


Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

March - April 2019

Chairman's Message by Cathie Foster

What a wonderful time we had at our Birthday Celebration on Saturday, February 23! It's hard to believe the Friends has been around since 1994! We started out as a public voice for the Preserve, a small group of people passionate about protecting it and restoring it ecologically. We were also ambassadors for the Preserve, trying to bring awareness of this important piece of natural Florida to everyone we could reach, even though it was only accessible to the general public via guided hikes on trails, some of which held standing water for at least part of the year.

In 1996, our first major event, Run in the Woods, was born - a timed and judged footrace through the northern part of the Preserve.

This drew in quite a crowd - a different crowd, we hoped, than those who signed up for hikes. After 2002, the Run was canceled as we came out of a drought and the trails could not

be relied on to be dry. With the opening of the current Environmental Education Center in 2004, our attention turned to supporting the programs there. Over time, we organized and implemented our own growing list of programs, which became hugely important with the 2008 recession when Preserve staff and their wonderful educational programs were severely cut for several years.

And here we are 25 years later, continuing to support the Preserve staff and their many amazing programs, while providing a long list of our own! We do this with the permission and blessing of the Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources Department. Our Operating Agreement with them was recently revised to acknowledge our longstanding relationship with the County and our significant contribution of time and funds in support of Brooker Creek Preserve, and also to

Save the Dates Upcoming Friends Events

- Mar. 2, 10, 16 Intro to Beekeeping
(3 part series) 10 am-12 pm
- Mar. 2 FOBCP Readers Club 9:30-10:30 am
- Mar. 9 Night Hike 6:30-8:30 pm
- Mar. 16 Paint for the Wild 12-3 pm
- Mar. 24 Off the Beaten Path:
Sandhill Scramble 9 am
- Mar. 30 Wildflower Garden work day 9-11 am
- Apr. 6 Wildlife Safari
- Apr. 6 FOBCP Readers Club 9:30-10:30 am
- Apr. 7 Beekeepers Club 9 am
- Apr. 20 Return the Preserve work day 8-11
- Apr. 20 Night Hike 7:30-9:30 pm
- Apr. 27 Wildflower Garden work day 8-10 am
- June 9 Ken Rowe Bird-a-Thon
- Nov. 19-23 Eco-Tour to Cuba

streamline the program approval process. We're proud to be the first Pinellas County Citizen Support Organization to operate under this newly revised agreement and we look forward to many, many years of providing support for all that is Brooker Creek Preserve!

Spring is here!

The blooming of these three common Preserve flowers denotes the arrival of spring!



Chickasaw Plum, a small tree, can be seen along the entrance loop.



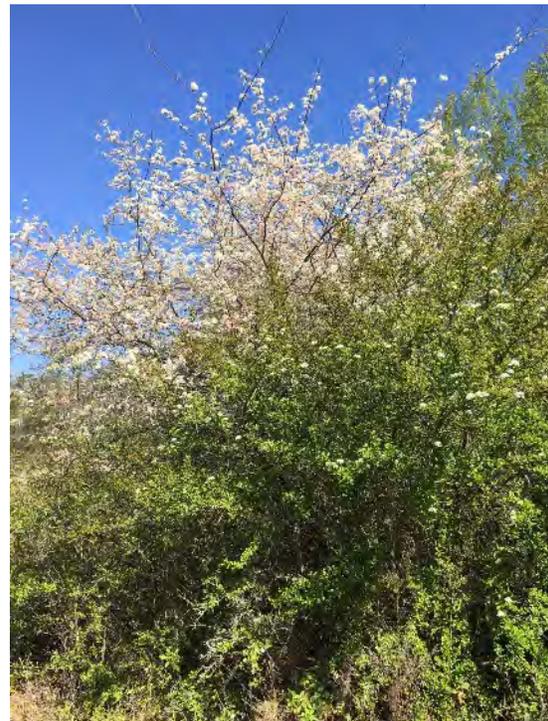
Carolina Jessamine, a vine, can be seen along the entrance loop,



Chickasaw Plum flowers.



Walter's Viburnum flowers.



Chickasaw Plum in the background, Walter's Viburnum in the foreground.

Click the link for trip details: [FOBCP Eco-Tour to Cuba](#)

BROOKER CREEK PRESERVE PRESENTS: AN AMAZING CULTURAL ECO-TOUR TO CUBA!

4-Night, 5 Days – November 19-23, 2019



Visiting: ▶ Havana- ▶ Las Terrazas- ▶ Playa Larga- ▶ Zapata Peninsula- ▶ Salinas Park ▶ Cienfuegos Botanical Gardens ▶ El Nicho Waterfalls ▶ Santa Clara

As a travel destination, Cuba is well-known for its amazing culture, charming colonial villages, highly regarded vintage cars and immaculate beaches, but travelers who are environmentally conscious and gravitate towards ecotourism, can find more than clichés in Cuba. You can explore the largest Caribbean island which can offer more than any other island in the Caribbean Sea by its sources of biodiversity. Home to 263 protected areas and six UNESCO Biospheres, Cuba has a lot to offer ecotourists.

