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Newsletter of the  
**Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve**

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November - December 2011

### **Chairman's Message**

By: Barb Hoffman

I cannot stress enough the importance of volunteers at the Preserve. Although the staff provides the anchor, the volunteers provide the power to run the operation. When I pop in to grab the mail or lead a hike or check on the wildflower garden, my heart is warmed to see all the many volunteers busy and dedicated to the Preserve. The exhibit hall is open thanks to volunteers. The boardwalks are clean thanks to volunteers. The trails are maintained thanks to volunteers. The lawn is mowed thanks to volunteers. We have a gift shop thanks to volunteers. We have hikes and events thanks to volunteers.

But we could use more.

This is a call out for the one thing you can give to the Preserve that is priceless - your time. Our website provides a list of volunteer positions available, and tells you how to go about becoming a volunteer. Right now, we especially need people to be docents and staff the front desk of the exhibit hall. Can you spare one morning a month to do so? Currently, the exhibit hall is open Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, so you would have your pick of these days. Please consider becoming a volunteer if you have the time to spare. We need you. The Preserve needs you.

**Barb**

#### Chairman's Message

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Come one, come all!  
Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve  
- ANNUAL MEETING -  
**CELEBRATE THE PRESERVE!**

**Saturday, Nov. 12, 2011**  
**Brooker Creek Preserve**  
**Environmental Education Center**

**9:00 a.m. Hike (optional)** - Join us for a guided walk along the Ed Center and/or Flatwoods Trails. Bird and wildflower experts will walk along with us.

**11:00 a.m.— Ed Center Auditorium**

**Lunch** - Enjoy a host of delicious, catered goodies—soups, salads, fruits, and home-made desserts!

**Annual Summary & Look to the Future**

Barbara Hoffman, Chair

**Preserve & Ed Center Updates** Preserve Staff

**Board Elections & Misc. Business**

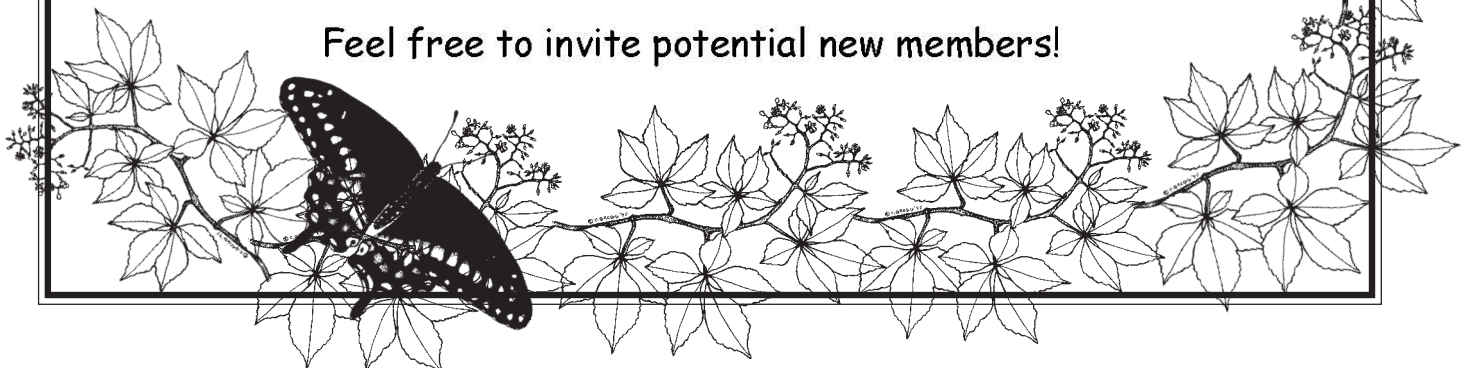
Hiking trails, Gift Shop, & Exhibit Hall will be open!

**RSVP by 11/10/11!**

Voicemail 727-934-2680

Email [fobcp@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:fobcp@tampabay.rr.com)

Feel free to invite potential new members!



## **\$3+ million to Pinellas County for Brooker Creek Preserve land purchase!**

By: Deborah Chayet, Grants Specialist  
Pinellas County Parks & Conservation Resources/Extension

A surprise sprung from Tallahassee late this summer and this time the environment won! After two years with no Florida Communities Trust (FCT) Florida Forever funding, this year they accepted grant applications to fund the acquisition of conservation land. Because they had no allocated funds for the program this year, FCT intended to have ranked projects be placeholders for what they hoped might be future funding. Parks & Conservation Resources submitted a grant application for reimbursement of expenditures for acquisition of the Wilde Tract purchased in November 2008 and added to the Brooker Creek Preserve.

