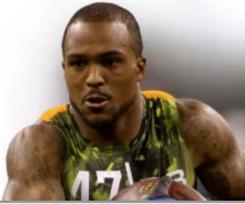




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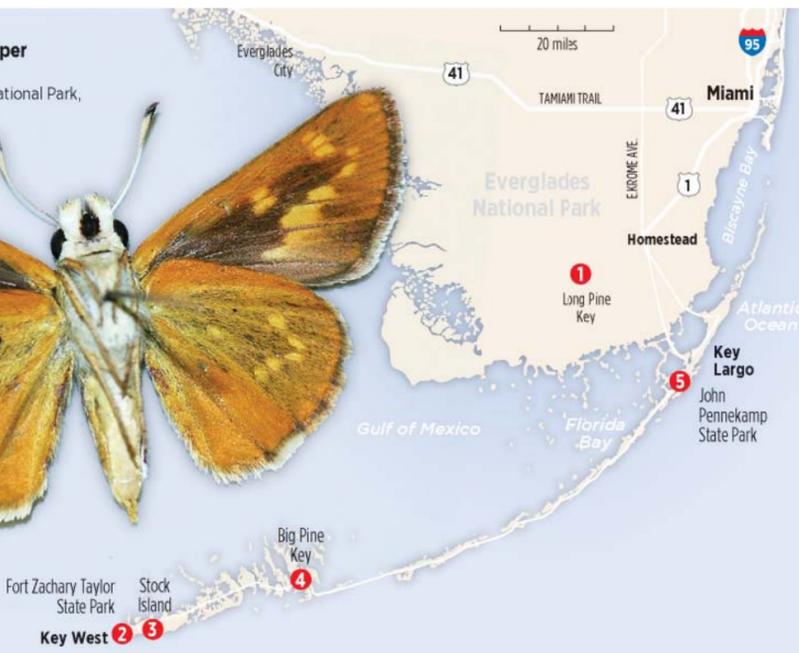
SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 2013
FINAL EDITION

ENVIRONMENT

1 Rockland Meske's Skipper
Status: May be extinct
Last sighted: Everglades National Park, Long Pine Key area, 2000



PHOTOS: Marc Minno, Eco-Cognizant Inc.



VANISHING INTO THIN AIR

■ South Florida's rare tropical butterflies are in serious decline, with five of the delicate creatures vanishing from the wild in a potentially unprecedented wave of demise.

BY CURTIS MORGAN
cmorgan@miamiherald.com

By their nature, South Florida's tropical butterflies have always been ephemeral creatures, coming and going with the rhythms of the life cycle and season. Now they're just gone.

In what may be an unprecedented die-off, at least five varieties of rare butterflies have vanished from

the pine forests and seaside jungles of the Florida Keys and southern Miami-Dade County, the only places some were known to exist.

Marc Minno, a Gainesville entomologist commissioned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to perform a major survey of South Florida's butterfly population, filed reports late last year recommending that the Zestos skipper and rock-

land Meske's skipper — both unseen for a decade or more — be declared extinct. He believes the same fate has befallen a third, a Keys subspecies called the Zarucco duskywing, and that two more, the nickerbean blue and Bahamian swallowtail, also have disappeared from their only North American niche.

Considering that there have been only four previous presumed extinctions of North American but-

•TURN TO BUTTERFLIES, 4A

2 Keys Zarucco Duskywing

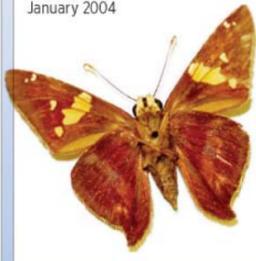
Status: May be extinct
Last sighted: Fort Zachary Taylor State Park, Key West, July 2009



Source: Marc Minno.

3 Zestos Skipper

Status: May be extinct
Last sighted: Key West Botanical Garden, Stock Island, January 2004



4 Nickerbean Blue

Status: May be gone from Florida
Last sighted: Big Pine Key, August 2009



5 Bahamian Swallowtail

Status: May be gone from Florida
Last sighted: John Pennekamp State Park, Key Largo, 1997



MARCO RUIZ / MIAMI HERALD STAFF

AIRPORTS

Travel woes get a quick budget fix

■ Congress passed a measure to avert furloughs and control tower closings by allowing the transfer of unused airport improvement funds.

BY DAVID LIGHTMAN AND CURTIS TATE
McClatchy News Service

WASHINGTON — Congress moved fast Friday to ease delays at airports around the nation triggered by furloughs of air traffic controllers, as the House of Representatives approved by 361-41 a budget fix designed to avert more trouble.

