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# Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

March - April 2017

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## Chairman's Message

by Cathie Foster

As I reflect on the past couple of years, I am amazed at and proud of all that the Friends has been able to accomplish with such consistent support from our members, volunteers, partners and sponsors. Our goals for this year are not so different from last year's goals, but that doesn't mean we are not making progress.

In 2017 we will continue to:

- Plan and conduct the events that you have become familiar with over the past few years; Music in the Woods, Music Jam, Night Hikes, and Star Party.
- Plan and conduct three major events; the Fall Wildflower Festival and the Wildlife Safari (coming up April 8), as well as a newer fall event, Owl-o-Ween.
- Run our very successful Nature Store.
- Move forward with setting up our apiary for our beekeeping program (the state bee inspector has approved our site).
- Move forward in helping to restore the habitat near the Preserve's entrance area by thinning out the slash pines and replacing them with long-leaf pines.
- Advocate for increased land management practices.

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The Friends have always held the ecological health of the almost 9,000 acres of Preserve as a top priority. We will continue to strongly encourage our County Commissioners and County staff to allocate greater resources toward land management practices that will enhance the health of the Preserve, including more frequent prescribed burns and a land manager dedicated to only Brooker Creek Preserve (the land manager currently oversees all County preserve and park lands north of Ulmerton Rd.) I can't stress enough how important these are.

Some of our larger "works in progress" related to land management of the Preserve simply take more time to accomplish. The Friends has provided funds for two major projects; eradication of exotic plants and bringing trails up to natural grade. Both are huge projects that will take time to complete, but it is wonderful that the process has begun.

So, we are happily busier than ever and excited to be moving forward with some of our bigger projects! I'd like to end with this little anecdote: I recently spent a Thursday afternoon volunteering in the Friends Nature Store. Almost everyone who stopped in made it a point to let us know "what a fabulous place you have here". For many it was their first visit to Brooker Creek Preserve. But the award goes to the little boy (couldn't have been older than 5) who, upon going into the "exhibit" area of the Exhibit Hall, started shouting repeatedly to his parents, "You gotta see this! Come on! You gotta see this!" He was just so excited! I got to thinking, we should all be this excited when we share with our friends and family anything we do at Brooker; hikes (guided or on our own), programs, events, volunteering or simply sitting a spell and enjoying the beauty around us. We should all be telling the folks we know, "Come join me. You just gotta see this!"

## Save the Dates Upcoming Friends Events

- Mar. 2-11 Splash Trash Tour
- Mar. 4 FOBCP Book Club
- Mar. 5 Music in the Woods
- Mar. 18 Return the Preserve Work Day
- Mar. 25 Wildflower Garden Work Day
- Apr. 1 FOBCP Book Club
- Apr. 2 Off the Beaten Path hike:  
Sandhill Scramble
- Apr. 8 Wildlife Safari
- Apr. 9 Music Jamboree
- Apr. 22 Bee Biology & Behavior
- Apr. 22 Earth Day Work Day
- Apr. 29 Wildflower Garden Work Day

## Earth Day Work Day!

### A Return the Preserve Event

Saturday, Apr. 22, 7:45 - 11:00 am

Join the Friends as we remove young slash pines that have grown too numerous in a portion of the Preserve that was once a cattle pasture. This area is along the one-way driving loop not too far from the entrance. Please bring gloves and hand saws. Wear long pants, a hat, and work shoes.

Water and snacks will be provided. Help Return the Preserve to its natural health! Contact Evan Earle to sign up and for more information:

[earlejr@gmail.com](mailto:earlejr@gmail.com)

## New Exhibit!

The **Splash Trash Tour** is coming to Brooker Creek's exhibit hall March 2nd through the 11th! The "Splash Trash Pop Up Show" combines art made out of objects found on the beach with an interactive educational exhibit about trash in our oceans and explains what we can do to make a difference! (See the flier on page 7.)



## Remember!

When ordering items from Amazon, if you use Amazon Smile, a donation will be made by Amazon to Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve! The Preserve has a unique charity-link to take customers directly to our smile.amazon.com site:

[smile.amazon.com/ch/59-3302182](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/59-3302182)

## Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve New Members

Pam Burrows  
Linda Daniels  
Liza Ryan

## WANTED!

Mulching Mower to aid in land management!  
Only \$500,000!