Then came the surprise announcement that \$17 million was unexpectedly available! When the preliminary grant rankings were posted, our project was listed as the first project out of the funding. While very disappointing, this was not yet the final ranking! The final grant rankings are determined at an annual meeting of the Governing Board of the Florida Communities Trust. Applicants may opt to offer a very brief presentation to this Board; consisting of appointees from the Governor and state department heads, in an effort to showcase the outstanding merits of their project. On August 25, 2011, with an exceptionally passionate support letter from Friends President Barbara Hoffman in hand, Commissioner Roche and I presented at this meeting. When the final grant rankings were posted, our project was listed for funding in the amount of \$3,344,000!!!

Many thanks go to Barbara Hoffman of the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve, the Pinellas Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society and the Parks & Conservation Resources Advisory Board for their helpful letters of support for the Project Excellence presentation.

## **Preserve News**

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

Residents and visitors are encouraged to visit and enjoy the natural areas of Pinellas County, including Brooker Creek Preserve. To ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all, those charged with managing these properties strive to ensure that established rules are followed. Compliance also is a central component of our ability to protect sensitive natural and cultural resources. Multiple approaches are used to provide security at Brooker Creek Preserve. First, signs and fences are used to delineate the boundaries of the Preserve, and gates are used prevent access by unauthorized vehicles. The main entrance to the Preserve is equipped with an automated gate that allows ready access during normal hours of operation and for special events. Of course, those who desire to gain illicit access to the Preserve have been known to climb a fence or bypass a gate. A second level of security is provided by Rangers, staff of the Parks & Conservation Resources Department. Rangers patrol the Preserve several times each day to provide for the safety and security of visitors using the trails, boardwalks, and facilities. Other departmental staff members routinely at the Preserve, including resource managers and environmental educators, also remain alert for violations. A third level of protection is accomplished through a contract with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff provides deputies assigned to patrol environmental lands and investigate criminal offenses. This unit is specially equipped to enable them to conduct their work off the beaten path. A deputy housed at the on-site residence also routinely patrols and responds to emergency calls. Visitors themselves also may support security efforts. If you see unauthorized access within the Preserve or rules being violated, do not confront the person. Instead, phone our departmental office at 727-582-2100 during regular business hours, or the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office at 727-582-6200 during other times to report the violation. Together, these steps will help keep Brooker Creek Preserve a safe destination for the visiting public while protecting the area's diverse and unique resources.

## Consider Leaving a Legacy to Brooker Creek Preserve!

As we transition from a county-run facility to one run by concerned citizens, the time is now to begin thinking about the future of Brooker Creek Preserve and how you can help. Please consider adding Brooker Creek Preserve to your will. The needs at Brooker are great, especially in areas of land management and restoration. For example, one day of a prescribed burn costs \$6,000. We will need large dollars to approach and maintain the ecological health of Brooker Creek Preserve. As a 501-C3 non-profit organization, the Friends gladly and graciously can accept any tax-deductible gifts and donations. Please consider the future of Brooker Creek as you plan your own future. Thank you.

*News release June 23, 2011:*

**Craig Huegel Ph.D.**

### **Named Florida Habitat Steward for 2011 by Florida Wildlife Federation**

At the Florida Wildlife Federation's 74th Annual Conservation Awards Banquet, held June 11, 2011, at the Chateau Elan Hotel and Conference Center in Sebring, noteworthy Florida conservationists were recognized for their achievements. For his outstanding contribution to helping ensure a sustainable future for Florida's habitats, the Federation is proud to name Dr. Craig Huegel as its Florida Habitat Steward for 2011.

A naturalist with extensive training and experience in wildlife and plant ecology, wild lands management and listed-species permitting, Dr. Craig Huegel is an ardent advocate for saving what remains of "the real Florida." As co-founder of the Urban Wildlife Cooperative Extension Program at the University of Florida, and Administrator of the Department of Environmental Management for Pinellas County, he has worked extensively with local and county

governments, state agencies, and the general public on issues related to comprehensive planning, growth management and wildlife at the urban interface.

Dr. Huegel has received numerous accolades for conservation work and environmental education. He produced a popular series of 30-minute video programs on Florida's native habitats and wildlife. Presently, he is a principal at Ecological Services Associates, Inc., an environmental consulting business that provides a wide range of services to private, governmental and not-for-profit clients. He lectures and writes on a broad range of topics related to Florida wildlife and wildlife habitat, particularly concentrating on Central Florida.



