


Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

March - April 2016

Chairman's Message

By Cathie Foster

In the last newsletter I wrote this message as Vice-Chair. I am honored that, at our January meeting, the Board of Directors elected me as Chairman for the coming year. With such a hard-working and dedicated group of fellow directors, I anticipate a very productive year.

This is an exciting time for the Friends and for Brooker Creek Preserve! Pinellas County and UF/IFAS Extension are recovering from the financial woes that affected the country in 2008, when hours at the Education Center were cut back and staff was limited to one person, who was there simply so that the center could be open to the public. Environmental programs and events were limited to what the Friends and volunteers could provide. Fast forward to 2016: The Education Center now has several employees with Environmental Education backgrounds, some of whom split their responsibilities between Brooker Creek Preserve and UF/IFAS Extension. Additionally, we have seen the recent and welcome addition of a team of three rangers to help manage the natural areas outside the Education Center.

What's next? The Friends Board of Directors has long-dreamed of the Education Center being open on Sundays. The trails are open 7 days a week, and I have seen as many as 25 cars in the parking lot on Sunday. This is fantastic! But, as you are aware, the Center is only open Thursday-Saturday. We learned recently that the Friends of Weedon Island Preserve, our "sister" center in St. Petersburg, has received a positive response from Pinellas County administration to their request to provide funds in the 2017 budget for Sunday hours at the Weedon Island Education Center. Funding for The Brooker

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Creek Center will be included, as well. What wonderful news! Our Board of Directors plans to work with the Friends of Weedon Island and County Commissioners to make sure this remains a priority. Stay tuned!

Cathie

A big THANK YOU from the FOBCP Board of Directors to "Return the Preserve" volunteers **Marion Yongue** and **Lou Petersen**. In the two years that our monthly "Return the Preserve" Work Days have been happening (under the excellent supervision of Evan Earle) Marion and Lou have been regular participants, arriving early, making sure everyone has what they need, making it fun, and staying until the area is cleaned up and ready for wildlife and visitors to the center to enjoy.

Save the Dates Friends Events for 2016

- Mar. 4 Advanced Plant ID
- Mar. 5 BC Preserve Book Club
- Mar. 12 Intro to Beekeeping
- Mar. 12 Star Party
- Mar. 13 Music in the Woods
- Mar. 19 Return the Preserve Work Day
- Mar. 20 Off the Beaten Path:
 Sandhill Scramble
- Mar. 26 Wildflower Garden Club**
- Apr. 2 BC Preserve Book Club
- Apr. 10 Music Jamboree
- Apr. 16 Wildlife Safari
- Apr. 23 Return the Preserve Work Day
- Apr. 30 Intro to Beekeeping
- Apr. 30 Wildflower Garden Club**
- May 21 Intro to Beekeeping


 Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

NIGHT HIKES!

Join the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve for a hiking experience along the EdCenter Trail...at night! These special hikes are open to the public and limited to 15 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, March 5, 6:30 pm
- Saturday, March 12, 6:30 pm Star Party!
- Saturday, March 19, 7:30 pm
- Saturday, April 2, 7:30 pm
- Saturday, April 16, 7:30 pm

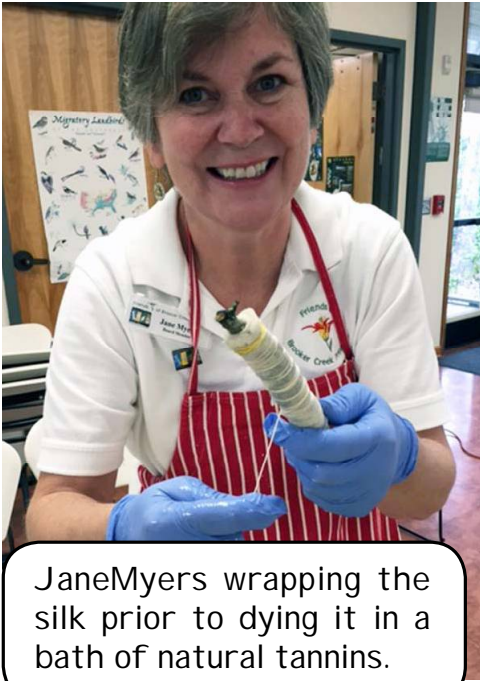
Pre-registration is required! Once you register, more information will come to you via email. Pre-register online by logging onto: <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/night-hikes-tickets-15245149653> These hikes are for adults and families only. Children must be accompanied by parents. And please leave Fido safely at home. No pets are allowed in any county Preserve.

Questions? Email fobcp@tampabay.rr.com

Eco-Printing Workshop - 1/10

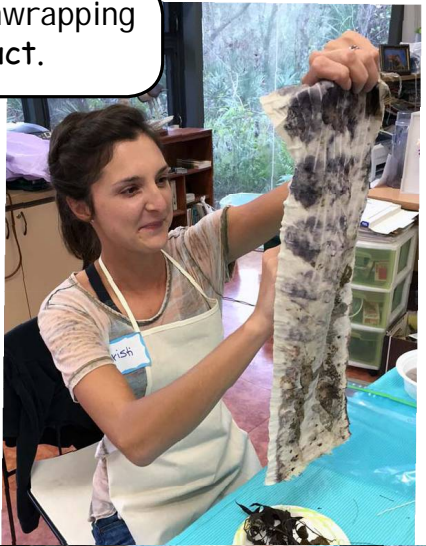
The Friends' very first Eco Printing workshop in January was a great success! The class was full with 15 eager participants! We learned the process of transferring the natural tannins from plant matter to silk and as you can see, the results were beautiful!