On Nov. 11th, the FOBCP Board unanimously voted to sponsor for next November an eco-tour to Cuba for FOBCP members. The 4-night, 5-day trip would also be a fundraiser with \$100 of the individual cost donated to the Friends as a tax-deductible donation. As a fund-raiser, the board is hoping for significant participation in this unique once-in-a-lifetime travel opportunity. The tour will be hosted by our own Dr. Craig Huegel. Our Cuban guides will introduce us to the diverse ecological wonders of Cuba, including the **UNESCO** Biosphere Reserve at La Terrazas, the swamp lands of the Zapata Peninsula, and the forests and waterfalls of the Gran Parque Natural Topes de Collantes in the Sierra Escambray mountain range. The eco-tour is being organized by the fully licensed and OFAC compliant Cuban travel specialists at Carlson Maritime Travel in Tarpon Springs.

SOME OF YOUR HIGHLIGHTS WILL INCLUDE:

La Yoandra rare fruit tree farm, Havana *Sustainable Biosphere, Las Terrazas, hiking, lecture Cuban Orchid Farm *Finca Marta (organic farm) *Zapata Peninsula – Playa Larga (Cuba's largest wilderness area) *Salinas Park- Rare bird watching, Cuban Crocodiles *Cueva de los peces (Caves of the fishes for swimming) *Cienfuegos Botanical Gardens with private guide *Gran Parque Natural Topes de Collantes/ El Nicho Waterfalls *Che Guevara Museum *Fully Escorted / Private Guides / Private Driver



This group is being organized through a fully licensed Travel Service Provider. Carlson Maritime Travel, LLC is authorized to provide services in connection with travel to Cuba for U.S. citizens who are authorized to engage in travel-related transactions involving Cuba under either a general or specific license. CU-2014-307835-1 Dept. of Commerce License: D1118969

Details coming to your inbox soon! Or click on the link in this email.

Off the Beaten Path: Cypress Swamp Stomp 1/13

By: Craig Huegel

A full contingent of hearty souls joined us on Sunday January 13 for the first of four hikes in our Off the Beaten Path series. These hikes take us to some of the most beautiful parts of the Preserve, off trails for the most part, and in areas not open to the public. Our recent hike took us to the Preserve's most beautiful cypress



swamp. We had a wonderful diversity of young and older hikers and a spectacular day to be outdoors. This swamp is special because it is large and deep. It also has a hardwood-forest island in the middle of it. With all of these qualities it has a great diversity of wetland and upland plants.

The water was cool, but not cold and it was up to our knees in places. I think that is the perfect time to explore a cypress swamp. With the leaves off the cypress because of the season, there was plenty of sunlight to use for photographs or simply to clearly see the logs resting just beneath the surface of the water. Always a good thing... For those of us looking for rare plants, the day did not disappoint. Early in the walk we found a number of jingle bell orchids clinging to the branches of various buttonbushes. So named because the tiny seed capsules look like jingle bells, this is a rare leafless orchid that does all of its photosynthesizing through its roots.



jingle bell orchid,
jack-in-the-pulpit,
and strap fern.



As expected, the forest floor of the hammock island was covered with thousands of blooming jack-in-the-pulpits. As we circled back into the swamp, we also encountered a small population of strap fern that was previously unknown to me. Strap fern is common in south Florida swamps, but the tiny population in Brooker Creek





Craig looking up at an extremely large dahoon holly.

Preserve is at the northern extent of its range. This swamp is the only one where strap fern has been recorded and there may well be no more than half a dozen plants total. It was an exciting find to discover these two plants.

As we wound our way through the swamp and back to the entry road, we found a mature dahoon holly that seemingly surpasses the current national champion tree in size. We will have to return someday to measure it accurately and then submit the measurements to the National Register of Trees. This is very exciting.

All of us left the swamp feeling like we had just shared a very special experience. There are 3 hikes left in the series and they fill up quickly. The hike on Sunday March 24 is to a dry upland site, north of Keystone Road where we will hopefully encounter native sky-blue lupines and bluebirds among other things. I hope you will join us.



After the hike, we enjoyed a picnic lunch before heading out of the Preserve.



Led by Dr. Craig Huegel, 26 hikers spent a good two hours exploring the very wet swamp . . .and loved every moment.

Note the water height on the jeans of these swampers! (Also note their smiles!)

FOBCP Return the Preserve — 1/19

Our next RTP work day will be April 20. Join us!