## BP Settlement / Penny for Pinellas

In our July-August 2016 newsletter we asked for your support in encouraging our County Commissioners to use part of the BP settlement money to purchase a **forestry mulching mower** that would be used to reduce fuel load and to create and maintain

firebreaks within the almost 9,000 acres of Brooker Creek Preserve. Our request did make the "Under Consideration" list. Unfortunately, it did not make the final cut.

Over the next few months our Commissioners, with input from the residents of Pinellas County, will be creating a list of potential projects to be funded by the 2020-2030 Penny for Pinellas tax. The Friends will bring the request to purchase this much-needed piece of equipment to the Commissioners once again for consideration.

This link will take you to the Pinellas County page regarding the BP settlement funds  
<http://www.pinellascounty.org/BPupdates/default.htm>

# Summary of BCC Approved Projects

The listed projects and associated funding were approved by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) on December 13, 2016. County staff will be working with partners to establish agreements to enable execution of the projects and investment of BP funds.

\* Additional due diligence pending.

Project Description	Funding
Affordable Housing - Housing Trust Fund	\$1,000,000
Arts – Traveling Sculptures/Installations	\$500,000
City of Gulfport Mooring Field	\$100,000
Clearwater Ferry System	\$80,000
Community Access Project for At Risk Youth	\$70,000
Dr. MLK Building Restoration (Happy Workers) *	\$150,000
East Lake Library-Cypress Oaks School Parking Lot	\$350,000
Electric Bus Charging Station / Infrastructure *	\$589,000
Foster Care Transition (aka My Sistah's Place)	\$100,000
Hammock Park	\$250,000
Historic Lincoln Cemetery Memorial Rehab	\$90,000
Historic Palm Harbor Lights and Landscaping	\$222,000
Indian Shores - Tiki Gardens Beach Access Landscaping	\$30,000
Kenneth City Pond Fountains	\$22,500
Largo Nature Park Trail upgrades	\$85,000
Metro Wellness Center	\$150,000
Military & Veterans Resource Guide	[included in budget]
Palm Harbor Chamber CIP	\$78,000
Palm Harbor Land Prep for Recreation Center	\$294,000
Pedestrian Bicycle Bridge @ Phillippe Park	\$250,000
Sewer lining/Sewer/Stormwater Capacity/Upgrades	\$1,000,000
Sidewalk/Trail improvements	[included in CIP]
SJWAA Youth Sports Complex (Design)	\$284,000
St. Pete - Tampa Ferry Pilot	\$350,000
Tampa Bay Estuary Program	\$100,000
Tierra Verde/ Study/ Dredge	\$150,000
US Coast Guard Auxiliary Clearwater Property for Training Classes (Be Safe Inc.)	\$125,000
Veterans Memorial Plaza at Crest Lake Park, Phase II	\$150,000
Water Rescue	\$250,000
Wounded Warriors Abilities *	\$250,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$7,069,500</b>
<b>TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING</b>	<b>\$7,106,000</b>



Doing Things For You!



[www.pinellascounty.org](http://www.pinellascounty.org)

## Tri-County Trail to be Complete June 2017!

The Tri-County Trail, which will connect The Pinellas Trail with Hillsborough County and Pasco County, is due for completion this June! Brian Smith, Chairman of the Pinellas County Bike Pedestrian Advisory Committee and Chairman of the Florida Greenways and Trails Council, was allowed access onto the completed part of the trail that traverses Brooker Creek Preserve. He rode his bicycle and took several photos, below.



The north end of the trail where it meets Pasco County. Pasco County will continue this trail to Starkey Park.

Brian says, "The trail already is being used!" referring to a pair of sandhill cranes striding along the trail.



North end of the trail looking south.