Many expressed an interest in having another day of printing and we will make that happen. Many thanks to our instructors, Marian Borchers and Dr. Barbara Kazanis!



Jane Myers wrapping the silk prior to dying it in a bath of natural tannins.

Cynthia Grizzle unwrapping her finished product.



Ironing the finished product

Students displaying their silk eco-prints.



Off the Beaten Path Hike: Swamp Amble - 1/17

By Cathie Foster

On a cloudy day in January twelve intrepid hikers followed their fearless leader, wildlife ecologist Dr. Craig Huegel, into an amazing swamp, far off the beaten path in Brooker Creek Preserve. Henry David Thoreau wrote of swamps, "I seemed to have reached a new world, so wild a place... far away from human society". Although our swamp was a mere stone's throw from human society it was, indeed, a new, wild world. Winding our way carefully through the sometimes thigh-high water, and being careful not to trip over cypress knees and tupelo roots, we were in awe of the ethereal beauty of the ferns. The majesty of the towering trees above our heads were in amazing contrast to the barely visible roots of the tiny jingle-bell orchids that Craig's experienced **eye spotted instantly. Butterfly orchids in the trees and jack-in-the-pulpits at our feet, waiting patiently for warmer weather to bloom, were everywhere!** If you have never experienced a swamp hike, what better way to do it than in one of Pinellas County and Brooker Creek Preserve's wildest places! Thanks, Dr. Huegel, for an exciting day!

If swamps aren't your thing, our next Off the Beaten Path hike is the dry Sandhill Scramble on March 20 (see page 11).



Don't forget to "like" the BCP Environmental Education Center on Facebook - [Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center](#)

Did You Know?

The Friends donated 4,717 hours during fiscal year 2014/2015 for Friends events! Wow!

Music in the Woods welcomes OAK HAY to the preserve on Sunday, **March 13th!** See our gorgeous flier on page 10 for all the information! We hope you can come to our scenic Preserve to kick back and enjoy their folksy tunes!

Amazon Smile -- Did You Know?

Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve Inc whenever you shop on AmazonSmile. AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service. Support Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve by shopping at: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/59-3302182>

Return the Preserve Work Day: Kicking off 2016 - 1/30, 2/20

by Evan Earle Jr.

Our January and February Friends Of Brooker Creek Preserve (FOBCP) Return The Preserve (RTP) Work Days got us started on the right foot for 2016! Wow! The progress from those two RTP Work Days has set the bar high for the rest of the year. But that's okay because there is no doubt that the FOBCP are up for the challenge.

Key to the success of these first two RTP Work Days of 2016 was the participation by the Hillsborough Academy of Math and Science (HAMS). Mr. Greg Long, his student volunteers, and parents showed up in numbers and with great energy and enthusiasm! Adding (and adding A LOT) to the folks from HAMS were Laura and Doug Wilhelm, Phil and Brian Kesel, and FOBCP volunteers Bob Burkard, Lou Petersen, Barbara Hoffman, and Marion Yongue. Everyone worked hard and it shows!

Targeted Areas:

Saturday, 01/30/16: Unnatural grapevine overgrowth and smilax at the delivery road turn off
Saturday, 02/20/16: More vine removal. St. Augustine grass along the walkway to the Education Center from the delivery road.

The students and volunteers jumped right in. Or should I say, they jumped right up to grab a hand full of grapevine or smilax. And down the vines came. The trees were opened up along with palmettos, beautyberry, salt bush, and more. The view to the wetlands was opened up. Stop and take a look the next time you are visiting the Preserve.

And when everyone wasn't jumping up to remove vines they were getting down to get out St. Augustine grass growing among the muhly grass. Once again, our friends from HAMS and our other volunteers were amazing. Out with the bad grass (St. Augustine) and in with the good grass (muhly). The muhly grass has been relieved from its unwanted neighbors and the whole area is healthier, more natural, and more attractive.



Students from HAMS -- HAMS Rocks!



Thank you HAMS! We love working with you! Thank you to ALL of our volunteers! You make such a contribution to our RTP Work Days. You make them fun! Did I really just call all that hard work fun? I would be remiss if I didn't give a shout out to the FOBCP **volunteers who were key to the success of our first two 2016 RTP Work Days:** Bob, Lou, Barbara, Laura, Phil, Brian, and Marion. Thank you! Working with our HAMS volunteers, you helped guide people in the right

direction, you helped remove the REALLY tough vines, you cleaned up the debris and cleaned off the road way when we were done. You are the best!

When I look back at where we started two years ago (yes, it's been two years), it lifts my spirits to see the difference we have made. The areas we have tackled over the years look fantastic. Check out the trees and shrubs to the north of the gazebo at the boardwalk entrance. You can see our wetlands. Check out the tree "islands" in the parking lot and imagine them blanketed in vines. Today, you see the trees and the understory.



What great volunteers and contributors we have. If you are looking for a hands on, sweat equity way to be involved at Brooker Creek Preserve, our Return The Preserve Work Days are the perfect option. We work hard, but we have lots of fun. You will see and enjoy the "before and after" benefits of your endeavors. And you can take pride in knowing that you helped us as we work to return the Preserve to its natural beauty.



"After" photo of one of the areas we tackled. All photos by Evan Earle Jr.