By: Evan Earle, Jr

On Saturday, January 19th, we held our first RTP Work Day of 2019 and we started the year off the right way. We had 30 volunteers donating their time and energy on a Saturday morning and making an impact! SPLASH from River Ridge High School was back again to work with us. HAMS was there again. Sandy, Jacob, and Jeremy joined us. The Jenkins family returned for another RTP Work Day. New volunteers interested in Brooker Creek Preserve were there (I love seeing people visiting for the first time and introducing them to the Preserve and all it has to offer).

Pulled down vines? Check. Cleaned out caesarweed and St. Augustine grass? Check. Did a number on cat briar roots? DOUBLE CHECK! This group was focused and fixated on not just pulling down cat briar vines but getting to the "root" of the problem (sorry, I couldn't help myself). Boy, did they get to the root of the problem. Check out the picture of the pile of cat briar roots resulting from their hard work.

I love being part of our RTP Work Days. I learn something about the Preserve every time. I get to meet outstanding people from all walks of life who care about where they live and take time to participate.

It's hard work, but it's fun. If you like projects with a "before and after" reward, I can promise you that. I invite you to join us at our next RTP Work Day on Saturday, April 20th, when we will be helping to celebrate Earth Day! I can't think of a better place to do so than Brooker Creek Preserve.



Twenty bags of caesarweed and St. Augustine grass! Miles of grape vines and cat briar vines.

This team did a number on removing cat briar vines AND the roots! Look at that piles of tubers!

The best volunteers!



Photos by Evan Earle, Jr.

In honor of Earth Day

Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve



Return the Preserve Work Day

April 20, 8-11:00 am

For additional info, contact Evan at earlejr@gmail.com

Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve

ACRE ADOPTIONS FOR BROOKER CREEK PRESERVE

Many thanks for the following Acre Adoptions for
Jan./Feb. 2019:

In honor of Marion Yongue

from Ruth Ann & Evan Earle, and Barb & Eddie Hoffman

Please consider adopting an acre as a birthday gift, memorial or to honor a special person. See p. 26 for Adopt an Acre Form and additional information.

Plein Air 2019 — 1/26

The winners were:

Best of Show (\$100 award): Carole Loiacono

First Place (\$75 award) : Stuart Harrison

Second Place (\$50 award): Babette Kiesel

People's Choice (\$25 award): Carole Loiacono

"Morning Light" by
Carole Loiacono.

Below, painting by
Babette Kiesel, and
photo by Stuart
Harrison.



Three of the artists during Plein Air 2019.



... And Additions to our Friends Art Collection

Ten prints, donated by artist Christopher Still and wife Kelly, were framed by FOBCP and are on display in the Auditorium. Read about it in our [Jan./Feb. 2019 newsletter](#), on page 4. Then come see them!



Many thanks to Jeff Klinkenberg for the donation of three art pieces to the Friends!
Holding the three are Chairman, Cathie Foster (left), Jeff (center) and Barb Hoffman (right).



Star Party 2019 a big success! – 2/9/19



About 75 people came to the Preserve - after dark - to enjoy the night sky! The dreaded clouds disappeared as the sun set, allowing for three hours of full view. Four night hikes were conducted as well. (Photo above by Jerrod Simpson.)



Members of the St. Petersburg Astronomy Club brought their knowledge and their giant telescopes.



Photo by Jerrod Simpson



Photo by Lisa Boing



Photo by Dr. Craig Huegel

Featured on some of the Night Hikes were scorpions! When they were illuminated by a UV light, they turned a bright green (left and center). Under normal light, they appear brown (right).

Birthday Celebration — 2/23

The four guest speakers from left, Kelly Victory (former Preserve staff educator), Christopher Still (artist), Dr. Craig Huegel (former Preserve manager), and Ed Hoffman (Education Center architect).



Everyone who attended the event received a birthday gift from us - a branded tree cookie! Many thanks to Katy Roberts and Chuck Parsons for donating the cedar branches, to Chuck Parsons who sliced the branches into "cookies", to Barbara Hoffman who did the branding, and to Cathie Foster for tying the jute.

Look who stopped in to visit the Education Center on January 26! Former Pinellas County Administrator, Fred Marquis, and his beautiful wife, who brought a neighbor to visit the Preserve. They are standing in front of the poster of Fred that hangs in the Education Center. This is whom the Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail is named after. Fred was the County Administrator when Brooker Creek Preserve was formed and was a firm proponent of creating the Preserve. Thank you, Fred.



Paint for the Wild!

Saturday, March 16 from 12-3 pm

Register online at <https://paintforthewild.com/>



Join our next **Paint for the Wild** class and learn how to create this colorful impressionist Tree Frog from acrylic paint! You will be guided step by step on your creative journey in a judgment-free space, and be introduced to the impressionist style and techniques!

