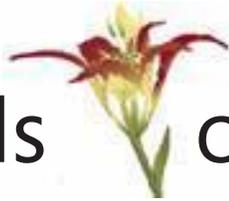

Newsletter of the
Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve



January - February 2011

BCP Featured in Florida Parks & Wildlife!

How pleasantly surprised I was to open my fall issue of Florida Parks & Wildlife, the magazine for members of the Friends of Florida State Parks, and see a nice spread on Pinellas County preserves! Typically the pages of this magazine are reserved for state parks! Striking color pictures of Brooker Creek Preserve, Weedon Island Preserve, and Shell Key Preserve, along with several paragraphs describing them, were beautifully presented on three full pages - wow! An excerpt from the introduction: *Pinellas County reserves more than 10 percent of its 280-square-mile peninsula for preserves, parks, and management areas. Three sanctuaries occupy the area: Brooker Creek Preserve, Weedon Island Preserve, and Shell Key Preserve. These sanctuaries allow animals to stake claim to the land and offer natural locations for visitors to explore the wild.*

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Annual Meeting 2010

November 9 marked a beautiful day for our Annual Meeting. We had a nice turnout as we started with lunch and a chance to reconnect with old friends and welcome new ones. Following lunch, Dr. Steve Harper provided updates on the newly formed Department of Parks and Conservation Resources and on current plans for managing the Environmental Education Center and the preserve itself. Our chairman, Barbara Hoffman, followed with a quick look at the year's accomplishments and a look forward to a future of working closely with the county staff and volunteers to keep Brooker Creek Preserve a vital and exciting place to be.



Barb Hoffman recognizing Dave Seidel's many years with the Friends.

We were sorry to have to say farewell to long-time director Dave Seidel, who has decided to step down from his position on the board. We wish him the best! We welcome Bob Host, a newly elected director, as he joins us for what we expect to be an innovative and exciting year!

Chairman's Message

By: Barb Hoffman

Happy New Year! Does your list of New Year's resolutions include more exercise? There is no better place for a brisk power walk than one of the many trails at our beautiful Brooker Creek Preserve! Winter in central Florida is in full display now with the bright red maples, rusty-colored cypress trees, and the dahoon hollies ripe with their crimson berries. Plus the whole Preserve is teeming with birds that are here as special winter visitors! What an incredible place! Bring your family and friends!

ANCA Scholarship - We applied for and were awarded a scholarship (actually a huge fee reduction) for an ANCA Peer Review. ANCA stands for Association of Nature Center Administrators and part of their mission is to offer expert advice on how to improve a center. They charge \$3,500 to do so, but offer two \$1,000 reduced fee scholarships per year, and we got one! Our consultation is planned for spring during which three to four consultants will spend three days finding out everything they can about the Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center. They do so by touring the facilities and work with a committee of BCP stakeholders including select staff persons, county commission representation, and people from the Friends and volunteer corps. They will conduct interviews and ask many questions. They will then offer back ways to enhance fundraising, education, and management based on years of their own personal experience and knowing what works and what doesn't at nature centers throughout the U.S. We are looking so forward to not only the outcome of this consultation, but also the consultation itself. Stay tuned for more information!

Grants - We just applied for two grants from *Temper of the Times*, a group that offers funding for media that support environmental efforts. One grant was for the advertising

needs for our Fall Wildflower Festival and our potential Spring Walk for Wildlife. The other grant was for funding to create and market a public service announcement about the pollutants affecting the water quality of the lakes, rivers, and tributaries within the Brooker Creek Watershed and how the public can help improve it. The Public Service Announcement will engage the public to become proactive in stopping the majority of pollution going into Lake Tarpon and the Lake Tarpon Outfall Canal by:

- **Preventing discharge of pollutants into stormwater drains and directly into Lake Tarpon** such as yard waste, chlorinated water from pools, household wastes and chemicals, vehicle washing and maintenance, and the use of fertilizer on yards and golf courses.
- **Educate the Public about the new Fertilizer Ordinance** passed in Pinellas County for all homeowners and lawn care services. No fertilizer containing nitrogen or phosphorous can be used in yards between June 1 and September 30 with violators facing large fines.

This water quality issue is extremely relevant and timely with the deterioration of the Brooker Creek Watershed and the Lake Tarpon area water as evidenced in the recent findings of the Environmental Protection Agency as of August 2010.