Craig Huegel, center, with Manley Fuller and Jim Schuette

Additionally, Dr. Huegel serves on the Board of Brooker Creek Preserve and has provided great service to the Native Plant Society. His teaching acumen reaches from the formal classroom setting to in-person education in the field. Often mixing humor into his presentations, listeners gain knowledge of the natural world as well as having an enjoyable experience. With many publications to his credit, Dr. Huegel not only has a wealth of knowledge at his command, but he also knows how to share that knowledge well.

The Federation's annual selection of outstanding conservationists is one of the oldest in the state. Award winners are selected from nominations made to the Federation's board of directors and are chosen for their dedicated efforts on behalf of Florida's fish and wildlife and native habitats.

## Fall Wildflower Festival A Huge Success!

With over 650 people attending, the Fall Wildflower Festival was a great success! The parking lot was full most of the day, over 400 people explored the exhibit hall, over 80 families were on the trails doing the wildflower scavenger hunt, and hundreds enjoyed the butterfly tent. Many thanks to the many volunteers who helped organize and work this festival - in fact, it is totally organized and conducted by Friends and volunteers! Great job, everyone!



## My Experiences at the Wildflower Festival

By: Debbie Chayet

Each time I visit Brooker Creek Preserve I ask myself why I don't visit more often. This place is breathtakingly beautiful! I was the first on site that day; arriving before 7 am and slipping through the gates when they slowly opened. Hoping to see early morning wildlife I crept along the entrance roadway toward the parking area; being careful my car did not run over the many unidentified frogs crossing in front of me. Three deer grazed off to one side and dark silhouettes of birds crossed through the skyline. It was a good morning already. I knew it was Wildflower Festival Day and I was on a mission. I was out to photograph a Catesby Lily (*Lilium catesbaei*) for the first time!

As I parked the purple tops of the nearby muhly grass glistened with dew, looking like Florida icicles in the fall morning. I observed three more deer in the edge of the cypress swamp when I crossed the bridge leading to the Wilderness trail. My hike led me to a wonderful variety of sandhill wildflowers in full bloom. I saw and photographed *Carphephorus corymbosus*, Florida paintbrush; *Carphephorus odoratissimus* var. *subtropicanus*, Vanilla plant; *Sabatia brevifolia*, shortleaf rosegentian; and *Agalinis fasciculata*, false foxglove. Also lots of my favorites...Liatris. No Catesby. On my way back to the Ed Center as downy woodpeckers chattered, I passed by scarlet red *Lobelia cardinalis* (cardinalflower) and a beautifully open terrestrial orchid *Habenaria floribunda*, tooth-petal false rein-orchid.

The Wildflower Festival was starting and the classroom was all set up with a wonderful array of touchable items & nature activities for kids. I passed a wildflower scavenger hunt table and noted that I had already seen all the wildflowers on the hunt! Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve volunteers were everywhere. Throughout the morning wonderful educational

sessions progressed in the auditorium, the classroom was filled with kids learning ecological lessons and a large butterfly tent drew families in for close and personal experiences. The excited squeals of children coming from the butterfly tent and the sight of a group of young girls eagerly walking the trails in pursuit of viewing wildflowers for the scavenger hunt was heartwarming. I was so very glad to see children enjoying this beautiful property. I was tremendously impressed with how the "Friends" volunteers ran this event. It was very organized and provided an excellent family outdoor environmental experience. Thanks to everyone involved. And my Catesby? To the sounds of two serenading red-shouldered hawks, I finally got my Catesby photographs!



Catesby Lily  
*Lilium catesbaei*

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

## Off the Beaten Path: Hike to Anclote Spur

There are still a few openings left for the final hike in the Off the Beaten Path series scheduled for January 22, 2012, to Anclote Spur. This hike will traverse from the Brooker Creek campground (yes, we have a campground!), through uplands, with the final destination being the shore of the Anclote River. The Anclote River section was once part of Brooker Creek Preserve but is now a preserve to itself. It is a fundraiser hike, \$25 per person, and led by writer and naturalist, Dr. Craig Huegel. An added bonus is that, if you wish, you may camp the night before at the campground. Be warned, it is primitive camping - everything must be packed in and packed out, including garbage and water. But the camping area is only a short walk from the parking area, and it is located within a beautiful oak hammock. More information will follow in the next newsletter and via email.