PS. Look for Penny Carnathan's informative and fun column Diggin' Florida Dirt in the Tampa Bay Times. Penny visited on our February 20th RTP Work Day and will feature us in her upcoming March 6th column focusing on Invasive Species Awareness Week. We're famous!

I see these pictures as another benefit of our Return The Preserve Work Days in that it restores areas where not just the flora, but the fauna (wow, I NEVER thought I would live long enough to actually be able to correctly use flora and fauna in a sentence) have a chance to recover and return. I look at the deer grazing where before it was a thick mat of vines. I am hoping that the raccoons, possums, bobcats, foxes, birds, snakes, lizards, frogs, and insects will return as well. And I realize it's not like there is a shortage of any of those critters, but if we can give them even just a little more space in terms of a natural setting, then I feel we have accomplished something with our RTP Work Days.

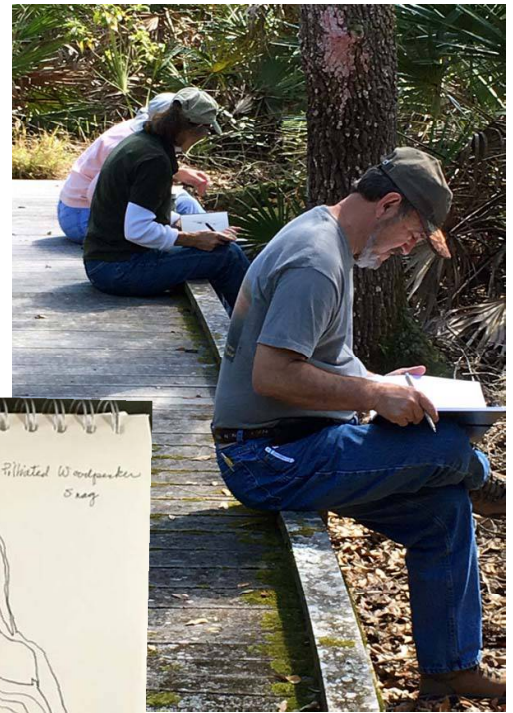
A couple of deer "enjoying" the area next to the boardwalk area that we cleaned out two years ago.



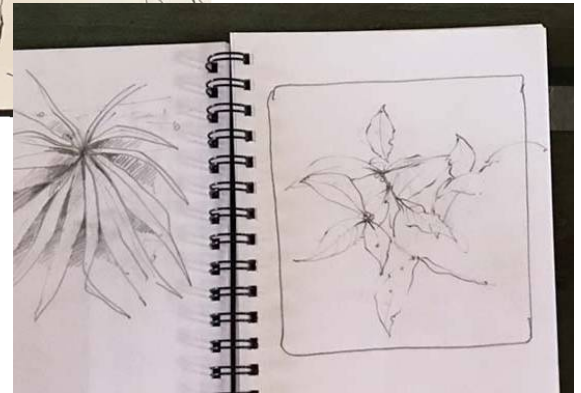
Illustrated Nature Journal - 2/20

By Terri Gonzalez

A perfect sunny day greeted the six of us who joined instructor Elizabeth Indianos for an art-nature journaling class on Saturday the 20th. We practiced contour drawing of the many plants around us, noticing the fine details often overlooked. Plant names were noted. After lunch we shared our results, eager to learn more. There was discussion of a possible follow-up class. Look for some of us around the Preserve, intently drawing in our journaling books. Thank you Elizabeth for a great day.



Photos of the Nature Journaling class by Elizabeth Indianos





Since Earth Day 2008, we no longer use plastic bags in our store. We offer a 5 donation per bag to a different charitable organization each month. Please help us raise these donations by bringing your own bags for your groceries!



February
donation went to
Rescue-A-Dog
www.rescueadog.org

 **We love dogs & cats at The Patch**

6,439 Bags
For a total of **\$321.95**

Donate to local charitable organizations & help save the Earth by bringing your own bag!

BRING YOUR BAG

Request a local charitable organization on our Facebook page.
www.facebook.com/naturesfoodpatch

March
donation going to
Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve
www.friendsofbrookercreekpreserve.org



Nature's Food Patch
Like This Page 1 hr · 48

Thank YOU for bringing your bags and donating \$321.95 to Rescue A Dog for the month of February as a part of We Love Dogs & Cats @ The Patch Campaign! Our March donation will go to @Friends at Brooker Creek! — at Nature's Food Patch. — at Nature's Food Patch.

Like Comment Share

Write a comment...

Nature's Food Patch's monthly Bring Your Bag Donation is going to the FOBCP this month! Thank you, Nature's Food Patch! Way to go Jane!

UF/IFAS Extension: 3 part series
Advanced Plant Identification
 Friday, March 4, 11 & 18 10:00am - 2:00pm



This three-part plant identification series will introduce participants to the basics and not-so-basic steps required to positively identify plants.

During each 4-hour session, participants will have lecture, hands-on and field experiences.

\$30 for the 3-part series.
 Register online:
<http://advancedplantid.eventbrite.com>



Introduction to

BEEKEEPING

A Hobby with Sweet Rewards
 3 Part Series!

 **March 12~ 10am-12pm**

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

 **April 30~ 10am-12pm**

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.

 **May 21~ 10am to 12pm**

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 BROOKER CREEK PRESERVE Our Wildest Place

An equal opportunity institution.