Barb

This newsletter is published every other month. Please submit articles to Newsletter Editor Dr. Craig Huegel (727) 422-6583 or email Huegelc55@aol.com

To contact The Friends:

Email: fobcp@tampabay.rr.com

Phone: (727) 934-2680

(please leave a message and your phone number for a return call)

www.FriendsOfBrookerCreekPreserve.org

Registration Form

Conserving and Restoring Biodiversity in Urban and Rural Environments



PLEASE CHECK YOUR CLASS CHOICE

- Jan. 11 - Alachua Co. / Gainesville** (Alachua County Extension Office, 2800 NE 39 Avenue) - Map and directions: <http://directory.ifas.ufl.edu/Dir/searchdir?pageID=2&uid=A11>
- Jan. 13 - Pinellas Co. / Tarpon Springs** (Brooker Creek Preserve, 3940 Keystone Road) - Map and directions: <http://www.brookercreekpreserve.org/pagesHTM/about/abt3000.htm>
- Jan. 26 - St. Lucie Co. / Fort Pierce** (Hurricane House, St. Lucie County Extension, 8400 Picos Road) - Map and directions: <http://directory.ifas.ufl.edu/Dir/searchdir?pageID=2&uid=A66>

Class Time: 12:30 - 4:30 pm

4 CEUs BOLA 0008628
 4 CEUs AR 9877984
 4 PDHs FBPE exp4028
 3.5 AICP-CM credits (pending)

During this 4-hour workshop, participants will learn about tools, methodologies and strategies to conserve and restore urban environments and promote biodiversity and water conservation; how to evaluate the positive or negative impacts of a proposed policy or development design on biodiversity and water conservation; and how to retrofit older neighborhoods.

Instructor: Dr. Mark Hostetler
 Associate Professor, Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, University of Florida

Program for Resource Efficient Communities / UF
352-392-5684 prec@ifas.ufl.edu

www.buildgreen.ufl.edu/cecampus.htm

(Provider Numbers: CILB/BCAI/BOLA 1129, BOAR/ID 8074
 BCAI 1178, FBPE EXP 004028)

In compliance with ADA requirements, participants with special needs can be reasonably accommodated by contacting the Program for Resource Efficient Communities at least five working days prior to the program.

To register, please check off the class date on the left, complete the registration information and **fax** with credit card information to **(352) 392-9033** or mail with check to:

University of Florida
 Program for Resource Efficient Communities
 Attention: Registration
 P.O. Box 110940
 Gainesville, FL 32611-0940

Upon receipt of your registration form and payment, a confirmation with map and contact information will be faxed, emailed, or mailed to you. Please note that any of the classes *may* be cancelled if fewer than 10 attendees register.

Name: _____

Company/Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Check to receive occasional email updates on UF/PREC classes (we will not share your email).

License # _____
 (List all license types/numbers that qualify for these CEUs)

Please check off on the left the session you will attend.
 \$105- Conserving and Restoring Biodiversity in Urban and Rural Environments

Please check payment method:

- Check payable to University of Florida
 Please charge my credit card (VISA, MC or AmEx only)

Card number: _____

Expiration date: ___/___/___ Card Security Code: _____

Print name as it appears on card: _____

Signature: _____

(If you prefer to call in your credit card information, your registration will be completed when that information is received).



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Preserve News

By: Steven J. Harper, PhD
Director, Environmental Lands Division

While enjoying a hike at the Preserve, have you ever wondered where those "Staff Only" trails lead? Contrary to what some may think, they are not trails provided for staff to access the "best areas" unavailable to the general public; in fact our hiking trails pass through many tremendously diverse natural communities, including some of the "best areas" to be found in the Preserve! These are not hiking trails at all, but rather are firebreaks established in support of natural resource management. In our region of the country and elsewhere, natural areas routinely are subdivided into "burn units" through the use of firebreaks.

Established by removing vegetation, firebreaks are maintained as non-flammable mineral surfaces by disking the line and trimming encroaching vegetation. Firebreaks promote safe and effective prescribed burns by delineating areas to be managed and by helping to contain a fire's spread. Firebreaks also facilitate the ability of personnel and equipment to access remote areas of the Preserve in the event of a wildfire. Because the Preserve is surrounded by densely developed urban areas, smaller more manageable burn units are needed. We currently maintain over 60 miles of firebreaks! The recent transition of the Environmental Lands Division into the Parks and Conservation Resources Department has provided an unanticipated opportunity in this regard. The landscaping crew responsible for county-wide mowing also now resides in this department, and they have a "buzz saw" mounted on a side-arm slope mower. A crew of one person has been using this equipment to trim back vegetation along many of the Preserve's firebreaks, a task previously completed by-hand by staff and some of our hardest volunteers. While this approach is very efficient, the trimmed vegetation falls in place and must be dragged off the firebreaks. We are seeking volunteers from the Friends to help

with this task - many hands make light work! Contact our volunteer coordinator, Grant Craig, at (727) 549-6137 if interested in helping. You'll not only be helping the Preserve, but you'll get to see for yourself what lies beyond those "Staff Only" signs!