The hike will begin at 9:00 a.m. Bring water and lunch. **Reservations are required.** Email [fobcp@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:fobcp@tampabay.rr.com). Questions? Email, or call 727-934-2680.

Barb Hoffman and Dr. Craig Huegel in a wet part of the last Off the Beaten Path hike.



## Brooker Creek Preserve featured in Destination Magazine!

A full two-page spread, with pictures and lots of good stuff to say, features Brooker Creek Preserve in the Spring 2011 issue of Destination, a magazine dedicated to "places worthy of travel or an extended visit" for the "sunrise side of Tampa Bay." The article features the Friends and what we do for the preserve, and also describes the natural history of the preserve. Wow! To read the article, go to <http://magazinevolume.com/8247BM> which will take you straight to the spring issue, then turn the pages till you get to pages 8 and 9.

## Friends Adopt-A-Mile, Keep Pinellas Beautiful



### PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR FINAL TRASH PICK UP!

This is the last time to help with this very worthwhile cause!

Saturday, December 10, 2011

Meet at 7:45 a.m. in the main parking lot. Gloves, orange vests, and sweet treats provided!

We will be done by 10:00 a.m.

## News from the Wildflower Garden

A decision was made to change the name of the Butterfly Garden to the Wildflower Garden. The public is more familiar with heavily flowering butterfly gardens that contain not only native flowers, but exotic flowers so that there is a continuous profusion of blooms. As you know, native wildflowers are not as prolific for as long as the exotic butterfly attractors, so Wildflower Garden is a more appropriate name. This name change will also allow us to plant wildflowers that may not be butterfly attractors. At our September work day, we pulled more weeds, planted more wildflowers, and put down mulch in preparation for the Wildflower Festival in October.

We are always looking for additional help, so if you have some free time on the last Saturday of each month, bring your gardening gloves and tools and spend a couple of hours with us. Coffee cake, orange juice and coffee are always available.

### Breakfast with Butterflies

Please join us the last Saturday of every month to work in the Wildflower Garden! 9:00-11:00 a.m. Coffee, OJ, and breakfast treats provided! Bring your own garden tools!



Gardeners Pam Brown and Laurie Angyn pause for a picture.

### Pam's Gardening Tip of the Month

By: Pam Brown

If you are an avid gardener and spend time digging in the soil, it is very important that you wear gardening gloves. Our soil here in Florida contains the bacterium (*Clostridium tetani*) that is the cause of Tetanus. These bacteria can infect wounds that you might have on your hands or wounds that you suffer while gardening. Puncture wounds are the most dangerous. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, we should all have a Tetanus booster vaccination every ten years to keep us protected from this disease.

Left to right, Delaware skipper on Florida paintbrush, cassinus blue resting on a grass blade, queen on Spanish needles.





## Yellow-rumped Warblers and Wax Myrtles

By: Craig N. Huegel

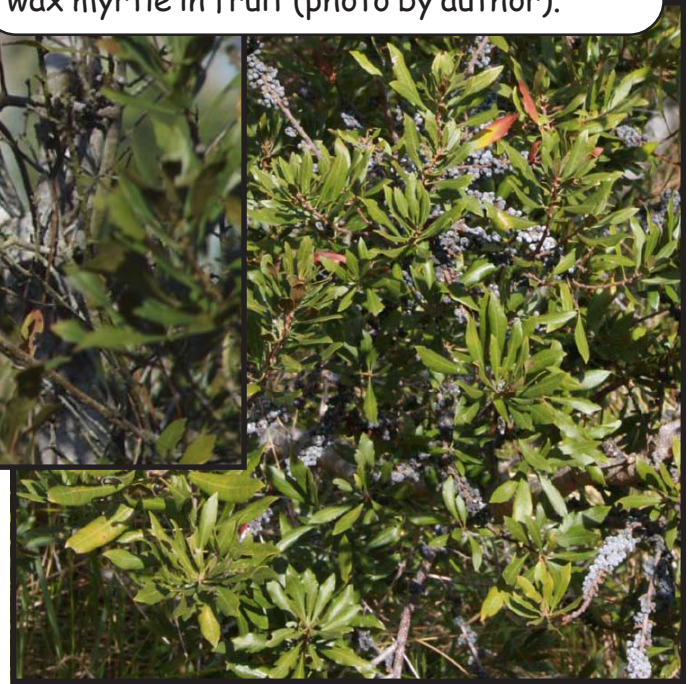
Though we lose bird species from Brooker Creek Preserve to migration, we gain many others as winter residents. Even our wildlife population has "snow birds." They arrive in late fall and early winter and stick around until late March to early April, and they add significantly to the Preserve's bird diversity and make winter bird watching quite different than at other times of the year.