The vote came only after a bruising debate over budget priorities, with many lawmakers wondering why

Congress was so quick to help air travelers and not programs that affect schools, poverty or other areas. Despite the concerns, the bill passed easily and lawmakers headed home — often to the airports — to start a nine-day break.

The Senate had passed its version of the measure Thursday night.

The debate capped a week of protests from consumers and growing con-

•TURN TO FURLOUGHS, 4A

LEGISLATURE 2013 | PARENT TRIGGER BILL

Bill debate flares over mystery video

■ A video featuring South Florida moms praising the controversial parent trigger bill was actually produced by a group in California.

BY KATHLEEN MCGRORY
Herald/Times Tallahassee Bureau

TALLAHASSEE — For weeks, it seemed, few parents in Florida supported the so-called parent trigger bill.

And then, a video began circulating in the Capitol.

The video, featuring South Florida moms praising the legislation, was attributed to a mysterious grass-roots group known as the Sunshine Parents. But it was actually produced by Parent Revolution, the California-based advocacy

group that has been using its considerable resources and political heft to promote the legislation nationwide. Parent Revolution confirmed Friday.

Emails to the Sunshine Parents were not returned.

Doubt has also been cast on a petition allegedly signed by more than 1,200 supporters of the parent trigger proposal. Three peo-

•TURN TO VIDEO, 4A

•Dolphins' stadium tax bill delayed again, 1B

BOSTON MARATHON BOMBINGS | THE CARJACKING

Terrifying ride ends in daring escape

■ The victim of the Tsarnaev brothers' carjacking filled in some of the last missing pieces in the timeline of the manhunt for the Boston Marathon bombing suspects.

BY ERIC MOSKOWITZ
The Boston Globe

The 26-year-old entrepreneur had just pulled his new Mercedes to the curb to answer a text when an old sedan swerved behind him, slamming to a stop. A man in dark clothes got out and approached the passenger window. It was nearly 11 p.m. last Thursday.

The man rapped on the glass, speaking quickly. Danny, unable to hear him, lowered the window —

and the man reached an arm through, unlocked the door, and climbed in, brandishing a silver handgun.

"Don't be stupid," he told Danny. He asked if he had followed the news about the previous Monday's Boston Marathon bombings. Danny had, down to the release of the grainy photos of suspects less than six hours earlier.

"I did that," said the man, who would later be identified as Ta-

merlan Tsarnaev. "And I just killed a policeman in Cambridge."

He ordered Danny to drive, the beginning of an aching slow odyssey last Thursday night and Friday morning in which Danny felt the possibility of death pressing on him like a vise.

In an exclusive interview with The Boston Globe, Danny — the victim of the Tsarnaev brothers' much-discussed but previously lit-

•TURN TO CARJACKING, 2A

•Legal case against suspect may take years to unfold, 3A



ANDREW KITZENBERG/BLOOMBERG

THE HIJACKED VEHICLE: Boston Marathon bombing suspects Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev duck behind the black Mercedes SUV in a shootout with police on April 19.



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America's Test Kitchen, 3 p.m.: Jacques Pepin cooked for Charles De Gaulle but refused to cook for the Kennedy White House.



News at 11 p.m.: CBS 4 chief investigator Michele Gillen takes you inside the secret world of an FBI informant

ENVIRONMENT

Fears that list of lost could grow

• BUTTERFLIES, FROM 1A

terflies — the last in California more than 50 years ago — Minno finds the government response to such an alarming wave frustrating.

"There are three butterflies here that have just winked out and no one did a thing about it," Minno said. "I don't know what has happened with our agencies that are supposed to protect wildlife. They're just kind of sitting on their hands and watching them go extinct."

And the list of the lost could easily grow. South Florida has one of the world's highest concentrations of rare butterflies. At least 18 others are considered imperiled, reduced to small, isolated populations vulnerable to a host of threats from exotic ants that eat their larvae to a single storm that could blow a colony into oblivion.

Federal wildlife managers insist they are doing all they can do in a state with one of the longest lists of endangered and threatened species in the nation.

"It basically comes down to resources, what we have in terms of money, staffing and those kinds of things that we aren't always in control of," said Ken Warren, spokesman for the Fish and Wildlife Service's South Florida field office in Vero Beach. "We are trying to be as responsive as we can."

BREEDING PROGRAMS

State and federal agencies haven't ignored the decline. They formed a joint group in 2007 to develop recovery strategies and have supported laboratory breeding programs for signature species like the Schaus' swallowtail and Miami blue. The service even put a biologist full-time on butterfly problems, Warren said, a level of attention otherwise reserved for high-profile species like the manatee and Florida panther.

