

Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

September - October 2011

Chairman's Message

By: Barb Hoffman

We are about to make history.

If you have been following my column in the last several newsletters, you know about the consultation that took place in May by four seasoned nature center administrators from ANCA, the Association of Nature Center Administrators. After touring our facility, conducting interviews with many Brooker stakeholders, and conferring together, their recommendation was for Brooker Creek Preserve and the Environmental Education Center to be managed and funded by the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve. At a recent meeting of Brooker stakeholders including Paul Cozzie (head of Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources), Mary Campbell (Director, Pinellas County Extension Service), Commissioner Karen Seel, Ric Hoover (representing the volunteers), and several Friends board members, we concluded that this recommendation would work for Brooker and the Friends would evolve into a governing board.

Mark your calendar! Fall Wildflower Festival - Saturday, October 15!

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This scenario is not new; it is being played out throughout the country by nature centers, museums, botanical gardens, and more. Although the land and buildings are owned by a government entity, the governing board would oversee all activities and provide input to programs, classes, land management, and more. Most importantly, the governing board would find and secure the funding to run the center, including additional staff. The governing board would start an endowment fund specifically for Brooker, and have the ability to accept bequests, memorials, honorariums, and other planned giving.

In order to do this, the Friends must evolve from the working board it is now to a governing board composed of people with financial means, the movers and shakers of the community who can not only provide financial resources themselves, but can pull in money from elsewhere. This evolution will take at least a year, possibly more. But once there, it will be a strong, independent, cohesive body

that will maintain and uphold the mission of preserving and conserving Brooker Creek Preserve in perpetuity.

I just returned from the annual ANCA Summit which took place at Tremont, a nature center in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. While there, I took classes and had many discussions with 150 nature center directors from all over the United States, most of whom work under the scenario described above, including Tremont staff. I have returned excited and inspired to begin the task of board evolution along with great ideas for workshops, classes, fundraisers, open houses, and much more. In the meantime, I look forward to discussing all this with the current board of directors. Now is the time to bring in volunteers as their help throughout the transition - and beyond - will be key to Brooker's survival.

I am always open to questions, comments, and ideas.

Barb

Thanks to the Friends of Brooker Creek for paying for Barb Hoffman to attend the ANCA!



Barb Hoffman at the ANCA Summit

Friends Adopt-A-Mile, Keep Pinellas Beautiful

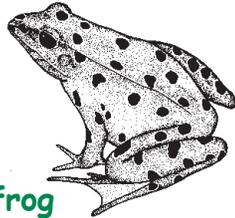


We will be doing a trash pickup along Keystone Road Saturday, September 10, at 8:00 am. **Please reply if you can help.** Orange juice and donuts will be available before we start. The work takes about 2 hours -- a great way to start your day! Please contact Ken Rowe at 727-781-0745 ksr28@verizon.net. We will meet at the Brooker Creek Preserve Education Center Parking Lot at 8:00 am.

Thursday, September 22
6:30 - 9:00 pm

Brooker Creek Preserve Auditorium

"Songs of the Swamp"



A presentation about the frog calls we hear at Brooker, what species make them and what they look like -- followed by a night hike along the boardwalk to identify the frogs we hear.

by Lance Arvidson, Ecologist
Wildlands Conservation, Inc.

Free, donations welcome. Presentation geared towards adults and older children

Preserve News

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

A core component of stewardship for Brooker Creek Preserve, as well as most other natural areas, is the control of invasive exotic species. Two characteristics define these harmful plants and animals. First, they are found outside their historic range, and thus are not native to the area. Second, they are able to spread widely and can dominate the local community. Once introduced to an area, invasive exotics are largely unchecked by natural control agents, such as competitors, predators, or herbivores. They are especially problematic because they may have severe adverse impacts on local communities. For example, the very presence of these species can crowd-out natives, reducing local biodiversity. They also can change the functions of ecosystems, for example, by altering nutrient cycles and disrupting fire regimes. Managers focus their limited resources on the most problematic invasive exotics. To facilitate this process statewide, the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (FLEPPC) lists invasive exotic plants that have demonstrated ecological impacts (Category I) or show the potential for such impact (Category II). At Brooker Creek Preserve, the list of invasive exotic plants is long, but considerable effort has resulted in generally good control. This is an on-going battle, given that invasive exotics are ever-present and can rapidly re-establish in the preserve, even in areas previously controlled. Homeowners can reduce their impact on local natural areas by removing from their yards any ornamental plants that are invasive exotics. Examples include Chinese tallow tree, mimosa tree, carrotwood, camphor tree, Mexican petunia, oyster plant, and elephant ear. Instead, landscape with plants native to this area since they don't pose a threat to our natural communities!

Friends Trail Now Open!