One of the most common winter residents is the yellow-rumped warbler. Yellow-rumped warblers can be seen pretty much anywhere in the Preserve from now until about March, but they are most abundant in pine flatwoods, and along the upper edges of wetlands where wax myrtles are common. In the northern coniferous forests where they breed, yellow-rumped warblers eat a diet composed mostly of insects, but the fruit of wax myrtles comprises a significant portion of their diet during the winter, hence their former common name - myrtle warbler. Many migratory birds that overwinter at Brooker Creek Preserve rely heavily on small fruit during the winter months, even those like the yellow-rumped warbler that are insectivorous the rest of the year. Small caterpillars are rare during the winter as butterflies and moths are not laying eggs at this time. Fruit is more reliable, but lower in calories so more of it is required. That is why yellow-rumped warblers are drawn so heavily to patches of wax myrtles when they are full of fruit.

Small fruit is more universally used by birds than larger fruit during the winter because birds need to be able to swallow it whole. Therefore, fruit-producing plants that hold their ripe fruit into the winter are especially important, more so if the fruit is small like that of the wax myrtle. Other shrubs at Brooker Creek that fit this model are beautyberry, Walter's viburnum, and the hollies - yaupon, Carolina, and gallberry. The most significant trees are dahoon holly, cherry laurel, swamp bay, and tupelo. As you hike the various trails at Brooker Creek Preserve, watch and listen for bursts of energy caused by small birds. Chances are, you will find that these areas have large patches of wax myrtle, or one of these other plants, too.



Female yellow-rumped warbler in a wax myrtle (photo by David Williamson). Below, wax myrtle in fruit (photo by author).



The winter months are ideal times to take family and friends outdoors. Hike the trails of the Preserve and bring your binoculars to watch for yellow-rumped warblers and other winter birds during their brief, but important time here. You can join me and other Friends for the hike I will be leading on November 12 as part of our Annual Meeting. We'd love to have you join us.

## Gift Shop Open!!

The Friends Gift Shop had its grand opening the day of the Fall Wildflower Festival, and was a smashing success! Many thanks to Friends member and preserve volunteer, Kathleen Nichter, for taking on the job of Gift Shop Manager. Kathleen has been working hard over the past several months researching and exploring other gift shops and websites to determine what would work best here at Brooker Creek. Kathleen's many, many hours of work have come to fruition as the Friends gift shop has something for everyone: t-shirts for adults and children, hats, toys, books, a hiking center for items needed for hiking, water bottles, and more. Prices are reasonable, and it is a great place to shop for birthdays and holidays. Plus, all proceeds stay at Brooker Creek! Thank you, Kathleen! It will be enjoyed for many years to come!





**Brooker Group Tour Training**  
**Nov. 8, Tuesday**  
**4:00 to 7:00 pm**

**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](http://www.brookercreekpreserve.org)

**Nov.- Dec. Saturday Guided Hikes**

Most Saturdays 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.**

Extended guided hikes: Nov. 26 and Dec. 24, Saturdays, from 9:00 to 11:30 am.



Frog & beautyberry fruit, photo by Karl & Kathleen Nichter

**BCPEEC November Programs**

**4-H Brooker Creek Explorers.**  
Nov. 5 and 19 (1st & 3rd Saturdays of each month), 10:00 am to noon.

**Discovering Wildlife with your Child**  
Nov. 12 (2nd Saturday of each month), noon to 3:00 pm.

**Book Time at Brooker Creek**  
Thursday, 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.**

**BCPEEC December Programs & Events**

**4-H Brooker Creek Explorers.**  
Dec. 3 and 17 (1st & 3rd Saturdays of each month), 10:00 am to noon.

**Discovering Wildlife with your Child**  
Dec. 10 (2nd Saturday of each month), noon to 3:00 pm.

**Book Time at Brooker Creek**  
Thursday, 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.**

## **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](http://www.FriendsOfBrookerCreekPreserve.org)

### **To contact The Friends:**

Email: [fobcp@tampabay.rr.com](mailto: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](http://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**

Chair: Barbara Hoffman

Vice Chair: Cathie Foster

Vice Chair: Allyn Childress

Secretary: Chuck Parsons

Treasurer: Carson Morrow

### **Board Members**

Business Affairs:

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

Walt Hoskins

Robert Host

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

Newsletter Publisher/Artist: Cathy Vogelsong

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

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