wonderful international collaborators.”

(Above adapted from <https://www.seaturtlestatus.org/legends/karen-bjorndal>)

The University of Florida wisely chose Dr. Karen Bjorndal to continue the legacy of Dr. Archie Carr and for almost four decades in this distinguished position, she has led efforts to study and conserve sea turtles. Through her research, teaching, and advising, she has inspired and mentored countless women (and not only women!). Thus, she richly deserves The Influential Woman in Wildlife Award 2024.