Dec. 4th Trash Crew: Barb Hoffman, Barbara Conciatori, Jon Burr, Crew Leader Ken Rowe, and Hank Dykstal. Not pictured: Pat Coughlin and Bonnie Willett.

Adopt-A-Road Trash Pick-Up

Six of us braved the cold and met early on Saturday, December 4 to pick up debris along one mile of Keystone Road where the road traverses the preserve. Not only was it a good work-out with all the bending and stretching, but it gave us a warm, fuzzy feeling that we were doing something good for wildlife. We were joined by two volunteers from the East Lake Community Response Team, a volunteer group under the umbrella of the East Lake Fire Station - thank you, Bonnie Willett and Barbara Conciatori!

Remember! **Never throw any trash onto the highway**, even if it is biodegradable, like apple cores or the last bit of hamburger you don't want. Discarded food items attract wildlife near and onto the road, making them vulnerable to being hit and killed or maimed. Do this favor for wildlife - teach your children and grandchildren the importance of not throwing food or any trash onto roadways! We will be holding more pick ups in the future and will announce dates. If you would like to participate, please call Ken Rowe at 727-781-0745 or ksr28@verizon.net



Many thanks to St. Petersburg resident, Rick Mussett, for the donation of a mounted wild turkey "in full strut" for the Brooker Creek Preserve Education Center! As you know, Brooker Creek Preserve hosts many wild turkey populations, so this beautiful specimen will be a fabulous addition to the Ed Center displays. What a great way for people to see a real turkey up close and personal! Photo by Cathy Foster.

Civilian Conservation Corps

by Paul Cozzie, Pinellas County Parks & Conservation Resources Director

The Parks and Conservation Resources Department is pleased to unveil its new Civilian Conservation Corps as part of its expanded Volunteer Services program. The Civilian Conservation Corps was developed at the suggestion of and in cooperation with area conservationists and wildlife enthusiasts to help the department

manage its parks, preserves and management areas. The program seeks to allow trained and dedicated citizens with an interest in the flora and fauna associated with our environmental lands the ability to have unfettered access to these lands for the purpose of conducting wildlife inventories, cataloging plants and botanical species, and monitoring the overall condition of environmental lands. In return, the data gathered or observations noted are shared with department staff to develop database inventories and direct limited resources to manage and enhance environmental lands.

The Civilian Conservation Corps, under the leadership of Lorraine Margeson and Dr. Marianne Korosy, had a successful debut on December 11, 2010 when they led a team of volunteers performing a bird count at the recently acquired Eldridge-Wilde property, now part of the Brooker Creek Preserve. Despite the dreary weather, the team documented 67 species on the property and donated 27 volunteer hours to the County. Their information is now part of the Brooker Creek Preserve database.

The volunteers provide a valuable service to the county, and in return are able to perform a service that is personally rewarding and enriches their appreciation of the County's parks, preserves and management areas. The program also reduces the "red tape" that previously made it difficult for citizens to perform bird counts and other natural areas inventories. If you are interested in becoming a part of the Civilian Conservation Corps, please contact volunteer program coordinators Judy Jarosz, South County Volunteer Coordinator at 549-6136 or Grant Craig, North County Volunteer Coordinator, at 549-6137.

New Members

Donald Borbath,
Sandra and Joseph Kritch

Birds and Winter

By: Craig Huegel

Winter brings a new set of birds to our yards and new challenges in providing for them. As fall departs, so do many of the bird species that lived and nested in our yards since spring. Species such as eastern kingbirds, red-eyed vireos, and northern parula warblers vacate the state as day length shortens and head to more tropical climates in Central and South America. But even as we lose a few beautiful summer residents, we gain a great many more winter visitors - sort of like our human population here as well. These winter residents include a number of warblers, wrens, flycatchers, sparrows, kinglets, and swallows. They arrive like clockwork each fall and depart for their northern breeding areas in late winter/early spring. And, since their influx is so predictable, we can plan for them in our landscapes with predictable results.

