



Newsletter of the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

January , February, 2010

Evolution of the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

By Barbara Hoffman, Chairperson

When the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve began in 1994, very few Pinellas County residents had heard of Brooker Creek Preserve. Brooker Creek what? Where? Brooker Creek Preserve often was confused with John Chestnut Park because the park was formerly named Brooker Creek Park. We had an identity crisis. Our focus then was public awareness, and we spent hundreds of hours giving talks to local groups (Rotary, Native Plant Society, Kiwanas Club, Palm Harbor Methodist Church Singles Group – basically, anyone who would have us!) expounding the greatness of having over 8,000 acres set aside for wildlife. We urged people to vote for the Penny for Pinellas (the first one) because part of that money would be used for trails, land management, and a dream – an environmental education center.

Back then, the county employed three people to run and manage Brooker Creek Preserve, and the county depended on its huge staff of volunteers to do a host of needed chores including guiding hikes every Saturday morning, help with fire maintenance, collecting and disposing hundreds of truckloads of garbage, exotic plant removal, Catesby Lily research, and much more. The Friends planned and provided the money to run three weeks of summer camps from 1998 to 2003 staffed by volunteers. The Friends supported the volunteers by providing tangible needs like microscopes, insect nets, work gloves, boots, bug spray, and field guides.

The Penny passed, the Education Center was built, trails were opened to the public, and Brooker Creek Preserve became a jewel of Pinellas. By 2004, the county employed 25 staff to run and manage the preserve and the center. Employed staff took over many of the jobs of the volunteer staff. Programs expanded, adult and youth classes were plentiful, and research was taking place. Brooker Creek Preserve was now on the map.

But being on the map had its downsides. There came the time when county VIPs wanted pieces of the preserve for non-preserve uses. The Friends evolved from a support to an advocacy group. We spent countless hours at commission meetings, meetings with county staff, meetings with each other, and meetings with our lawyer. As our founding Chairman, Judith Buhrman, often stated, “Not one inch!” Today we are proud and satisfied with the final outcome of our work. By 2009, we finally had time to breathe and re-group.

Then the economy crashed. The paid staff of Brooker Creek Preserve was pared down to seven. The trails, once open seven days per week from sunup till sundown, are now open only a meager three days per week. The Education Center is closed four days per week. Research staff are gone, and so are the research programs. The maintenance crew dwindled to two, and though their hearts and souls are with the Preserve, two people cannot keep up with the required maintenance of a healthy 8,000 acres.

We are convinced that the county needs to rely on its army of volunteers for manpower. We are confident that the volunteer staff, numbering 120, can easily provide the manpower necessary to keep Brooker Creek Preserve vibrant, healthy, and open to the public seven days per week. Although we remain ever vigilant about watching our precious preserve land, we are evolving from that into a complete support group, and have made this our goal for 2010.



Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

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This newsletter is published every other month.

Submit articles to:
Newsletter editor: Ken Rowe
ksr28@verizon.net
727-781-0745

The Board of Directors meet every other month on the second Thursday evenings and occasionally every month.

Take Note:

Officers

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

Board Members:

Debbie Reker, Business Affairs
Dave Seidel, Volunteer liaison
Barbara Schultz, Publicity Chair
Craig Huegel, Land Use Chair
Jon Burr, Membership
Beverly Billiris, Mayor, Tarpon Springs,
Ken Rowe, Newsletter Editor
Walt Hoskins —Still a board member now living in Hernando County

To contact the Friends

E-Mail;

fobcp@tampabay.rr.com
727-934-2680

Leave a message and your phone number or see our website:

www.friendsofbrookercreek-preserve.org

Environmental Lands Division has a new Disc Harrow!

By Jon Burr

The old one was broken waiting for a part. The company that makes them was out of business. What was Environmental Lands Division to do?

Friends to the rescue: just in time. What, you say?

You know those little trails off the main trails at Brooker Creek Preserve that say "Staff Only", you know the ones you really want to go down but your conscience won't let you. They are most likely to be fire breaks. Fire breaks are a very important component of wild fire management. When "proscribed burns" are warranted these firebreaks allow the fires to be contained in smaller more manageable areas. When wild fires occur, firebreaks allow the setting of "back fires" to meet the oncoming flames and stop them by consuming the fuel before the wild fire can get there. Fire breaks are also valuable to allow staff to get to wild fires more quickly.

Fire breaks are maintained by discing equipment pulled behind a tractor. Well, that's what's broken. And that's what Environmental Lands Division needed. Thanks to the Friends, the Environmental Lands Division will be getting an ECW 20-24 Harrow. This is a strange looking device called, I think, a wheel offset harrow, has a set of regular wheels in the center and discs at each end. It's pulled behind a tractor. (Thank goodness the Environmental Lands Division already has one of them.) This harrow weighs 3656 lbs and has a cutting width of 8'. Its heavy duty US made Timken roller bearing assemblies are one of its highlight features.

The Friends made the purchase of this vital piece of equipment possible by a gift of \$12,000 to Environmental Lands Division. Stay tuned, maybe we can get a demonstration some time in the future.



Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center - February 2010

3940 Keystone Rd., Tarpon Springs, FL 34688

Call (727) 453-6800 to register for programs.

Guided Hikes

Saturday, February 6, 2010 9:00 am – 10:30 am

Saturday, February 13, 2010 9:00 am – 10:30 am

Saturday, February 20, 2010 9:00 am – 10:30 am

Education Services Volunteers, Environmental Lands Division

Take a walk through time on these Saturday morning guided hikes along the Education Center Trail. Join us for this 0.75-mile walk as we look at how the land has changed over time and discuss the ecological footprints left by those changes. Sturdy closed-toe shoes are a must, and water and a hat are recommended. Pre-registration is required by 12:00 noon on the Friday before the hike. Free. **All ages welcome - children younger than 6 may find this hike challenging.**

Wildlife in Your Backyard

Saturday, February 6, 2010 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Wildlife Haven Rehab, Inc., Odessa, FL

From anoles to zebra longwings, many wildlife species are attracted to our suburban yards. Join rehabilitators from Wildlife Haven Rehab to learn more about the wildlife in your backyard and how to coexist with your wild neighbors. Live animals may attend and participate in this program. Pre-registration is required. Free. **All ages welcome.**



Book Time at Brooker Creek: *Who's Bugging You?*

Thursday, February 11, 2010 10:30 am - 11:15 am

Education Services Volunteers, Environmental Lands Division

This program is designed to connect pre-school children to the wonders of the natural world. Twice each month, children are treated to a variety of stories that connect them to their environment. This week features *Who's Bugging You?* by Charles Reasoner. Children learn about the amazing feats performed by many insects in this delightfully illustrated pull-out book. The program also includes a craft, game or other hands-on activity related to the story. Pre-registration is required. Spaces are limited so register early! Free. **Recommended ages: 3 – 5.**

Changing Seasons Guided Hikes

Friday, February 12, 2010 9:00 am – 10:30 am

Friday, February 26, 2010 9:00 am – 10:30 am

Education Services Volunteers, Environmental Lands Division

Seasonal changes in Florida can be subtle, even to long-time residents. Join us for a guided walk as we look for evidence of the changing seasons along the trail. Sturdy closed-toe shoes are a must, and water and a hat are recommended. Pre-registration is required. This event is free and open to the public. **All ages welcome - children younger than 6 may find this hike challenging.**

Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

Scatology: The Study of Scat (Animal Poop) Mini-workshop

Saturday, February 13, 2010 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm

coyote

Scat Educational Display on Exhibit

Thursday, January 21, 2010 – Saturday, February 13, 2010



George L. Heinrich, Heinrich Ecological Services, St. Petersburg, FL

Have you ever seen scat on a Preserve trail and wondered which species left it behind? Perhaps it was from a gopher tortoise, coyote or alligator. This family-oriented mini-workshop and educational display allow participants and visitors to see a variety of preserved specimens and learn about the value of scat to wildlife biologists and naturalists. Mini-workshop participants will also dissect gopher tortoise scat to learn what these reptiles eat. Registration is required for this free mini-workshop. **Recommended ages: 10 and up.**

Open Classroom - Discovering Nature with Your Child

Saturday, February 20, 2010 12:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Education Services Volunteers, Environmental Lands Division

Who lives in that skin? What is the difference between a carnivore and an herbivore? Whose tracks are those? Stop by our classroom anytime between noon and 3:00 pm to participate in a variety of self-guided nature games and activities that answer these questions and many more. Pre-registration is not required for this open activity. Free. **Recommended for families with children of all ages.**

Book Time at Brooker Creek: A New Home for an Old Friend: Responsible Aquarium Stewardship

Thursday, February 25, 2010 10:30 am - 11:15 am

Education Services Volunteers, Environmental Lands Division

This program is designed to connect pre-school children to the wonders of the natural world. Twice each month children are treated to a variety of stories that connect them to their environment. This week features *A New Home for an Old Friend: Responsible Aquarium Stewardship* by Suzie Caffery and Diahn Escue. Moving to a new home can be hard, especially if you can't take your fish tank pets along. Children learn safe alternatives to aquarium dumping in this fun rhyming tale. Pre-registration is required. Spaces are limited so register early! Free. **Recommended ages: 3 – 5.**

Winter Wonders Extended Hike

Saturday, February 27, 2010 9:00 am – 11:30 am

Education Services Volunteers, Environmental Lands Division

Cooler temperatures and shorter days bring about many changes during the winter months. Join us for a brisk walk along one of the longer trails to experience winter in the Preserve. Hikers may walk 2.8 to 4 miles, depending on trail conditions. Pre-registration is required by 12:00 noon on the Friday before the hike. Free. **All ages welcome - children younger than 12 may find this hike challenging.**

Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

Wildlife Scene Investigators Hike

Saturday, February 27, 2010 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm

Education Services Volunteers, Environmental Lands Division

Join our “investigators” as they take you behind the scenes of a wildlife investigation. Scat, tracks and other “evidence” tell the story of the daily dramas of the food web in action. Watch and listen closely as they piece together clues of wildlife activity from the signs that are left behind to learn which wild creatures have been in the area and what they might have been doing. Sturdy closed-toe shoes are a must. Water and a hat are recommended. Pre-registration is required and space is limited. Free. **Recommended ages: 8 and up.**

Fox



Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center - March 2010

3940 Keystone Rd., Tarpon Springs, FL 34688

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Guided Hikes

Saturday, March 6, 2010 9:00 am – 10:30 am

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Palm Boot Mask Workshop

Saturday, March 6, 2010 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Lilian Norris, Artist and Environmental Educator, Palm Harbor, FL

In almost every culture, masks have been created and worn for protection, as disguises, or as a means of transforming oneself spiritually. They have functioned as a dynamic medium of expression and transformation. In this workshop we use the base of the palm frond, known as the palm boot, as a foundation to create unique wall hangings. The program begins with a pictorial introduction that helps inspire participants to create their own works of art. No art experience is necessary. Participants receive a palm boot to decorate with paint and natural materials. Fee: \$10 for materials. Pre-registration is required and space is limited. **Recommended ages: 10 and up.**

Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

Book Time at Brooker Creek – *The Snail's Spell*

Thursday, March 11, 2010 10:30 am – 11:15 am

Education Services Volunteers, Environmental Lands Division

This program is designed to connect pre-school children to the wonders of the natural world. Twice each month children are treated to a variety of stories that introduce them to their environment. This week features *The Snail's Spell* by Joanne Ryder. This enchanting tale encourages children to imagine being a snail. They learn how snails move, see, and feel their way through a beautifully illustrated garden. This program also includes a craft, game or other hands-on activity related to the story. Pre-registration is required. Spaces are limited so register early! Free. **Recommended ages: 3 – 5.**

The Story of Smokey Bear

Saturday, March 13, 2010 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Florida Division of Forestry

Smokey Bear has been teaching kids how to prevent forest fires for more than sixty years. Did you know that he is based on a real bear? Join us to learn the true story of Smokey Bear and things you can do to help prevent wild prevent wildfires. Bring your camera to have your picture taken with Smokey after the program. Pre-registration is appreciated. Free. **Recommended for families with children of all ages.**



Open Classroom - Discovering Nature with Your Child

Saturday, March 13, 2010 12:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Education Services Volunteers, Environmental Lands Division

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Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

I's the Photographer, not the Camera!

Saturday, March 20, 2010 9:00 am – 11:00 am

Karl and Kathleen Nichter, New Port Richey, FL

Do you think the only way to take good nature photographs is to have expensive, specialized camera equipment? It is the photographer that makes the photograph, not the camera! Bring your camera and join local nature photographers Karl and Kathleen Nichter for this two-hour workshop. Learn how to apply basic digital photography techniques and photo composition to create pleasing nature pictures with your own camera. This workshop includes both classroom instruction and practice in the field. Space is limited, so register early. Pre-registration required. Free. **Best for adults and children 12 and up.**

Book Time at Brooker Creek – *The Grouchy Ladybug*

Thursday, March 25, 2010 10:30 am – 11:15 am

Education Services Volunteers, Environmental Lands Division

This program is designed to connect pre-school children to the wonders of the natural world. Twice each month children are treated to a variety of stories that introduce them to their environment. This week features *The Grouchy Ladybug* by Eric Carle. From sunrise to sunset the grouchy ladybug is looking for someone to fight, until it finally meets its match. Children learn to tell time and get along with others in this delightfully illustrated tale. Pre-registration is required. Spaces are limited so register early! Free. **Recommended ages: 3 – 5.**



Spring has Sprung Extended Hike

Saturday, March 27, 2010 9:00 am – 11:30 am

Education Services Volunteers, Environmental Lands Division

Warmer temperatures and lengthening days bring about many changes in the spring. Join us for a brisk walk along one of the longer trails to experience spring in the Preserve. Depending on trail conditions this walk could be 2.8 to 4 miles long. Pre-registration is required by 12:00 noon on the Friday prior to the hike of your choice. Free. **All ages welcome - children younger than 12 may find this hike challenging.**

Landscaping for Wildlife

Saturday, March 27, 2010 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Wilma Holley, Pinellas County Extension

Spring is here and it's time to start getting back into our yards. Join us to learn how to invite the birds and butterflies to your yard by attending this landscaping for wildlife program. You will learn what plants attract wildlife, where to plant them, and how to take care of them. Pre-registration is required. Free. **Best for adults.**



Keep Pinellas Beautiful (Adopt-A-Mile)

We will be doing a trash pick up along Keystone Road in front of Brooker Creek Preserve on Saturday March 13, 2010
Please put this date on your calendar and come out and join the festivities.

The keep Pinellas Beautiful project provides us with orange safety vests, gloves, and big plastic bags We hope to provide your smiling faces. We are so happy to do it.

Please call Ken Rowe at 727-781-0745 or ksr28@verizon.net

When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it
attached to the rest of the world.

--John Muir

Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve

3620 Fletch Haven Dr.
Tarpon Springs, FL 34688