But so far, it hasn't been enough to reverse troubling trends. Experts acknowledge that reviving the rich array of butterflies that once ranged along much of the coast poses significant, possibly insurmountable challenges.

"It's hard to see for some of the species what really can be done," said Jaret Daniels, assistant curator of Lepidoptera for the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville, who has directed captive breeding efforts for the two others on the brink, Miami blue and Schaus' swallowtail.

Those booster injections of new butterflies may be the last and best hope, having worked to reinvigorate populations in other states. But so far, they have fizzled in South Florida. Biologists have produced copious quantities of butterflies in protected pens but the lab-bred bugs have never managed to make it in the wild, for reasons still under study.

"With a lot of these butterflies, we don't necessarily know the ins and outs of them," said Mark Salvato, the service's lead butterfly biologist. "There are a whole bunch of factors that could be affecting them. It's hard to find a smoking gun."

South Florida's unceasing growth has clearly hastened the decline. Many of the area's unique subspecies, originally blown in from Cuba, the Bahamas or other Caribbean islands, developed their distinctive colors or markings in the subtropical comfort of rocky pinewoods and hardwood hammocks, ecosystems now paved over or cut into small pieces.

But there are a long list of

additional suspects: Pesticide spraying for mosquitoes can kill delicate larvae. Hurricanes and tropical storms can ravage habitat. Exotic predators have more recently emerged as a major concern, with iguanas eating essential "host plants" that shelter eggs and caterpillars. In some cases, invasive predatory ants may have supplanted native varieties that once protected butterfly larvae in symbiotic relationships.

A lack of breeding partners and genetic diversity also could cripple populations. Climate change and land management may also have impacts.

What is particularly puzzling is why many butterflies have declined in otherwise healthy habitats in places like Everglades and Biscayne National parks, protected areas where mosquito spraying is prohibited. Last summer, for instance, teams scoured Elliott Key in Biscayne Bay, once prime breeding ground for the Schaus, hunting for enough to jumpstart a new breeding effort. They found only a handful — and not one female. They'll try again in a few months.

And the Miami blue, once common along the coast from Daytona Beach to the Dry Tortugas, has now been reduced to the Marquesas islands west of Key West.

"It makes no sense from an ecological standpoint," Minno said. "They should be up in the biggest islands with the most habitat."

While other butterflies are also in decline globally, South Florida's problems are acute, with roughly a third of the 100 or so varieties known to live south of Lake Okeechobee at risk, said Elane Nuehring, past president of the Miami blue chapter of the North American Butterfly Association.

"We are sort of the capital of declining species," she said.

Though butterfly watching doesn't rival bird-watching, the delicate creatures are fascinating for many people, said Daniels, calling them "as close as you can get to the panda" in the insect world.

Scientists also say their disappearance is more than damaging than simply erasing fluttering flecks of color from the landscape. They are part of complex food webs and rank next to bees among the most important pollinators. They also are indicators of the health of the forests and hammocks they call home, Salvato said.

"When you start to lose the butterflies, something broader is going on," he said.

Not everyone, however, is quite ready to pronounce the missing butterflies dead — at least not yet.

WHAT NEXT?

The Fish and Wildlife Service, which received Minno's extinction recommendations late last year, is pondering its next steps.

Butterflies in the past have vanished for years only to make surprise reappearances. The Miami blue, for instance, was considered unofficially extinct after Hurricane Andrew in 1992 until the discovery of a colony of 50 in Bahia Honda State Park seven years later. Those disappeared in 2001 but more were later found in the Marquesas.

The Meske's also once before went missing for a decade, Salvato said. "It's a very indistinct butterfly. It's not hard to overlook."

Daniels agreed it's too soon to make a pronouncement. Many of the butterflies have brief life spans and live in areas difficult to

Butterfly extinctions

Previously, only four butterflies were presumed extinct in North America, all in California

- Sthenele satyr butterfly: 1890s, San Francisco
- Xerces blue: 1943, San Francisco
- Strohbeen's parnassian: Santa Cruz, 1958
- Atossa fritillary: Tehachapi, 1959

Butterfly blues

Entomologist Marc Minno's assessment of South Florida butterflies.

- Presumed extinct: Zestos skipper, rockland Meske's skipper, Keys Zarucco duskywing.
- Vanished from region but possibly elsewhere: Bahamian swallowtail, nickerbean blue.
- Imperiled and at risk of disappearing: Miami blue, Schaus' swallowtail, spicebush swallowtail, Florida white, Statura sulphur, Dina yellow, atala, amethyst hair-streak, silver-banded hairstreak, Bartram's scrub-hairstreak, gray ministreak, Cuban crescent, tropical buckeye, malachite, Florida purplewing, dingy purplewing, Florida leafwing, Hayhurst's scalloppwing, Palatka skipper.