We also can plan for our resident birds. Species such as bluebirds, catbirds and brown thrashers remain, but their food and cover needs change. For many of these birds, their summer diets rich in insects change to a winter diet comprised of a large percentage of fruits and seeds. Their spring and summer nesting cover needs are replaced by a need for shelter from winter weather and for more concealment.

Many of us approach our winter responsibilities by staging and filling bird feeders. This can be effective *if* our feeding program supplies food that is truly needed, but a good share of the commercial bird foods sold in grocery and department stores are composed mostly of seed that the vast majority of birds disdain; white and red proso millet. If you are one of the great many

people who feed birds with a feeder, use a bird feed specifically designed for wild birds - available in nature center stores by wild bird experts. Seed that most birds prefer will contain black (oil) sunflower, striped sunflower, and similar energy-rich seed. Use a squirrel "proof" feeder so as not to attract the attention of too many squirrels (and rats) and position the feeder near cover - not in the middle of an open yard. Consider getting a suet feeder as well. You'd be surprised at how many songbirds will come to this energy-dense food during the winter months.

Feeders are not enough, however, to provide for wintering birds. Your landscape should not be forgotten in this equation. You can provide important food by a thoughtful landscape design and the type of cover that all wildlife need.

Photos by David Williamson



red-bellied woodpecker
on a suet feeder

A bird that switches to a diet of fruit
in the winter - yellow-rumped warbler
in wax myrtle. Photo by David
Williamson

Because many birds switch to a diet high in fruit and seeds during the winter months, having plants in your landscape that produce this type of food *and* hold it deep into winter is significant. A great many plants that produce small fruit and seeds are barren by December. Such species can be important landscape additions for other times of the year, but winter is critical to a great many birds and a good wildlife landscape takes this season into careful consideration.

Plants that generally hold their ripe fruit well into winter include most of the hollies, beautyberry, wax myrtles, red cedar, marlberry, wild coffees, and a few of the hawthorns (green, parsley and littlehip, in particular). Walter's viburnum is often threadbare by late fall, but a few of the lesser used native viburnums (rusty and arrowwood, especially) can also supply significant winter food for a wide assortment of birds.

Cover comprised of evergreen plants is especially important during the winter. As leaves fall, deciduous trees and shrubs lose much of their cover value. Pockets or thickets of dense evergreens are needed to provide protection for birds from cold temperatures and hungry predators. A hedge of evergreen shrubs such as wax myrtle, white indigoberry, yaupon or myrtle holly, and Florida privet is effective for small to medium-sized wintering songbirds. Wild coffees can be equally important if planted in mass in shady locations. Providing a "thicket" may be even more significant. I like to anchor plantings of evergreen shrubs with sub-canopy and/or canopy evergreen trees. Great choices are red and Atlantic white cedar, American and dahoon holly, and Simpson's stopper.

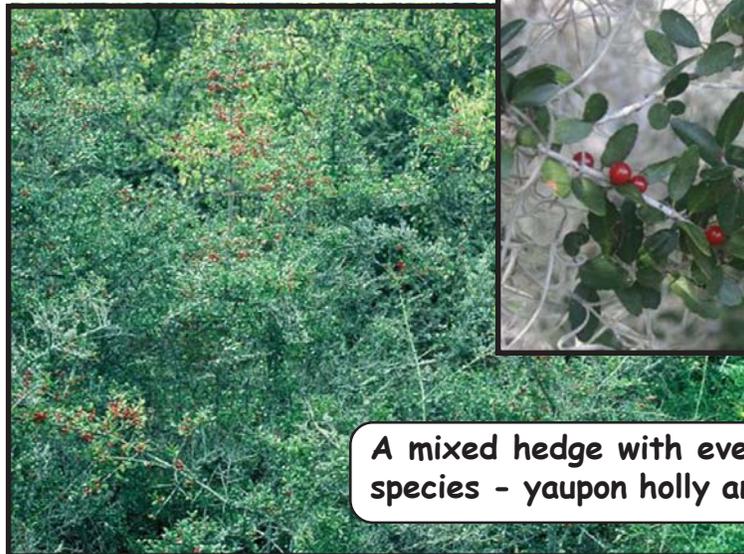
The winter months can be exciting times for bird watching in Florida because of the influx of so many beautiful winter residents. If you plan for them, much of your best bird watching can occur around your own home.