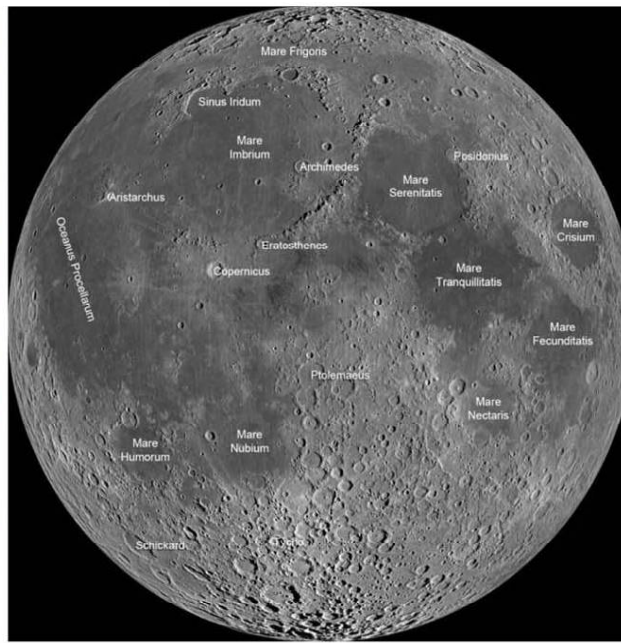
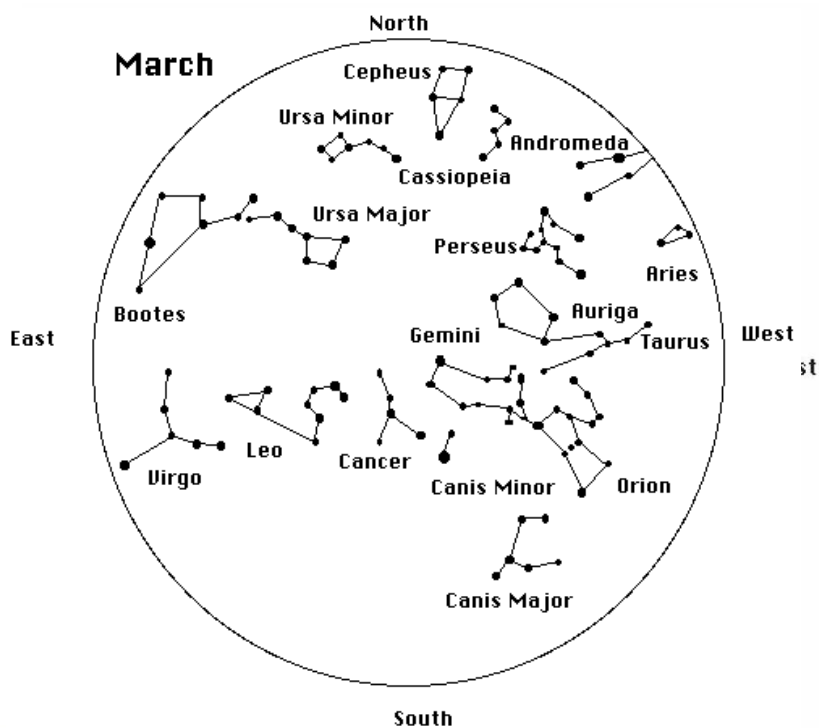
**Friends of
 Brooker Creek
 Preserve
 New Members**

Waltraud Boyles
 Richard Casper

Star Party!

Saturday, March 12, 2016
6:30 – 10:30 or so

Join us as we observe the night sky with the St. Petersburg Astronomy Club. Observe the stars through telescopes provided. Night hikes will be conducted as well along the .75 mile Ed Center Trail through the woods. Please bring a chair, water, insect repellent, and your own telescope if you have one. As always, pets, smoking, and alcohol are not allowed. Arrive between 6:30 and 7:00 p.m. – the front gates will be open only during this time. A \$3 per person donation is requested; registration is required. Register by calling 727-934-2680 or online at: <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/star-party-tickets-21136182892>



Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve
presents

MUSIC IN THE WOODS SERIES

with

Oak Hay Folkin' Bluegrass Band



Sunday, March 13, 2016 5:00—7:00 pm
Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center
Outdoor Music Pavillion
(Auditorium if raining)

\$5/person donation requested, kids 12 and under free

Make sure to bring lawn chairs or a blanket to sit on.

Bring drinks and a picnic dinner if you wish!

Sodas, water, and hot chocolate will be available for purchase.

(Sorry, no pets or alcoholic beverages allowed)

Questions: fobcp@tampabay.rr.com

or

727-934-2680

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

Two Hikes Remaining!

March 20, 2016 – 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 12, 2016 – Wildlands Walkabout – 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!

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.

Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve Music Jamboree - 4/10 3:30 – 5 pm – All Ages

Dust off that guitar, fiddle, banjo or other acoustic instrument and bring it down to the outdoor pavilion near the auditorium for a jam session. Meet other musicians and learn some new songs. Music lovers of all ages are encouraged to come, listen and enjoy. The jam session will be lead by local musician, Brad Myers.



Hey Kids!

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

WILDLIFE SAFARI

Saturday, April 16, 2016
9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

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 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 16, 2016
9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
For children ages 4-12

Thank you for sponsoring this fun and educational adventure for kids. Your business name and logo will be placed on a sign in a prominent location as a sponsor of one of the wildlife stations along the safari. Wildlife stations cost \$200 each. You may choose to sponsor one station by yourself (\$200) or share a sponsorship with another sponsor (\$100 each). Deadline for sponsorships is April 12.