## Eagle Nest in Brooker Creek Preserve!

The staff and volunteers are excited that a pair of eagles have nested in the Preserve! Not only that, but they have chosen a place observable to the public! If you follow the Bird Path to the end where the bird blind is located and look to the right (south), you will notice a group of sticks near the top of the left side of the closest Duke Energy tower. This is the eagle nest and, although it looks small from a distance, it really is quite large. As of this writing, the male and female eagles have been taking turns sitting on eggs for a few weeks. As of Feb. 18, it appears that at least one egg has hatched. It is not known how many eggs are in the nest. As the hatchlings begin to grow, the adults will add more sticks to the sides of the nest to help keep the chicks from falling out.

Preserve volunteers and members of Audubon Eagle Watch will be at the bird blind periodically keeping tabs on the goings on of this nest. These volunteers are always willing to share their eagle knowledge and spotting scopes (birding telescopes) for you to have a close-up look, too.

Did You Know? Currently there are 25 active eagle nests in Pinellas County!



Photo by Debra Chayet

# Off the Beaten Path Hike: Cypress Swamp Stomp - Jan. 8, 2017

What a great way to begin the year! A gorgeous hike through one of the prettiest spots in Brooker Creek Preserve.



Dr. Craig Huegel led the group into (and safely out of) a stunning cypress swamp, dry this time of year.



Above, Shiny Lyonia



Left, Jack-in-the-Pulpit and Wild Coffee were abundant on an oak island within the swamp.



The Swamp Fern grows over six feet here. Yes, there are people in this photo!

New Exhibit!



# The Splash Trash Tour is Coming to Brooker Creek Preserve's Exhibit Hall

## \*March 2-11\*

\*During the Education Center's opening hours

### Splash Trash Tour

This Tour includes an arts-based interactive Pop Up Show that combines art made out of objects found on the beach with an educational exhibit about trash in our oceans and what we can do to make a difference.

We are celebrating our guest exhibit with the following programs!

Saturday, March 4, 1:00 to 2:00 pm:  
Saturday Youth Program: Microplastics!

Sunday, March 5, 1:00 to 2:00 pm  
Splash Trash and You Program

Sunday, March 5, 2:00 to 4:00 pm  
Music in the Woods: Featuring Brad Myers

Thursday, March 9, 10:30 to 11:15 am  
A special Book Time for Preschoolers

Friday, March 10, 11:00 to 12:00 pm  
Microplastics 101

Saturday, March 11, 1:00 pm  
Saturday Youth Program: What's In My Water?

Saturday, March 4, 5, & 11  
Keep Pinellas Beautiful Table in the Exhibit Hall

March, 1 to April 2  
Youth Splash Trash Art Contest

For more information: <http://brookercreekpreserve.eventbrite.com>



## Music in the Woods - Sunday, March 5

The Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve are happy to present musician, Brad Myers, as our spring Music in the Woods performer!

Brad Myers is a talented musician and multi-instrumentalist from Dunedin. He has performed in many venues in the Bay Area from the beaches to the breweries. With a style that spans the spectrum and plenty of instruments to choose from, Brad finds himself entertaining people in lots of different settings. Brad will be performing solo as a **one-man-band** using loops to layer instruments live on stage.



The Music in the Woods event will be **Sunday, March 5, at 2:00 pm** in the music pavilion just outside the Auditorium, and last until 4:00. Part of the event will be incorporating instruments improvised from "trash" materials for our audience to join in. This is in conjunction with the Splash Trash Tour speaker, who will be speaking in the Auditorium at 1 pm. (See Splash Trash Tour, p. 7.) We hope you will join us and join in the fun. Bring a lawn chair or

blanket and enjoy the surroundings while listening to this talented performer!

## Music Jamboree - Sunday, April 9

Dust off that guitar, fiddle, banjo or other acoustic instrument and bring it down to the outdoor pavilion for a jam session, Sunday April 9, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. The pavilion is near the auditorium. 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 8, 2017  
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](mailto:fobcp@tampabay.rr.com)



# Sponsorship Form



Saturday, April 8, 2017

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 5.

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

Name of Business: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Please email your logo to: [fobcp@tampabay.rr.com](mailto: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](mailto: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 8, 9 am - 2 pm**. We cannot conduct this event without you! If you would like to help, please contact Julie Wade at [the1midge@aol.com](mailto:the1midge@aol.com).