After many months of closure due to bridge reconstruction, the Friends Trail is now open for hikers! Named in honor of the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve, the Friends Trail begins at the end of Lora Lane off of Keystone Road. It traverses mostly pine flatwoods to a channel of Brooker Creek where hikers enjoy the cool shade provided by the riverine hardwood hammock. The trail is a loop, and winds back through a young pineland area. The trail crosses one of Brooker's many horse trails several times. This self-interpretive trail is 1.75 miles long and is open every day, dawn to dusk.



Photo of bridge during construction by Ric Hoover, one of Brooker Creek Preserve's volunteers. Ric spends numerous hours at Brooker performing many outdoor tasks including trail maintenance. Now more than ever, volunteers are needed at Brooker and all of our parks and preserves.



Fall Wildflower Festival

Brooker Creek Preserve

Saturday, October 15, 2011

9:00 am - 4:00 pm

FREE! FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!

EXHIBITS — open all day

- **Butterfly Encounter** — Be surrounded by butterflies! Enjoy a walk-through tent with 500 plants and over 250 live butterflies! Hand feed butterflies, learn about their life cycle, and enjoy their beauty *up close and personal!*
- **Honeybee Observation Hive**
- **Exhibit Hall**
- **Hands-On Classroom**



PRESENTATIONS



9:30, 11:30, 1:30: **Wildflowers of Pinellas County**

10:00, 12:00, 2:00: **Landscaping with Wildflowers**

10:30, 12:30, 2:30: **Bees, Bugs, and Butterflies ~ the Amazing Wildflower Pollinators**

11:00, 1:00, 3:00: **Edible Plants ~ What You Can Eat, What to Avoid**



Wildflowers for Sale!

Wildflower Scavenger Hunt!

Roving Naturalists on the Trails to Answer Questions

Come Rain or Shine!

Sponsored by: Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve

For information: 727-934-2680 or fobcp@tampabay.rr.com
Event Location: Brooker Creek Preserve
3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs, FL

Volunteers Needed For the Fall Wildflower Festival!

If you are interested in volunteering Saturday, October 15, please call (727) 934-2680 or email fobcp@tampabay.rr.com. We are scheduling two-hour shifts for the following:

- * Greeters
- * Parking Help
- * Roving Naturalists on the Ed Center Trail
- * Open Classroom Attendants

Attention Birders!

We are looking for volunteers with good bird knowledge and patient teaching skills to lead beginning bird hikes the second Saturday of each month, from 9 - 11 along Brooker Creek trails. Contact the Friends if you are interested, or pass along the information to others who might be. Thank you!

Gift Shop Opening Soon!

Many thanks to Friends member and wildlife photographer, Kathleen Nichter, for becoming the Friends Gift Shop Manager! Kathleen is busy purchasing items to sell with a budget limit of \$3,000. Kathleen has researched which items people want and which items sell well. Kathleen says, "We are starting small, but a wish list will be available at the front counter if there is an item someone really wants us to have available." Kathleen is hoping to have the shop open by Oct. 15 in time for the Fall Wildflower Festival. Buyers can use cash, check, or credit card, and all profit stays within Brooker Creek Preserve. Stay tuned for the grand opening!

We Now Have PayPal!

Thanks to our young and technically-talented Treasurer, Carson Morrow, we now have Paypal with which we can use for membership and the gift shop! Thank you, Carson!

Off the Beaten Path Hike Series at Brooker Creek Preserve!

Please join us for our nature-based fundraising hike series, *Off the Beaten Path!*

Description: Two hikes remain in this series of four hikes that take place in beautiful areas tucked away within Brooker Creek Preserve in sites that are closed to the public. Our guide, Dr. Craig Huegel, can identify everything, from the tiniest moss to the tallest tree including animal prints, bird calls, lichens, and more. He is full of stories and very patient in answering questions. The hikes will be not only educational, but a lot of fun as well! The hikes will begin at 9:00 a.m. and are about 3-4 hours long. Bring water and lunch.

Cost: \$25 donation per hike with a 10% discount for members of Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

Remaining Hikes *Off the Beaten Path:*

Sept. 25 - Pine Flatwoods Catesby's Lily Site
Located in the eastern part of the preserve, this site features the endangered Catesby's Lily (aka, pine lily) in full bloom along with a profusion of other fall wildflowers.

Jan. 22, 2012 - Anclote Spur

This site was once part of the preserve but is now a preserve in itself. We will start in Brooker Creek Preserve, then traverse from woodlands into saltmarsh to a secluded spot along the beautiful Anclote River.

Reservations Required: Reserve your spot. Email fobcp@tampabay.rr.com. Sign up early! Only 20 spots are open for these fabulous hikes *off the beaten path!*

Questions? Email fobcp@tampabay.rr.com or call 727-934-2680.