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

Name of Business: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Contact Person: _____

Please email your logo to: fobcp@tampabay.rr.com
Check payable to: Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve
3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs, FL 34688

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

Wildlife Safari Volunteers Needed!

We are gearing up for one of our most exciting events of the year! The annual **Wildlife Safari**, featuring animals native to Brooker Creek Preserve will be **Saturday April 16, 9 am - 2 pm**.

We cannot conduct this event without you! Please look for the volunteer sign-up in the break room at the Education Center in the near future. Or contact us at fobcp@tampabay.rr.com and let us know how you'd like to help.

Morning Shift (8:30-11:00) & Afternoon Shift (11:00-2:30):

- **Registration Table**
- **Greeter Table**
- **Prize Table**
- **Parking Lot Attendant**

Morning shift 7:30-11:30 & Afternoon shift 11:00-3:00

- **Safari Guides** – 2 assigned to each Wildlife Station, a morning person and an afternoon person.

Guides will (1) help set up the station, (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 passports, (5) help take down the station.

Lunch Attendants – 2 people needed to set up and clean up lunch in the break room (10:00- 2:00)

An Invitation from Barry

Barry Andress, our Golf Cart Guy, invites you to take a tour with him in the golf cart along the paved 2-mile driveway loop at Brooker Creek Preserve. The golf cart provides a quiet ride and a new way to see the beautiful landscape and possibly some wildlife. Barry knows some natural history and Preserve history, and is happy to share his knowledge with you. Please email Barry to set up a date and time: alfabarry3@gmail.com.



Seeds By: Craig Huegel

With spring fast approaching, seeds that have lain dormant all winter are getting ready to sprout. We often look at seeds as somewhat simple objects, but what seems simple on the outside is **infinitely more complex on second look.**

Seeds are the pinnacle of evolution when it comes to plant reproduction. Before the evolution of seeds, plants relied on spores and this still works quite well for ferns and mosses. After all, these groups have been on land for hundreds of millions of years. Spores have the advantage of long-range migration; their lightweight simple structure allows them to travel great distances through the air and colonize new lands. Their major drawback, however, is tied to this same feature; spores are lightweight because they do not carry nutrition that can be used to sustain the embryonic plant as it develops and eventually becomes independent.

Seeds pack a lot of extra nutrition with the embryo. What makes beans and other seeds so nutritious for us are the dense oils, proteins, and carbohydrates the parents packaged for their embryos at the time they formed the seeds. This "endosperm" feeds the developing embryo prior to its germination and right afterwards. As the leaves develop enough to fully function, the endosperm continues to make up the shortfall. The evolution of seeds greatly decreased infant mortality in seed-producing plants.

Seeds are much heavier than spores, so they generally don't travel as great a distance, but they move far enough away from their parents to do their job. While spores travel on the wind, a great many seeds travel by way of animals. Seeds eaten by birds can go great distances before exiting out the other end; those carried away by mammals may also get planted beneath the soil surface. It has been an effective trade-off.

Seeds are composed of three different parts and each is extremely important. The seed cover protects the seed and often inhibits it from germinating until the right environmental conditions arise. **Breaking seed dormancy (seed stratification) is accomplished in a great many ways and is tied to the ecology of the plant.** Tiny seeds, like lettuce, cannot germinate unless they can "feel" the sunlight near the soil surface. This ensures that the tiny shoots can reach the soil surface before the energy stored in their endosperm is used up. Some require a period of cold - even some natives found at Brooker Creek Preserve. Cold temperatures tell the seed that winter has arrived and the eventual warm-up then tells them that **it is spring and safe to germinate.** Some require fire/heat. **These seeds are from fire-adapted plants that have evolved to germinate when the understory is most open and sunny.** Other seeds have chemical inhibitors on their seed coat that have to be abraded off. This happens in the digestive tract of birds, most commonly, and ensures that the seeds are being carried away in the bird's gut to new places, away from their parents.



Grapefruit seed. The tiny embryo is slightly raised above the endosperm on the left half. The darker colored seed coat surrounds the entire

The embryo inside a seed starts life off as a very tiny organism that often exists in a state of **suspended animation until the seed coat is stratified**. Once this occurs, the embryo wakes up and begins acting like any other embryo, plant or animal. It begins to feed on the endosperm supplied by its parents and starts to grow, and it begins releasing a complex suite of hormones that direct its future development. Within this so-called womb of a seed and further protected by the structure of the cone or fruit, the embryos develop their future root and shoot and prepare to meet the day they will emerge into the world.

The seeds of some plants at Brooker Creek Preserve sprouted last fall and have overwintered as small seedlings, waiting for spring. Most, however, are just now swelling up and getting ready to sprout. They have navigated a complex process to get to this point and will now rely of moist soil and sufficient light and fertility to reach the next stage in their life story.

Nature Store News by Kathleen Nichter

As promised in the last Nature Store News, the Friends' Nature Store continues to grow and evolve. We added to our plush toy collection, and are always looking to our distributors for new adult and children's books that relate to the plants and animals in the preserve.

Our used book section continues to be popular, so popular that we often run low on books. If you have any books or magazines on Florida, nature, science, history, or anything else **related to Brooker Creek Preserve, whether fiction or non-fiction, that you no longer want to keep**, please consider donating them to the store. Our store volunteer can provide you with a donation receipt if you want one.