- All materials provided
- No experience required
- Enjoy an assortment of snacks
- Explore the exhibits during breaks

Cost: \$35/person

Register online at <https://paintforthewild.com/>

***“Paint for the Wild”** generously donates a portion of registration fees to the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve (non-profit) to support our mission: 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.*

Introduction to

BEEKEEPING

A Hobby with Sweet Rewards

3 Part Series! 10am - 12pm



Saturday, March 2

Part 1: **INTRO TO HONEYBEES:** This program will introduce you to the basics of honey bees, their biology and the guiding principles of beekeeping.



Sunday, March 10

Part 2: **GETTING STARTED:** We will cover what it takes to get started with a focus on the equipment and tools necessary for beekeeping. We will review the components of the "modern" bee hive and explain Florida's rules & guidelines.



Saturday, March 16

Part 3: **HEALTHY HIVES:** We will review how to maintain healthy honeybee colonies, discuss how to recognize pests and diseases, and have an in-depth discussion on what you can do to support your bees, with a focus on organic beekeeping practices.

UF | **IFAS Extension**
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Pinellas
County



An equal opportunity institution.

Hey Kids!

If you are between the ages of 4-12
Bring an adult and join the...

WILDLIFE SAFARI

Saturday, April 6, 2019

Arrive any time between 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
The Safari walk takes about one hour.

Join in the fun at this educational and fun adventure for children through 12 years old! The children begin with a blank Wildlife Passport, then walk with their families along a one-mile loop of adventure with live owls, snakes, baby raccoons, hawks, and more! As the children visit each Wildlife Station, their Passport gets stamped. At the end, they get a special prize for completing the journey. Cost is \$5 per child.

This event is sponsored by Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve.
3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs, 34688
Questions? Call 727-934-2680
Email fobcp@tampabay.rr.com



Sponsorship Form



Saturday, April 6, 2019

10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

For children ages 4-12 and their families

Thank you for sponsoring this fun, educational, family-friendly adventure for kids. **In recent years this event has drawn 1200 people.**

Your sponsorship pays for our Safari stations, prizes for our young adventurers and other event costs.

Your name and logo, if applicable, will be placed on a sign in a prominent location along the Safari trail as an event sponsor. Your name will also be included on our website, in our newsletter, and on the electronic display inside our Nature Store at the Preserve for the next year.

Sponsorships are \$200 each, or you may choose to share a sponsorship sign with another supporter (\$100 each).

Deadline for sponsorships is Friday, March 29.

Sponsorship Donation Amount: _____\$200 _____\$100

Name as you want it to appear on the sign:

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Contact Person: _____

Businesses: Please email your logo to: fobcp@tampabay.rr.com

Check payable to: Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve
3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs, FL 34688

Wildlife Safari Volunteers Needed!

We are gearing up for another exciting Wildlife Safari. This fun, educational event, featuring animals native to Brooker Creek Preserve will be Saturday, April 6, 10 am - 2 pm. We cannot conduct this event without you! If you would like to help, please contact **Julie** at **612-850-0111** or at **the1midge@aol.com**

Registration Table

Sign people in, collect money, give out passports, answer questions.

Location - picnic shelter near parking lot

Morning Shift (9:30-12:00) Afternoon Shift (12:00-2:30)

Greeter

Greet everyone, direct them to the Safari start, count guests, answer questions.

Location - *Main parking lot at trail leading to picnic shelter (registration area)

*Note - this is a new location!

Morning Shift (9:00-12:00) Afternoon Shift (12:00-3:00)

Prize Table

Hand out prize to each passport-holder.

Location - Ed Center Exhibit Hall

Morning Shift (10:30-1:00) Afternoon Shift (1:00-4:00)

Safari Guides

Guides will (1) help set up the station (am shift), (2) help the wildlife experts carry their animals and equipment to and from the parking lot and their wildlife station, (3) assist the experts during the event, (4) stamp the children's passports, (5) encourage the crowd to move on to the next Wildlife Station after about 5 minutes, (6) help take down the station/fold table, take down tent (pm shift).

Location - along the Education Center Trail

Morning shift 9:00-1:00 Afternoon shift 12:00-4:00

Thank You!

Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve

2019 NIGHT HIKES!

Join the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve for a hiking experience along the Education Center Trail...*at night!* These special hikes are open to the public and limited to 20 people per hike. **A \$3 per person donation is requested.** Hikes are led by Mark Yeager, a Preserve volunteer who is knowledgeable about nocturnal wildlife. The hike is about one-mile in length and will take about 1.5 hours.

Saturday Mar. 9, 2019 6:30 pm
Saturday Apr. 20, 2019 7:30 pm
Saturday May 11, 2019 7:30 pm

Pre-registration is required! Once you register, more information will come to you via email. Pre-register online by logging onto: <https://nighthikes.eventbrite.com>

These hikes are for adults and families only. Children must be accompanied by parents. Please leave your pets at home. Pets are not permitted in County Preserves.