Breakfast with Butterflies

By: Pam Brown

Four of us had a good work session in July weeding and deadheading flowers in the butterfly garden. We noticed many of the native wildflowers blooming with butterflies slowly gliding over them. Bill Brown came out to help with some of the heavy work clearing the area where the future native shrub demonstration area will be planted next to the butterfly garden. We could use a few more good men like him to get this area ready for planting. Barbara helped weed even with a damaged knee waiting for surgical repair. Plans have been made for adding additional wildflowers to our butterfly garden soon. Tasty blueberry muffins, OJ, and coffee were available to fortify the volunteers.

We are continuing work on the Butterfly Garden and native shrub demonstration area on the last Saturday of each month. Our summer work hours are from 8 to 10 a.m. to get a head start on the heat. Everyone is welcome to join us. Please bring your own gloves and gardening tools! Call 934-2680 for questions or to join our work crew.



Pam's Gardening Tip of the Month

By: Pam Brown

Pruning hedges and foundation plants during our hot summer is a drag. And, with the near daily summer rains, shrubs grow at phenomenal rates.

Why not plant naturally low growing foundation shrubs that only require infrequent pruning to keep them neat? One of my favorites in this category is a dwarf cultivar of our native yaupon holly, *Ilex vomitoria* 'Shilling's Dwarf' (see photo above). This plant has a mounding habit and can be kept to about 4 feet tall and wide with a hard pruning in the early spring every two to three years. That is a lot less work than a Viburnum hedge that needs pruning almost every week during the summer.

Goldenrods

By: Craig Huegel

Goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.) are members of the aster family and almost universally present across Florida and the rest of North America. The genus is also represented in other parts of the world; from Mexico and South America to parts of Eurasia. North American species have been introduced into Europe for landscape purposes and a few have become established as pest plants there. They are universally admired for their showy blooms and their ability to lure in a vast array of pollinating insects and they are sometimes reviled for their ability to thrive and spread in places they are not welcome. In the past, they were blamed for hay fever, but that issue has been resolved. We now know that it is solely the pollen of ragweeds that cause those symptoms each fall.

Goldenrods occur in nearly every habitat type in Florida, except fully inundated systems, and they are usually common in those places where they are present. Twenty unique species have been recorded in Florida, but only a few of them are found in Brooker Creek

Preserve. They are sometimes difficult to distinguish from each other, but if you take a close look at each, take note of the habitat they are growing in and take in the overall size and nature of the plant, it is really not that hard. The following are the most likely species to be seen at Brooker Creek Preserve during the late summer and fall months.

Pinebarren goldenrod (*S. fistulosa*) is one of the most common goldenrods to be found in the Preserve. As its name implies, it is common to pine flatwoods and other upland sites (including weedy fields). Because it suckers aggressively, it forms large extensive colonies and because it is robust, these colonies are easily noticed. Pinebarren goldenrod reaches a mature height of 4-5 feet by mid-summer and begins to bloom in early fall. Its bright yellow flowers occur in broad open panicles that fall in all directions from the main stalk. Its leaves are also distinctive; they are somewhat lance-shaped, with a sharp point and small teeth along the leaf margins. If you see large colonies of rather tall goldenrods in an open field setting in early fall, they are very likely pinebarren goldenrod.



Pinebarren goldenrod
Solidago fistulosa



Chapman's goldenrod
S. odora var. *chapmanii*

Chapman's goldenrod (*S. odora* var. *chapmanii*) is the southern version of *Solidago odora*; a species renowned for its heavily aromatic foliage and value in herbal teas. The problem this far south, is that our variety (i.e. variety *chapmanii*) is nearly lacking in those aromatic oils. Chapman's goldenrod is very common in a wide variety of upland habitats. Unlike pinebarren goldenrod, it does not form dense colonies and it is neither very tall nor aggressive. Chapman's goldenrod rarely stands taller than 2-3 feet and individuals are normally spaced a foot or more apart. Blooming occurs in early summer and is almost always completed before pinebarren goldenrod kicks in. The leaves tend to be wider and more oval also.

Seaside goldenrod (*S. sempervirens*) is most abundant along our coastlines, but occurs in a wide variety of uplands interior to the coast. It also is widely used as a landscape ornamental - so its seed can spread from wildflower gardens and plants can establish from them. This is one of the easiest goldenrods to distinguish in Brooker Creek Preserve. For one, it is the only evergreen goldenrod present in our area. Its large, strap-like leaves are present year-round. Blooming tends to occur in the fall, on stalks that can rise 6-8 feet above ground elevation.