We decided to keep a small display of our holiday cards and ornaments up year round. We **realized that many people may not be in the store during the five or six weeks we normally feature the display**, yet may be interested in the ornaments or cards for the next holiday season. If you have any suggestions for the store please let us know. We love hearing from everyone.

Red Maples Need Good Homes

We have a few red maple trees left over from our Florida Arbor Day celebration! These were made available through a grant from the Florida Forest Service. The trees, along with a tree tag, planting and pruning handout, as well as a magnet to remind you about watering your tree will all be available through the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve Nature Store attached to our Exhibit Hall. Stop by Thursday through Saturday between 9am-4pm to bring home a FREE tree. Be sure to bring some extra money with you to do some shopping there too! All proceeds go towards supporting environmental education programs that take place right here, Happy Florida Arbor Day from Brooker Creek Preserve!



Lara Milligan with maples

News from the Wildflower Garden

by Pam Brown

The January workday in the garden was spent deadheading and pruning to get it ready for spring. There were two surprises as we worked through the plants. We found two small, delicate lawn orchids (*Zeuxine strateumatica*) with blooms standing only about three inches high. See the picture provided by Karl Nichter. Unfortunately, even though they are naturalized throughout the Southeast, they are originally from Asia and not native. The other surprise was the sprouting of the pine hyacinth (*Clematis baldwinii*) that was planted in the northwest corner of the garden and presumed to have died. Apparently, it was just dormant and all of the rain that we had this summer and fall have coaxed it back to life. Now, it will be interesting to see if it actually blooms. **If you are interested in learning about Florida wildflowers while helping us maintain the Wildflower Garden, join us on the last Saturday of each month from 9 to 11 am. Bring your gloves, hat and gardening tools, and wear closed toed shoes. Mosquito repellent is also advised. We will provide breakfast snacks, coffee and juice. I would love to see you there. Please note that we will change to our summer hours of 8 to 10 am in April.**



Grass orchid. Photo by Karl Nichter.

Pam's Gardening Tip

Pine hyacinth. Photo by Craig Huegel.

Spring is here – but it doesn't seem like it was really winter. No real damage in the landscape from the cold, just a few plants nipped by frost. Now is the time to prune plants that need to be renewed or reduced in size.

Some of the natives that are used as shrubs can benefit from a good pruning. Dwarf Yaupon hollies (*Ilex vomitoria* 'Compacta,' 'Nana' or 'Schillings Dwarf') can be reduced by up to one half to keep them as nice mounding shrubs. They only need this pruning once a year. Dwarf Walter's Viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum* 'Mrs. Schiller's Delight' or 'Densa') can also benefit from this type of pruning. Too much frequent pruning of both of these plants can cause them to develop sparse foliage only at the tips of branches and then a gradual decline. Beautyberry can also be hard pruned this month if you want to keep the plant as a bush with full foliage. I prune mine down to about 18 inches each year.



If you have hedge plants that are getting sparse foliage at the bottom of each plant, you will want to prune them so that the top of each plant is narrower than the base. This insures that **there is sufficient light to encourage full growth all the way to the bottom of each plant as shown in the picture at right.** Picture from University of Florida/I FAS fact sheet "Pruning Landscape Trees and Shrubs." After pruning, apply an organic fertilizer or compost to the root area of shrubs. Mature shrubs do not need any additional fertilizer during the growing season if they are well mulched.

Brooker Creek Preserve Book Club

by Jon Burr

The Friends of Brooker Creek Book Club started the year with a January discussion of J. B. Starkey's "Things I remember". With perhaps more pluck than luck, rancher Starkey grew his cattle business from very modest beginnings in south Pinellas in the



early 1900's to the ownership of hundreds of acres in west Pasco county in the 1980's. I think everyone enjoyed the book: those who'd lived here all their life (yes, there are two of us) and those who have at various times moved to Florida. It seemed difficult not to rue the loss of most of this ranchland to suburban sprawl.

On the other hand, "Alas Babylon", February's read, presented a scenario that took care of suburban sprawl with a story that returned a small rural central Florida area back to about the era of the 1900's. Written in the late fifties the book related the survival of a small community after the almost total destruction of the 'civilized' world due to an atomic holocaust. The book was an easy read - today considered young adult reading - with limited swear words and no torrid love scenes that characterize so much, it seems, of present day novels. (Ozzie and Harriet, married couples slept in twin beds, that world. Now I'm giving away the demographic of the book and us readers).

It was observed that the Concerned Scientist's clock was recently set ahead to three minutes to midnight, a setting it 'enjoyed' about the same time as the time period of this book. I think the general consensus was that the world is in as much danger if not more than it was at the peak of the cold war. The book club attendees were all at least teens during the time covered in the book and each had something to share about those times. My wife was teaching in an elementary school a few blocks from McDill air base during that time and they were not instructed to duck and cover but to simply have the children sing.

In a much lighter vein, on March 5 we will discuss "Finding Home in the Sandy Lands of the South" by Francis ("Jack") Putz. The writer of this collection of articles tells many varied stories of his 30 or so years in Florida as a biology teacher at the University of Florida. "Rain" by Cynthia Barnett is the book we're going to share our thoughts about on April 2. Ms. Barnett, who lives in Gainesville and also teaches at the University of Florida, gave a talk at the Preserve last October about her book "Blue Revolution." We have room for some more at the table. Please consider coming: First Saturday of the month at 9:30 at the Preserve Ed Center.