Questions? Email fobcp@tampabay.rr.com

*Welcome to our new
Friends members:*

Lillian Brown
Stuart Harrison





Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve

Back by popular demand...

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

A nature-based fundraising hike series

Description: This series of four hikes will take place in beautiful areas tucked away within Brooker Creek Preserve in sites that are closed to the public. Our guide, Dr. Craig Huegel (SPC Biology Professor), 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 be about 3-4 hours long. Bring water and lunch.

Cost: \$80 donation for the series or \$25 donation per hike with a 10% discount for members of Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

Sites Off the Beaten Path:

March 24, 2019 – Sandhill Scramble – The only true sandhills of Brooker Creek Preserve. This site is in the northern end of the preserve and will feature an abundance of spring wildflowers.

June 23, 2019 – Interior Wildlands – We will be in parts of the Preserve so remote that cell phones won't work, areas so pretty you won't believe you are in Pinellas County!

Sep. 22, 2019 – In Search of Catesby's Lily – Located in the eastern part of the preserve, we will search for the threatened Catesby's Lily. In so doing, we will see a profusion of beautiful fall wildflowers in full bloom.

Reservations Required: Reserve your spot by emailing 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.

Creating a Wetland

By: Craig Huegel

I normally write about topics related to the natural history of Brooker Creek Preserve, but I digress for this issue of the newsletter. I've recently moved into a new residence in Holiday and I find myself starting over with the landscape I've now inherited. One of the first things I've done is to create wetlands.

Most of us don't need to be convinced that wetlands are important in nature, but most of us don't have one naturally in our home landscape. Developers purposely build on upland sites and they backfill any lots that might have a tendency to flood to protect the integrity of the homes they build. This just makes common sense. Unless we back up to a natural wetland or a created retention pond, our yards are relegated to only supporting upland plants.

Wetlands, however, have their own set of species and many are invaluable additions to a landscape designed for butterflies, bees, and birds. While most folks that I know simply accept the fact that they can't grow wetland plants in their upland yards, there are simple ways to create a small wetland that are easy to install and maintain. I've been doing it now for well over a decade and I've done it again here in Holiday.

The easiest way is to purchase a small plastic pool, available for less than \$20 at most Home and Builder's Supply stores. I've used the one in these photos for over a dozen years now and it should last for as long as I want it. Do not purchase a flimsy plastic kid's pool, but a more-substantial thicker plastic one. Dig a hole to the depth and width of your pool and sink it securely in the ground.



purchase a pot that fits inside the pool - with a drainage hole in the bottom. I like to use a pot that is wide and relatively shallow. Wetland plants have shallow root systems so you don't need a deep pot. What is important is that the soil line lies slightly above the depth of the plastic pot. The idea is that when it rains, the plastic pool fills with water. This water will wick up into your planter pot. If the soil line is above the water line, the soil will become saturated, but you won't have standing water in it.

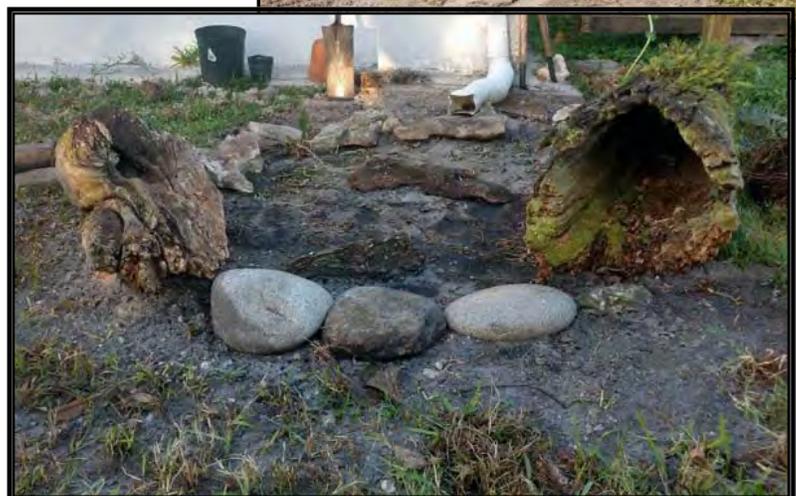


You can use any soil in your planter pot, but I prefer to use a commercial "garden soil" mix instead of potting soil. These mixes are normally dirt with a high organic component and that will best mimic a natural wetland soil. In the planter pot, I can then plant herbaceous wetland wildflowers, such as some of the native milkweeds for monarch butterflies that I could not normally grow in my landscape.