Littlehip haw



Yaupon holly



A mixed hedge with evergreen and deciduous species - yaupon holly and chickasaw plum

Photos by Craig Huegel

Help Wanted!!
 We are looking for an organized Friends member who would like to be the "Manager" of our small gift shop at the Education Center. Ed Center volunteers will do the selling - the "manager" will be in charge of inventory, stocking shelves, pricing items, etc. This will require about 4 hours of time per week and is a volunteer position. Contact the Friends via phone or email if you are interested or if you have questions.

Something New! Breakfast with Butterflies!

January 29, 9:00 am

(and the last Saturday of each month)

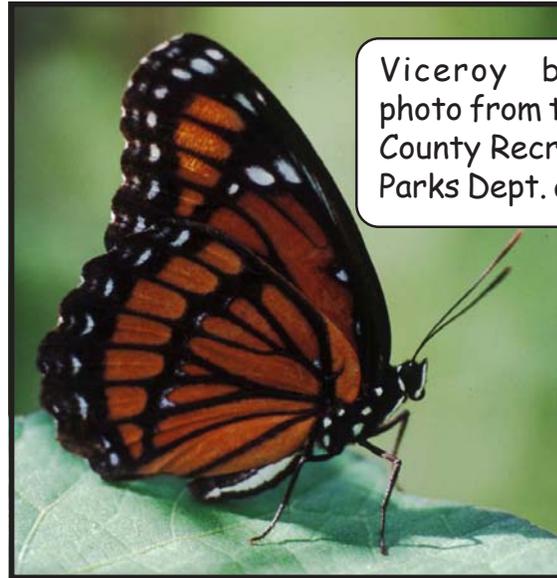
A Friends volunteer effort to enhance the Ed Center Butterfly Garden and surrounding area. Come join master gardener, Pam Brown, and Friends Chair, Barb Hoffman, as we weed, plant, clip, and mulch the Butterfly Garden and the new shrub garden! Coffee, OJ, and a breakfast yummy will be available for all workers. Everyone welcome! Please bring your own gloves and gardening tools! Call 934-2680 for questions or to join our work crew.

Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center Upcoming Events

Register at least 24 hours prior by visiting www.pinellascountyextension.org, clicking on the "Online Class Registration" button, then clicking on "Brooker Creek" tab. Event information call (727) 453-6800. Registration information call (727) 582-2100. All programs are presented by Education Services Volunteers, unless noted.

Jan. - Feb. Guided Hikes

Most Saturdays (Jan. 8, 15, 29, Feb. 5, 12, 19), from 9:00 to 10:30 am, led by Education Services Volunteers, Environmental Lands Division. Take a walk through time each Saturday morning on a guided hike along the Education Center Trail. Join us for this 0.75-mile walk as we look at how the land has changed over time and discuss the ecological footprints left by those changes. Sturdy closed-toe shoes are a must; water and a hat are recommended. Please register by noon on the Friday before the hike by calling (727) 453-6800. Free. All ages welcome - **children younger than 6 may find this hike challenging.**



Viceroy butterfly,
photo from the Pinellas
County Recreation and
Parks Dept. archives.

Extended Guided Hike: Winter Wonders

Jan. 22 and Feb. 26, 9:00 to 11:30 am

Cooler temperatures and shorter days bring about many changes. Join us for a brisk walk along one of the longer trails, 2.8 to 4 miles, depending on trail conditions. Water, hat and closed-toe shoes recommended. Free. **Children younger than 12 may find this hike challenging.** Children younger than 12 may find this hike challenging. Free

BCPEEC January Programs

Conserving and Restoring Biodiversity in Urban and Rural Environments

Thurs., January 13, 12:30 to 4:30 pm

Workshop in which participants learn about the tools, methodologies and strategies used to conserve and restore urban environments, promote biodiversity and water conservation, how to evaluate positive or negative impacts of a proposed policy or development design and how to retrofit older neighborhoods. Free

Book Time at Brooker Creek: "Stellaluna"

Thursdays, Jan. 13, 10:30 - 11:15 am.

This program is designed to connect pre-school children to the wonders of the natural world through stories and hands-on activities relating to the story that is read. Pre-registration is required. Free. Recommended **ages: 3 - 5.**

Tracking Wildlife

Sat., January 15, 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Join Sensing Nature biologists and learn about Florida wildlife, their footfalls and why "reading" their tracks is an important story to understand. Bring a parent, grandparent or friend and together create a plaster cast of an animal track to take home. Free

Native Plant Landscaping for Florida Wildlife

Sat., January 22, 2:00 to 3:00 pm

Craig N. Huegel, Ph.D. presents his new book on the need to embrace the great diversity of native plants in developing our landscapes. Dr. Huegel's presentation includes colorful slides of some of the natural wealth of plants available for creating your own special habitat in an urban setting. Free.