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](mailto:alfabarry3@gmail.com).





Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve  
**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, a Wildlife Ecologist with St. Petersburg College, 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:**

Jan. 8, 2017 - Cypress Swamp Stomp - Located in the central part of the preserve, this site features orchids, ferns, and epiphytes. It may be wet, it may be dry, so be prepared for either as we plunge into the depths of the swamp!

April 2, 2017\* - 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. (\*Note change of date)

July 9, 2017 - 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!

Oct. 8, 2017 - In Search of Catesby's Lily - Located in the eastern part of the preserve, we will search for the endangered 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](mailto: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](mailto:fobcp@tampabay.rr.com) or call 727-934-2680.

Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve

**MAY THE FOREST  
BE WITH YOU.**



Feel the Power of the Preserve this Earth Day.

## Return the Preserve Work Day

Saturday, April 22 7:45a – 11:00a

Brooker Creek Preserve



To Register Contact:

**Evan Earle**

[earlejr@gmail.com](mailto:earlejr@gmail.com) 727.515.9545





**Summer Camp 2017**  
**Brooker Creek Preserve**  
**(Tarpon Springs, Florida)**  
  
**Herpetology Camp**



Back for its 12<sup>th</sup> year, this popular, hands-on, science-based nature day camp is designed for children with a strong interest in nature. Campers will explore the fascinating world of amphibians and reptiles side-by-side with herpetologist George L. Heinrich. Through up-close encounters with a variety of animals, such as gopher tortoises, frogs, lizards, and snakes, campers will learn about the ecology and conservation of amphibians and reptiles.

**Dates:** 10-14 July 2017 (9:00 am-4:00 pm)

**Ages:** children ages 7-11

**Registration:** \$175.00/camper

limited to 30 campers

registration is now open and is on a first-come, first-served basis

no before or after camp care is available

## Return the Preserve Work Day — Starting Off 2017 The Right Way by Evan Earle Jr.

Our Friends Of Brooker Creek Preserve (FOBCP) Return The Preserve (RTP) Work Days kicked off 2017 the right way: pulling vines and removing exotics. That's our one - two punch!

In January, we had a great turnout with new volunteers, returning volunteers, and Mr. Greg Long and his volunteers from Hillsborough Academy of Math And Science joining us as we did a little maintenance on some of the islands in the parking lot where we were seeing the return of grapevines and greenbriar vines. Once that was done, we turned our attention to the large oak tree behind our gazebo. This large oak tree was "targeted" by the HAMS volunteers on a previous RTP Work Day. Well, we hit the target in January and down came the vines! As testimony to the amount of vines and the amount of hard work put in by everyone, check out the trash pile created from the vines from this tree. Awesome. And now we have one more cleaner, happier, healthier oak tree for the animals, for us, and for the Preserve. And while one team was looking up and working on vines, we had another team getting down. Getting down and removing St. Augustine from the mulch grass along the sidewalk from the delivery loop. And remove it they did. Piles of this crawling, spreading nuisance were added to our trash pile! Whether pulling down vines or pulling out grass, everyone pulled together (I know, groan) to make this a successful RTP Work Day. After we were done, we enjoyed a delicious lunch of pizza donated by BJ's Restaurant and Brewhouse at Westfield Countryside Mall. Thank you BJ's!

In February, we had a special request for our RTP Work Day: remove exotics that had grown into the wetland area in the center of the delivery loop driveway. Fourteen super volunteers turned out to tackle this area. With the guidance of Barbara Hoffman who identified the "bad guys", the removal began. Three hours and 18 large bags of bad guys later, we had made a positive impact on this area. There is more to remove, but we'll do it! Already, this area looks cleaner and healthier. Hopefully, the native plants will thrive and the entire area will attract even more pollinators, birds, and wildlife. When we were done, we enjoyed pizza provided by the Friends Of Brooker Creek Preserve. We have to keep our RTP volunteers energized!



HAMS volunteers showing the vines just who is boss.



That's a lot of vines and St. Augustine grass!