The other approach I use is to create a small wet area directly in the ground. This too is easy and inexpensive. Define an area of your yard that gets at least a half day of sun. It doesn't have to be a large area. Mine is about 6 feet in diameter. Also important is to put it in a location where you can direct rainwater runoff from your roof into it. Either use the downspout directly or create a small "stream" from it. Dig the hole to a depth of about 2 feet and slope the sides upwards. Once you've done this, measure the hole carefully and purchase a heavy duty pond liner from a good pool/pond supplier. Mine, shown in these photos, cost \$40. Do not get cheap plastic or it may degrade over time. This one will outlast my lifetime for sure.

Carefully lay the liner out into the hole and then refill it with the dirt you originally excavated. Mark and weigh down the edges of the liner so that you can remember exactly where it is. I use landscape stones and logs. You don't want to dig a hole for a plant and find that you just put a hole in your liner.

Wetlands naturally get wetter during the rainy season and drier at other times. Both of these wetlands in my landscape will do the same. I almost never need to water them with my hose. Wetlands are not ponds. They allow us to put plants into our landscape that could not live there otherwise. The extra diversity has value. If you also wish to add a pond, that is another article.



Wildflower Garden Update

By: Pam Brown

In January we had several new volunteers along with two regulars. It was gratifying to see two fathers who brought their young sons to help. We tidied up the garden and removed oak seedlings and invasive sword fern. The violets were beginning to bloom along with an occasional lyre-leaf sage and coreopsis. We are planning to remove some of the Gulf Muhly grass plants that are beginning to take over the area in February. There is also a possibility of planting some additional wildflowers. If you can help in the garden, our next workday is March 30th. Our workdays are on the last Saturday of each month from 9:00 -11:00 a.m. (winter hours). We change to summer hours (8:00-10:00 a.m.) in April. Bring your gardening tools, gloves, hat, bug spray and wear closed-toed shoes. We will provide breakfast snacks, orange juice and coffee. Hope to see you there!

Pam's Tip — Living with Alligators

I feel that this article which I wrote several years ago needs reposting. Many of us live near Brooker Creek Preserve, other conservation areas or any of the numerous lakes, ponds and canals. These provide the habitat necessary for alligators to thrive. Since they are an important part of these ecosystems, it is important for us to understand how to live with them. Alligators are protected as a 'Species of Special Concern' in Florida, however, they can be harvested legally under proper licenses and permits issued by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

Do Not Feed Alligators! It is illegal to feed, harass, or handle alligators in Florida.

Normally, alligators avoid humans but alligators that have been fed by humans will move toward humans when they see them and can become aggressive. Feeding them causes them to become acclimated to humans which can create a very dangerous animal. When this happens, these alligators have to be removed and killed. If you are a fisherman, do not throw the waste from cleaning fish into the water or wetlands as this is an indirect way of feeding alligators. If you are caught feeding an alligator, you face up to \$500 in fines and/or 60 days in jail.

Keep children and pets away from the water's edge wherever alligators are likely to be present. Do not allow dogs or children to swim or explore along the bank of waters that are known to have alligators because they can look like prey. Alligators seem to choose prey by the size of the animal. There are far more alligator attacks on pets than on



humans. Alligators feed primarily at dusk and during the night. They lie motionless and wait for prey to come close and then strike. They are remarkably fast in the water as well as on land.

FWC defines a **nuisance alligator** as one that is at least four feet long and is believed to pose a threat to people, pets or property. They receive an average of nearly 16,000 alligator-related complaints per year. Most of these complaints deal with alligators occurring in places such as backyard ponds, canals, ditches and streams but alligators also wander into garages, swimming pools and golf course ponds. Sometimes, alligators come out of the water to bask in the sun or move between wetlands. In many cases, if left alone, these alligators will eventually move on to areas away from people. However, if you encounter any alligator that you believe poses a threat to people, pets or property, call the **FWC Nuisance Alligator Hotline at 866-392-4286**. FWC will assign one of the licensed wildlife trappers to remove it. Please be aware, nuisance alligators are killed, not relocated.

Alligators of less than four feet in length are not large enough to be dangerous unless handled. Their diet consists of fish, frogs and other small animals. They are typically not large enough to be a threat even to small pets. The mere presence of a small alligator is not cause for concern unless humans have been feeding it.

Mating season for alligators is from mid April through May. Once mating occurs the female will build a nest and lay eggs. The nest is constructed by mounding up vegetation, sticks, leaves, and mud in a sheltered spot in or near water. Stay clear of any area that appears to have a nest. The eggs incubate for 65 days. Once the hatchlings emerge from the eggs in August or September, they stay around the mother gator and often stay near the nest site for a couple of years. If you see baby alligators, you can be sure that the mother is close by. If you see an alligator and/or hatchlings and want to take pictures, keep a good distance away. Mother gators are very protective of their young and can move very fast.

For more detailed information about living with alligators.

Please see this Internet site for additional information:

Living with Alligators: a Florida Reality -

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/UW/UW23000.pdf>

Cottonmouth water moccasin,
photo by Lynn Whitelaw.



