

October 2007 Employee of the Month

Steve Ball, Specialist Engineering Associate
North Field Operations/Okeechobee

On July 13, the Kissimmee Field Station received a visit from three law enforcement officers from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Florida Wildlife Conservation Commission who were investigating an allegation made by a member of the public who stated that District employees were observed knocking down and hauling away an active eagle's nest from a tree located in a vacant lot owned by the District.

As part of the internal investigation launched by the Kissimmee Field Station, Steve Ball was called upon to attempt to locate the tree where the nest had been, and to research his records for any information recorded during his regular inspections of District right-of-way properties within the Kissimmee Field Station area. Steve is known for his thoroughness in documenting and recording his inspections. Not only was Steve able to locate the tree, but was able to demonstrate that the tree had recently been struck and killed by lightning. Furthermore, he found the remains of the eagle's nest, complete with bones and feathers. He was also able to retrieve photos from his files of the active nest in March of 2007 before the tree was struck by lightning. These photos revealed that the tree was healthy and eagles had been in the nest at that time.

As a result of Steve's attention to detail and photo documentation of the sensitive site, the District was able to satisfy the law enforcement officers that the demise of the eagle nest was a tragic act of nature rather than a malicious act of humans.