SOURCE: MARC MINNO, ECO-COGNIZANT INC.

fully survey. "That's the inherent challenge, having enough data to verify that something is gone," he said.

The service's Warren said the butterflies Minno believes are gone also fall in a bureaucratic "gray area." None of them were yet in the official pipeline for listing. Only two, the Schaus and Miami blue, have endangered status. Two others, the Florida leafwing and Bartram's scrub-hairstreak, have been elevated to "candidates." The agency won't add something just to turn around and stamp it extinct.

"There is no requirement for us to do anything as far as a formal announcement that it's gone," Warren said. "At this point, I would say the smart thing for us is to take the recommendation under consideration and give it a little time to see what happens."

Minno argues something is wrong when butterflies vanish before the agency charged with protecting them even begins its process of declaring them in trouble. Environmental groups have expressed similar frustrations. In 2011, the Arizona-based Center of Biological Diversity sued the Fish and Wildlife Service over a backlog of 757 species awaiting listing.

Federal wildlife managers blame the sluggish action on shortages of money and resources, estimating the cost at simply listing a species as endangered or threatened at \$150,000 to \$300,000. In many states, there also has been strong political resistance to additional listings from landowners and developers.

Minno is persuaded the Zestos and Meske's skippers are gone forever. His survey was supposed to take two years, he said, but he spent six on it, logging thousands of hours in the field. Other experts also did the same. No one has spotted any of them, in any stage of life, from larvae to butterfly.

"I thought I was going to find some at some point so I just took a lot more time," Minno said. "They're just not there."

LEGISLATURE 2013 | PARENT TRIGGER BILL

Parent trigger bill spawns mystery video

• VIDEO, FROM 1A

ple whose names appear on the petition told The Herald/Times they never signed it.

"It's sad that they are resorting to these tactics," said Rita Solnet, a Palm Beach County mother whose non-profit organization Parents Across America opposes the parent trigger bill. "But it puts it all in perspective. It's people from outside Florida and outside our schools who support this bill. It's not the real parents."

The parent trigger bill hits the Senate floor on Monday. It has already passed in the House.

The controversial proposal would enable a majority of parents to demand sweeping changes at failing public schools, including having a charter school management company step in. It would also require principals to notify parents when their kids are assigned to "ineffective" or out-of-field teachers for two consecutive years, and provide information about virtual-education alternatives.

Supporters, led by former Gov. Jeb Bush and former D.C. Schools Chief Michelle Rhee, say the legislation would empower parents to play a more active role in the public school system. But opponents say it would give for-profit education companies the opportunity to take over vulnerable schools. They point to California, where efforts to pull the trigger have played out amid allegations of parent coercion and petitions with fraudulent signatures.

"Our members are concerned about how this bill will break apart our communities," said Mindy Gould, who heads the Florida PTA's legislative committee.

In addition to Florida PTA, parent groups lined up against the bill include Fund Education Now, 50th No More and Parents Across America. The NAACP and the League of United Latin American Citizens oppose the legislation, too.

For weeks, the groups

have blasted lawmakers with thousands of emails, and traveled to Tallahassee to testify against the proposals. They have challenged legislators to find any parents who support the measure.

The high-quality Sunshine Parents video and a shorter "sneak peek" surfaced last week, along with a host of questions about who had produced it.

In the videos, the Sunshine Parents described themselves as "an active and engaged group of parents throughout Florida that are seeking to transform the schools in their communities to serve all children." But they offered no other information about the organization. The Sunshine Parents have no public online presence, and haven't made themselves known around the Capitol.

The videos circulated in an email that linked to a petition by Bush's education think tank, the Foundation for Florida's Future. But foundation spokeswoman Allison Aubuchon said there was "no formal association" between Bush's organization and Sunshine Parents.

"We think it's a great video, but we can't take credit for it," she said.

The videos and the email made no reference to Parent Revolution. But Arlice Sims, who works at the Coconut Grove Barnyard, said Parent Revolution organizers Mehul Patel and Shirley Ford came to the community center earlier this month to produce the 32-minute documentary and trailer.

Parent Revolution spokesman David Phelps said his group had indeed "initiated" the mini-documentary, but wasn't "directly affiliated" with Sunshine Parents. He said the connection was brokered through the Urban League of Greater Miami.