Book Club Reads for 2016:

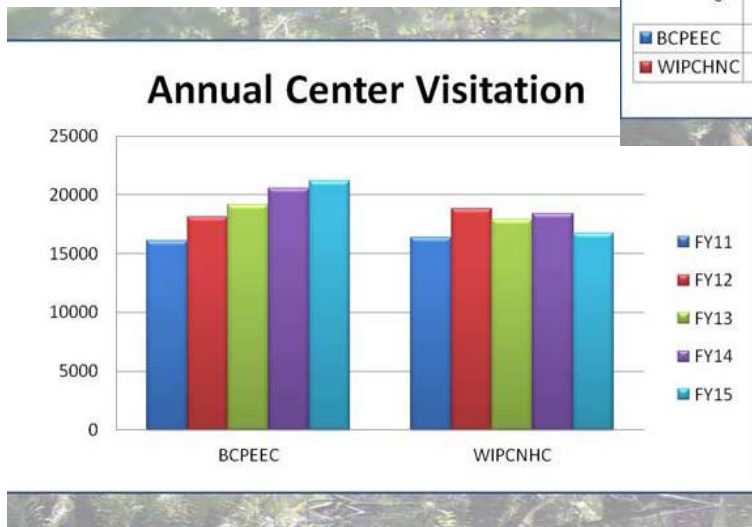
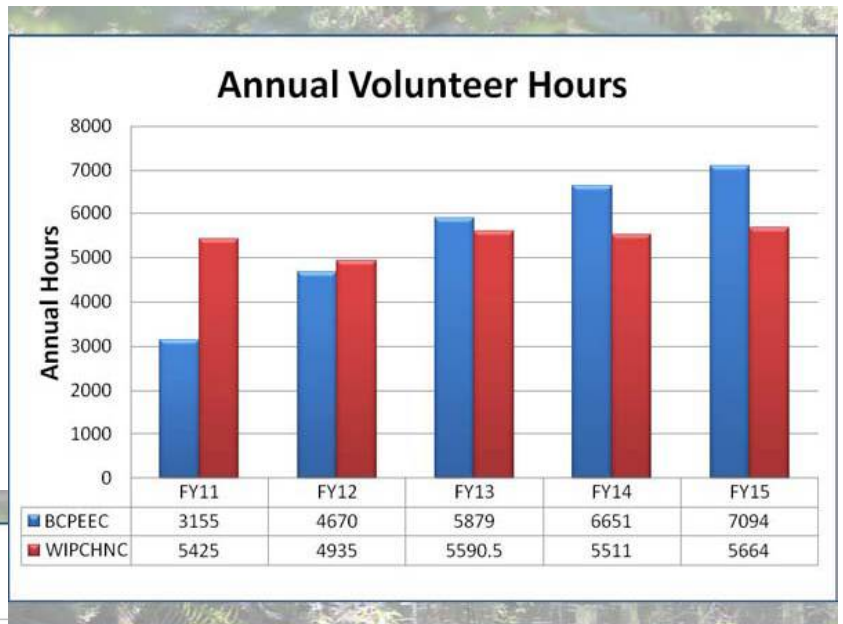
- Mar. 5: "Finding Home in the Sandy Lands of the South" by Francis ("Jack") Putz.
- Apr. 2: "Rain" by Cynthia Barnett.
- May 7: "The Everglades River of Grass" by Marjory Stoneman Douglas. This stands with "Silent Spring" and "Sand County Almanac" as one of the monuments of environmental writing.
- June 4: Craig Pittman and Ray Arsenault's book "Scent of Scandal" is a local account of CITES law concerning endangered species. Some of the names in the book may ring a bell.
- July 2: We stay with a tad more controversial an issue with Carl Hiaasen, author of "Team Rodent."
- Aug. 2: We're doing something a little differently. For the August meeting please read any book about, or by, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings.

Volunteer News and More!

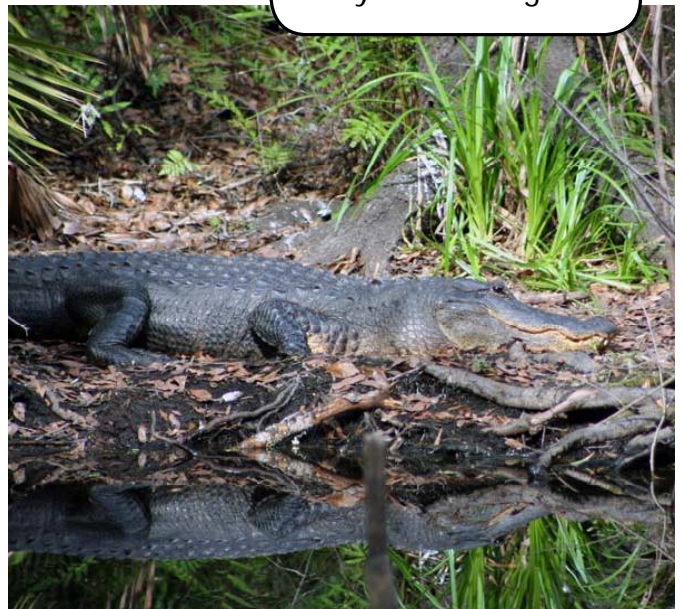
By Julia Myers, Education Support Specialist, Brooker Creek Preserve



Thank You for another GREAT Year! In 2015, we had 62 active volunteers contributing 7,094 hours, which is an equivalent of \$153,301 of service to this community! On top of that we had 21,158 visitors in the Education Center and we offered a total of 284 programs reaching 8,832 people! You all are FANTASTIC! Keep up the AWESOME work.