Wand goldenrod (*S. stricta*) is the other goldenrod at Brooker Creek Preserve that is hard to misidentify. Its Latin and common names come from its flower stalk that is almost like a blazing star; normally a single wand of tightly clustered bright yellow blooms. Wand goldenrod is diminutive during much of the year. Its basal leaves are thin and elongated. The flower stalk rarely stands taller than about 2-3 feet, and flowering occurs in late fall. Like Chapman's goldenrod, it does not form dense colonies, and individual plants are often several feet apart from each other. This goldenrod prefers slightly moister soils than the others described above and is most likely to be seen in open fields and savannas that get wet during the rainy season.

Twisted-leaf goldenrod (*S. tortifolius*) is another common goldenrod; found most often in dry uplands. It is a robust species that can reach heights of 5-6 feet and it can form extensive colonies in locations where it is well adapted. Its Latin and common names point to one feature that makes its identification simpler: many of its willow-like leaves are twisted, not flat like the others. Blooming occurs during the fall months.

As you walk about through Brooker Creek Preserve take a closer look at the goldenrods you encounter, take note of where they are growing, their bloom time, and their basic habit and I bet you will come to identify them - at least most of the time.



Seaside goldenrod
S. sempervirens



Wand goldenrod
S. stricta



Twisted-leaf goldenrod
S. tortifolius

Friends of Brooker Creek
New Mailing Address
3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs,
FL 34688. Please use this on any
correspondence from this time on.



Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center Upcoming Events

For more information about upcoming events or to register, call (727) 453-6800. Brooker Creek Preserve, 3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs. www.brookercreekpreserve.org

Sept. - Oct. Saturday Guided Hikes

Most Saturdays (Sept. 3, 24 and Oct. 1, 22, 29) from 9:00 to 10:30 am. 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. Wear closed-toe shoes; bring water and a hat. Advance registration required. Free. **Ages 6 and older.**

BCPEEC September Programs

Book Time at Brooker Creek

Thursday, 10:30 - 11:15 am. Sept. books:

Sept. 1 - "Starting Life - Butterfly"

Sept. 8 - "Eliza the Dragonfly"

Sept. 15 - "Buzz Buzz Mosquitoes in Backyard"

Sept. 22 - "Starting Life - Ladybug"

Sept. 29 - "Tiny Workers-Ants in the Backyard"

This program connects pre-school children to the wonders of the natural world through stories and a craft, game or other hands-on activity. Free, advance registration is required. **Ages 3 - 5.**

Sept. 17 -

Gopher Tortoises, Road to Conservation.

The gopher tortoise is a "keystone species" because it is an essential part of the wildlife community in which it lives. Learn about this unique ancient reptile and what is being done to protect the species throughout the state. After a brief classroom talk, a walk to visit a gopher burrow is planned. 10 a.m. to noon. Free, advance registration required.

Sept. 17 - Native Plants of Brooker Creek. Take this hike to learn about the diverse native plant life found in the preserve and the natural communities they inhabit. Closed-toe shoes, water and a hat are recommended. Best for ages 6 and older. 9 to 10:30 a.m. Free; advance registration required.

Sept. 22 - Songs of the Swamp - Frogs of Brooker Creek Preserve. Ecologist Lance Arvidson of Wildlands Conservation Inc. will assist participants of all ages in this interactive program to identify Tampa-Bay-area frogs and their calls. Native frogs are an important environmental indicator of the health of our waterways and climate shift. 6:30 p.m. Free; advance registration required.

BCPEEC October Programs & Events

Book Time at Brooker Creek

Thursday, Oct. 6, 13, 20, 27, 10:30 - 11:15 am. This program connects pre-school children to the wonders of the natural world through stories and a craft, game or other hands-on activity. Free, advance registration is required. **Ages 3 - 5.**

Oct 15 - Fall Wildflower Festival. Butterfly tent, wildflower presentations, wildflowers for sale, demonstration beehive, hands-on classroom, and more. 9:00 am - 4:00 pm. Free! Fun for the whole family!

Oct 15 - Brooker Creek Historical Hike. Join us on a special hike lead by the Brooker Creek hike guides to learn about the unique and exciting history of the preserve and surrounding area. 9 to 10:30 a.m. Wear closed-toe shoes, bring water and a hat. Best for ages 6 and up. Free; advance registration required.

Oct 22 - Many myths and misconceptions exist about one of Florida's most unique mammals - the bat. Florida is home to 13 species of bats. All these bats devour insects and are beneficial to our environment. Come meet some of these live animals. This fascinating night program is presented by Cynthia and George Marks of the Florida Bat Conservancy. From 7 to 8 p.m. Free but advance registration required.

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.

Current mission statement of the Parks Department - it is at least three years old and does not reflect the many changes in staffing and resources over that time. The newly formed Parks and Conservation Resources Department has not yet developed mission/vision statements.

The mission of the Pinellas County Park Department is to provide a continuing program of acquisition, development, maintenance, and protection of park areas for healthful outdoor activities.

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 is now open. The bridge is fixed and ready for hikers!

Friends of Brooker Creek Officers

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