Nature Store News

By Cathie Foster

Have you seen our Second Nature table? Here you will find a variety of gently-used nature-based items for sale at very reasonable prices. The selection is ever-changing, something new every week! Take a look next time you visit the Nature Store!



Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve



BEEKEEPERS CLUB

The Friends Beekeepers Club is open to anyone who is interested in beekeeping. Those of us already in the club are very new to the hobby and are learning as we go. Bob Burkard, Beekeepers Club President, is very knowledgeable about beekeeping. We have now built TEN hives, each hosting between 10,000 and 20,000 bees.

Meetings are held the first Sunday of each month at 9:00 am. We meet at the Bee Shed at Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center, gather equipment, and then go to the apiary located about two miles away. Everyone shares in all work.

Annual dues for the club are \$25 per person. You must also be a member of *Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve* in order to join the Beekeepers Club. The Friends Beekeepers Club is an affiliate of *Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve*.

If you would like to join the **Friends Beekeepers Club** or simply have questions, please email fobcp@tampabay.rr.com.

Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve Readers Club

By: Jon Burr



The Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve Reader's Club started 2019 off with a discussion of Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior*.

Kingsolver is a prolific writer. Best seller stuff. This was my first time reading her. She is an excellent crafter: Lots of clever similes. More than one person in the group commented on this. I think in general most of us didn't mind reading this book but I got the impression that we didn't think it "held together" very well, if that's an allowable critical expression. While fiction, the book dealt with the plight of the monarch butterfly. It also dealt with the plight of the main character. I thought the book ended suddenly. I worry that best selling authors are pushed by their publishers to get another title out there. Just a surmise on my part.

In February we discussed Susan Orlean's *The Orchid Thief*. She writes for the New Yorker magazine and I must confess that generally I really like New Yorker magazine writers. I think in total we were all disappointed with this book. (Always a great discussion when we don't like the book much.) Susan Orlean never met a list she didn't like. I was a third of the way through reading *The Orchid Thief* when I thought, "when is this going to become a book?" It turned out to be a shaggy orchid story. It did make me research the ORCHIDACEAE family in the Preserve: 11 species! Three are threatened species, one is commercially exploited and one is Non-native. None are endemic. But the Preserve doesn't have the orchid that was stolen. I tried watching the movie made as an adaptation of the book: that's exactly what it was called: *Adaptation*. I couldn't finish it: Way too 'meta'. The movie was about making a movie about the book. The main character's story was about how he was a failure at making the movie which was the most honest thing describing the movie. Meryl Streep as Susan couldn't save it for me. Spoiler: movie not totally true to the book.

One thing I have learned is that a careful look at the Amazon on line store has some really good comments about books and movies. You don't have to buy anything to read the reviews. My experience has been if the 5's are less than 50% it's important to read the 1's. I think Amazon has managed to clean up those great reviews (5's) which are just advertisements for the item. The book got 41% 5's and 12% 1's which was just about the same as the movie.

In March we discuss *River of Golden Ibis* by Gloria Jahoda. In April the beginning book of the environmental movement: Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*. There's more room at the table: please join us at 9:30 am on the first Saturday of the month at the conference room in the Environmental Education Center.

Volunteer News and More!

By Julia Myers, Education Support Specialist, Brooker Creek Preserve



Brooker Creek Staff debuted a NEW Nature Journaling Program on Valentine's Day!

Thursday afternoons are a slow time for the Education Center and we wanted to offer something that would bring in visitors on a more regular basis. We debuted a Nature Journaling class for families with a goal of promoting curiosity and enriching our visitors' experiences in nature. It was a success! We had about 40 attendees and are looking forward to the next one in March!

Lara led another successful Project Learning Tree workshop for educators in February!

Thirty-three more educators are equipped with environmental education curriculum they can use with students throughout Pinellas County. Plus they can all share how much they love Brooker

Creek Preserve now! ☺



Lara and Julia at the Birthday Celebration Feb. 23.

Have you been in the old Resource Room in the Ed Center lately? If you haven't, it is time to check out our new entomology display! Two brothers from the 4-H Entomology Club who are incredibly passionate about entomology have been working hard collecting and curating Florida insects for our new display. They have done a phenomenal job!

Our annual **Volunteer Appreciation Celebration** (1/6/19) was awesome this year and thanks to all who came! We always look forward to this day when we can shower our volunteers with our appreciation and recognize all we have accomplished together throughout the year. Brooker Creek Preserve Volunteers are a passionate and incredible team and we just couldn't be more grateful for all they do! Thank you Volunteers!



Presentation and lunch.



Our Volunteers!



It is your dedication that makes everything we do here possible. We had a 9% increase in volunteer hours this year and it has showed! In FY18 Brooker Creek volunteers offered 50 book

times for children, 81 guided hikes to the public, and 13 educational programs! All that is on top of running the front desk and Nature Store every day that we are open, plus festivals and events! Thank you to the greatest team ever!