Brooker Creek Explorers: Paper Pieces

Sat., January 22, 1:00 to 3:00 pm

Learn how paper is made and recycled and make your own paper and journal. First in a three-part series, the second meeting entitled *What Can You Find* will be held on Feb. 5 and will increase your powers of observations through all your senses in a forestry scavenger hunt. The third meeting to be held on Feb. 19th explores various habitats at Brooker Creek and is entitled *Trees as Habitats - How big is an ecosystem?* **Geared toward 3rd, 4th and 5th graders.**

Book Time at Brooker - "The Giving Tree"

Thurs., January 27, 10:30 am - 11:15 am

Designed to introduce pre-school children to the wonders of the natural world through stories and hands-on activities relating to the story that is read. Free. Recommended **ages: 3 - 5.**

Backyard Composting Workshop

Sat., January 29, 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Informative workshop to learn how recycling yard waste and kitchen scraps into compost can be a sustainable practice. Attendees will receive one compost bin per household courtesy of Pinellas County Utilities Solid Waste Operations Department.

BCPEEC February Programs

Florida-Friendly Landscaping Cistern Workshop

Wed., February 2, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Learn about the next level of rain harvesting and why cisterns are the rainwater harvesting choice of the future. Presented by Brian Gregson, President of Rainwater Services, this free class is sponsored by area IFAS Extension Offices and Tampa Bay Water.

Brooker Creek Explorers: What Can You Find?

Sat., February 5, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Learn how you can increase your powers of observations through all your senses in a forestry scavenger hunt. This is the second meeting in a three-part series in focusing on a different way of learning about and appreciating our natural resources. This free program is **geared toward 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders.**

Book Time at Brooker Creek:

Thursdays, Feb. 10 and 24, 10:30 - 11:15 am.

This program is designed to connect pre-school children to the wonders of the natural world through stories and hands-on activities relating to the story that is read. Pre-registration is required. Free. Recommended **ages: 3 - 5.**

Vegetable Gardening

Sat., February 12, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

With food prices rising, learn how to grow your own vegetables in your garden. Attend our free Vegetable Gardening Workshop about proper location, soil preparation, design, planting and care.

Brooker Creek Explorers: Trees as Habitats

Sat., February 19, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Learn how trees are habitats and how big is an ecosystem. This is the third meeting in a three-part series in focusing on a different way of learning about and appreciating our natural resources. This free program is **geared toward 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders.**

Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve - Mission Statement

The mission of the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve is to provide public support for the Preserve through fund raising, volunteer programs, and education to ensure that the Preserve remains a natural wilderness for future generations.

Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve - Land Use Position Statement

The Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve support land uses within the boundaries of Brooker Creek Preserve which have a main purpose that furthers the preservation, conservation, restoration or protection of the land and resources of the Brooker Creek Preserve.



Palamedes swallowtail on swamp milkweed, photo from Pinellas County Recreation and Parks Dept. archives.

Friends of Brooker Creek Officers

Chair: Barbara Hoffman
Vice Chair: Cathie Foster
Vice Chair: Allyn Childress
Secretary: Chuck Parsons
Treasurer: Carson Morrow

Board Members

Business Affairs: Debbie Reker
Publicity Chair: Barbara Schultz
Land Use Chair: Dr. Craig Huegel
Membership Chair: Dr. Carrie Root
Newsletter Editor: Dr. Craig Huegel
Birdman & Historian: Ken Rowe
Beverly Billiris
John Burr
Walt Hoskins
Robert Host

Friends of Brooker Creek website:
www.FriendsOfBrookerCreekPreserve.org

To contact The Friends:

Email: fobcp@tampabay.rr.com
Phone: (727) 934-2680
(please leave a message and your phone number for a return call)

Brooker Creek Preserve:

Phone: (727) 453-6900
Website: www.brookercreekpreserve.org

The Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center is located at 3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs, Florida, 34688. Phone: (727) 453-6800
Center Hours: Thurs. - Sat. 9 am - 4 pm

Preserve Hiking Trails open 7 days a week (except for day after Thanksgiving and Dec. 25), 7:00 am to sunset.

Horse Trails open 7 days a week, all year, sunrise to sunset.

Friends Trail closed for bridge repairs.

Registration Info: FEID #59-3302182 tax-exempt, non-profit corporation

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