The Urban League is run by T. Willard Fair, who serves on the Foundation for Florida's Future board of directors, and was a Bush appointee to the state Board of

Education.

Fair said Sunshine Parents was newly formed, but said he was "insulted" at the suggestion that the group had been created to carry water for Bush's foundation or Parent Revolution.

"When minority parents decide that they need to flex their muscles, there is always some criticism," he said.

Separately, questions have been raised about signatures collected in support of the parent trigger by StudentsFirst, the education think tank founded by Rhee.

The signees include retired Miami-Dade schoolteacher Ira Paul, who confirmed his signature to The Herald/Times.

But Maria and Dan O'Hollearn, of Coral Gables, both said they didn't sign, despite their names and addresses appearing on the petition.

"I wouldn't have signed anything like that," said Maria O'Hollearn, a healthcare professional.

Carlos Herrera, a 24-year-old Florida International University student, said he, too, was surprised his name was on the list of supporters. Herrera said he wasn't familiar with StudentsFirst or the parent trigger bill, and didn't remember signing a petition supporting it.

A spokesman for StudentsFirst said the organization "stands by the authenticity of the signatures." And Sen. Kelli Stargel, R-Lakeland, who has referenced the petition during debates, said she had no reason to believe to doubt their legitimacy.

But other senators said lingering questions over the petition and the videos would cast a dark shadow heading into Monday's debate on the Senate floor.

"We don't need groups from other states coming into Florida and causing trouble," said Sen. Bill Montford, D-Tallahassee, a staunch opponent of the bill. "This is proof."

Miami Herald staff writer Kathleen McGrory can be reached at kmcgrory@miamiherald.com.

AIRPORTS

Bill aims to ease airport delays

• FURLOUGHS, FROM 1A

cern that federal budget cuts were crippling the nation's air traffic system. On Sunday, the Federal Aviation Administration began asking its 13,000 air traffic controllers to take unpaid days off to comply with the sequester, the across-the-board, mandatory spending cuts that Congress passed and President Barack Obama signed to address long-term federal budget deficits.

Hundreds of flights a day encountered delays attributed to the furloughs, snarling the nation's commercial aviation system. Without a fix, the problem was expected only to get worse with the busy summer travel season approaching.

On Wednesday, the FAA reported 863 delays related to staff reductions, in addition to 2,132 delays it attributed to weather and other factors.

The bill permits the Transportation Department to transfer as much as \$253 million from other parts of the agency so that furloughs and control tower closings could be averted. The money will come from airport improvement grants that haven't been spent.

The solution essentially acknowledged what the Obama administration and FAA Administrator Michael Huerta had been telling lawmakers all week: Under the law that Congress enacted more than a year and a half

ago, the agency couldn't simply move money between accounts to make up for the gap in payroll, which accounts for 70 percent of its budget.

In Florida, 14 control towers faced potential closures, including North Perry in Pembroke Pines.

"While not specifically directing the FAA to avert the tower closings, the bill does give the agency sufficient resources to do so," Florida Sen. Bill Nelson said. "My feeling is now that Congress has acted on the furloughs, the tower closings no longer need to happen."

But few seemed happy with the last-minute deal. During a fiery House debate Friday, Republicans charged that Democrats were playing games.

"This is no way to run a government," said Rep. Tom Latham, R-Iowa, the chairman of the House appropriations transportation subcommittee. Rep. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., called the problem "President Obama's needless furlough."

Democrats were upset that only the FAA was being helped. "There are other agencies that have to make their cuts and are in a crisis themselves," said Rep. Ed Pastor, D-Ariz., the transportation panel's top Democrat.

House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer, D-Md., opposed the measure, reading a long list of others that are affected by the automatic

spending cuts. "Nothing in here for them," he repeated over and over.

In a statement, U.S. Reps. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Weston, and Joe Garcia, D-Miami, also called for a balanced approach.

"We cannot continue this piecemeal approach to fixing the damaging effects caused from sequester cuts," the statement said.

"Americans across the country are still feeling the effects of these indiscriminate, across-the-board cuts. There will be fewer meals in our South Florida districts for more than 1,000 seniors in need. Children across the country are being forced out of Head Start, and funding has been cut for medical research to develop cures for cancers and diseases."

White House spokesman Jay Carney echoed the Democrats' concerns.

"It would be a welcome development if members of Congress, the Republicans who celebrated the sequester as a political victory ... would show even a portion of the concern they showed about these real problems with flight delays for the families whose children have been kicked off of Head Start," he said. "The point of the sequester [was] that it was mindless. It was written ... by and agreed to by both parties so that it would never become law, because it would have these effects. It was designed to be terrible and onerous."