Alligators, photo by Lara Milligan.



Advanced Plant Identification with James is back! This year the 3-part series will be held at Brooker on March 4th, 11th, and 18th from 10am -2pm. Please register on eventbrite if you would like to attend and help us spread the word! See page 8 for details.

TWO Save the dates for all Active Pinellas County Parks & Preserves Volunteers!

1. Pinellas County's 3R Volunteer Event-Recognition, Retention and Recruitment - at Walsingham Park on March 5th from 11-2 at Shelter 8. Bring a like-minded friend who might want to learn more about volunteer opportunities. Lunch will be provided by the Cabot Cheese Gratitude Grill! If you'll attend, please RSVP by Feb. 29th to swilson@pinellascounty.org. See Julia if you have any questions.
2. Pinellas County Annual Volunteer Celebration for all volunteers with at least 20 hours in the last 12 months. To thank you for your services we are putting on the Ritz with live entertainment, dancing, and lavish hors d'oeuvres. April 14th from 4 to 6:30pm at the Armed Forces History Museum in Largo.



Diamondback rattlesnake,
photo by Lara Milligan.

We had two diamondback rattlesnake sightings in December! This was a very special treat for us. **The first one was behind the shed and the second one was literally right off the boardwalk in front of the Ed Center.**



Thank you to the Friends for sponsoring our Visiting Critters program in January! It was very well attended and a great way to kick off our programs for the New Year. The kids in attendance learned a lot! The great horned owl and friend are from the Largo Nature Park. Photo by Julia Myers.

**BROOKER CREEK PRESERVE
MARCH 2016**

Cool calendar for your refrigerator!

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
3 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	4 Guided Hike 9-10:30 <i>(Woods Walk)</i> Advanced Plant ID- #1 10am-2pm <i>(\$30 for 3-part series)</i>	5 Guided Hike 9-10:30 <i>(Ecosystems)</i> Book Club 9:30-10:30 Python Challenge 10:30-noon Night Hike 6:30-8:30 pm <i>(\$3)</i>	6
10 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15 Owls, Owls, Owls! 11-12:30	11 Advanced Plant ID- #2 10am-2pm <i>(\$30 for 3-part series)</i>	12 Beginning Bird Hike 8-10 Intro to Beekeeping Part 1 10-noon Star Party w/St. Pete Astronomy Club 6:30-10 pm <i>(\$3/person)</i>	13 Music in the Woods 5-7 pm <i>(\$5/person)</i>
17 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	18 Guided Hike 9-10:30 <i>(Wildlife)</i> Family Fun Friday 10-12 <i>(Dip Netting)</i> Advanced Plant ID- #2 10am-2pm <i>(\$30 for 3-part series)</i>	19 Return the Preserve Work Day 8-11 am Guided Hike 9-10:30 <i>(Footprints on the Land)</i> Night Hike 7:30-9:30 pm <i>(\$3/person)</i>	20 Off the Beaten Path Hike: Sandhill Scramble 9am-1pm <i>(\$25/person)</i>
24 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	25 Guided Hike 9-10:30 <i>(Botany)</i>	26 Photographing Nature 8:30-10:30 Guided Hike 9-12 <i>(Extended Hike)</i> Wildflower Garden Club 9-11 Ferns 10:30-12	27
31 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15			

APRIL 2016

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
	1 Guided Hike 9-10:30 <i>(Woods Walk)</i>	2 Ecosystems Hike 9-10:30 Book Club 9:30-10:30 Swallow-tailed Kites 10:30-12 Night Hike 7:30-9:30 pm <i>(\$3)</i>	3
7 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	8	9 Beginning Bird Hike 8-10 Big Birds for Beginners 10:30-noon Dragonfly Discovery Walk 1:30-3	10 Music Jamboree 3:30-5:00
14 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	15 Guided Hike 9-10:30 <i>(Wildlife)</i>	16 Wildlife Safari 9am-2pm Night Hike 7:30-9:30 pm <i>(\$3)</i>	17
21 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	22 Guided Hike 9-10:30 <i>(Botany)</i> Family Fun Friday 10-12 <i>(Alien Invaders)</i>	23 Return the Preserve Work Day 8-11 am Guided Hike 9-12 <i>(Extended Hike)</i> Wetland Wildflowers 10:30-12	24
28 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	29	30 Wildflower Garden Club 8-10 Photography Hike 8:30-10:30 Guided Hike 9-10:30 Intro to Beekeeping Part 2 10-noon	

Hiking Trails are open every day from 7:00 am until 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
Center Hours: Thurs. - Sat., 9am - 4pm
Friends Nature Store is located in the Education Center. Hours: Thurs. - Sat., 9am - 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.

Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve Board of Directors:

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Vice Chair: Robert Burkard
Secretary: Pam Brown
Treasurer: Jane Myers

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Director Emeritus: Ken Rowe
Art Director: Terri Gonzolez
Beekeeper: Robert Burkard
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Land Use Chair: Dr. Craig Huegel
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Past Chairman: Walt Hoskins
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Evan Earle, Jr.
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Wildlife Safari Chair: Brad Wilkins

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Book Club: Jon Burr & Kathleen Nichter
Membership: Jeff Myers
Nature Store Manager: Kathleen Nichter
Newsletter Publisher: Cathy Vogelsong
Website Master: Cathy Ordiway

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