Presents! Volunteer Trevor enjoys his new mug.

If you would like to join our active volunteer group at Brooker Creek Preserve, please call us at (727) 453-6800.



ADOPT AN ACRE



*A program to enhance restoration and land management programs in **Brooker Creek Preserve***

The **ADOPT AN ACRE** program was established by the Friends in 2016 to give individuals the opportunity to help keep intact the ecological integrity of the Preserve.

100% of funding will be used for:

- Removing exotic and invasive plants
- Restoring the natural flow of water
- Fire management
- Restoring natural plant communities

Acres make great gifts for birthdays, anniversaries, memorials and more!

Upon receipt of the donation, the donor or honoree's name will be placed on the **ADOPT AN ACRE** display inside the Environmental Education Center for one year. A certificate will be sent to the honoree acknowledging the adoption.

Donor Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (_____) _____

Email: _____

___in honor of ___in memory of ___for myself

Honoree Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (_____) _____

I wish to adopt _____ acres @ \$100/acre

Total Due: _____

Make check payable to: FOBCP

Mail to: 3940 Keystone Road
Tarpon Springs, FL 34688

Questions? fobcp@tampabay.rr.com

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BROOKER CREEK PRESERVE

Cool calendar for your refrigerator!

March 2019

***Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve events**

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
	1 Guided Hike 9:00-10:30 <i>(Florida Forests)</i>	2 Guided Hike 9-10:30 *Friends Readers Club 9:30-10:30 Intro to Beekeeping -Part 1 10:00-12:00	3
7 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	8 Guided Hike 9:00-10:30 <i>(Native Plants and Pollinators)</i> Wild Things (pre-K) 10:00-10:45	9 Songbird Sunrise 5:45 -7:30 am Beginning Bird Hike 8-10 am Frogs! 10:30-12:00 *Night Hike 6:30 pm-8:30 pm	10 Intro to Beekeeping - Part 2 10:00-12:00
14 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15 Nature Journaling 1:30-3 pm	15 Family Fun Friday 10:00-11:00	16 Guided Hike 9-10:30 am Intro to Beekeeping - Part 3 10:00-12:00	17
20 *FOBCP Board Meeting 6:00 PM	21 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	22	23 4-Mile Hike 9:00-12:00 Native Pollinators (program) 10:30-12
			24 *Off the Beaten Path Hike 9:00-1:00 \$25/psn donation \$22.50 for FOBCP members
28 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	29 Family Fun Friday 10-11	30 *Wildflower Garden Work Day 8-10 am Nature Photography Hike 8:30-10:30 am Growing Up WILD Educator Workshop 8:00 am-12:00 pm	31

April 2019

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
4 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:30	5	6 *Friends Readers Club 9:30-10:30 *WILDLIFE SAFARI 10 am - 2 pm	7 *FOBCP Beekeepers Club Work Day 9:00 AM
11 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:30	12 Wild Things (pre-K stories & songs) 10-10:45 Guided Hike 9:00-10:30	13 Songbird Sunrise 6:00-7:30 am Beginning Bird Hike 8:00-10:00	14
18 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:30	19 Family Fun Friday 10:00-11:00 Guided Hike 10:00-12:00	20 Guided Hike 9:00-10:30 *Return the Preserve Work Day 8-11 am *Night Hike 7:30-9:30 pm	21
25 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:30	26	27 Photography Hike 8:30-10:30 *Wildflower Garden Work Day 8-10 am 4-Mile Hike 9:00-12:00	28

For program details go to <http://www.brookercreekpreserve.org/programs-classes.htm> Click "Calendar of Classes/Programs/Hikes"
Hiking Trails are open every day from 7:00 am until posted time, approximately one hour before sunset.

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.

Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve:
www.FriendsOfBrookerCreekPreserve.org
Email: fobcp@tampabay.rr.com
Voicemail: (727) 934-2680

Brooker Creek Preserve:
Phone: (727) 453-6900
Website: www.brookercreekpreserve.org
Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center is located at 3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs, Florida, 34688. Phone: (727) 453-6800
Hours: Thurs. - Sat. 9am - 4pm, Sun., 11am - 4pm.

Friends Nature Store is located in the Education Center. Hours: Thurs. - Sat. 9am - 4pm, Sun., 11am - 4pm.

Preserve Hiking Trails open 7 days a week, 7:00am to 30 minutes before sunset. Closed the day after Thanksgiving and Dec. 25.

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

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

Pinellas County PCR Mission statement: The mission of the Parks and Conservation Resources Department is to maintain and protect the inherent value of the County's natural, cultural and recreational resources through sustainable access, education, and stewardship that enhance quality of life for our community and future generations.

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