Getting started on the wetland area in the delivery loop.



Go Team Wetland!

(Return the Preserve Work Day, continued)

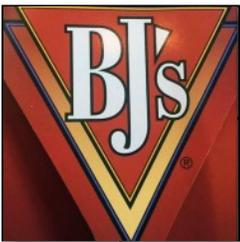
And as a point of explanation, we bagged up the material removed from this area because much of it seeds and spreads very well. Very well! For example, we removed several healthy, seedy caesarweed plants (perhaps the poster child for plants that successfully reseed themselves). We also removed beggar's lice, hairy indigo, and Sesbane. So by bagging it in heavy duty plastic bags and depositing those bags into the dumpster for proper disposal vs. adding the material to our trash pile, we hope to minimize the spread of these plants. We have enough areas needing our attention. We don't want to 'make work' for ourselves!



I'll give you a preview of next month's RTP Work Day. Let's just say that if you are in the mood to pull down some vines, we have an oak tree that practically reached out and asked us for some help. Please consider joining us. I can't wait to deliver that help!

Thank you, the volunteers who show up and work so hard at our RTP Work Days. Some of you are first time volunteers, some of you come back again and again (Laura and Mark), some of you volunteer as part of a school initiative (HAMS, Mitchell High School). Each of you is greatly appreciated for your time and effort. Our RTP Work Days wouldn't be as successful without you. You are making a difference. You are helping the Preserve. I hope that you will return to Brooker Creek Preserve to see the benefits of your hard work and to just discover and enjoy all that the preserve has to offer. As always, I thank you for joining us as we work to return the preserve to its natural integrity. Evan

PS. I encourage everyone to visit Brooker Creek Preserve and checkout the Chickasaw Plums, the Walter's Viburnum, and the Carolina Jasmine. They are blooming and they are beautiful!



Many thanks to  
BJ's Restaurant & Brewhouse  
located at Countryside Mall in Clearwater  
for providing delicious pizzas on Jan. 21  
for the hardworking Return the Preserve volunteers!

# A Walk in the Woods

Early one morning in January, two friends, Sandra Miraglia and Barb Hoffman, walked every public trail in Brooker Creek Preserve, taking full advantage of the dry conditions and beautiful weather. They discovered many colorful wildflowers and tranquility for their souls. Photos by Sandra and Barb.



Right, Sandra took photos within the dry black gum swamp as the sun rose in the background.

Barb, happy to be hiking with dry feet for a change.



The hikers took deep breaths at this point as this lichen only grows where the air is pure.



Above, highbush blueberry, soon to become berries for Preserve wildlife.

*Bidens mitis*, associated with wet environments, were plentiful in some places.



A Florida Water Snake rests in the creek along the Friends Trail.

Right, one of many pawpaws found along the trails



Left, candyroot added a bright splash of orange.

It was such an awesome day!

*Announcing something new!*

Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve  
Beekeepers Club



Apiary expert, Bob Burkard, tending our two hives.



Chairman Cathie Foster

Pending final approval by the Friends Board, the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve Beekeepers Club will be open to adults and families who would like to help tend the Friends apiary and learn about beekeeping in a real life format. The cost will be \$25 per person per year to join the club. The club will provide all the tools, equipment, uniforms, training, workshops, and more for members to use. Meetings and workshops will be bimonthly. The Club will be led by Bob Burkard, a bee hobbyist and apiary expert.

All members must take three sessions of workshops at least once. The next group of workshops are listed as follows, and will be offered again in the future. If you plan to join the club or you are simply interested in beekeeping, you are welcome to attend these free workshops which begin at 9:00 am and go for about two hours each. All sessions will be held at the Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center auditorium.

**Session 1 - Bee Biology & Behavior: April 22, 2017**

**Session 2 - Equipment & Getting Started: May 6, 2017**

**Session 3 - Maintaining Healthy Hives: June 17, 2017**

Email [fobcp@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:fobcp@tampabay.rr.com) for questions or more information.

# Carpenter Bees

By Craig N. Huegel

Over the past few issues of this newsletter, I have been writing about bees - especially those we're likely to encounter at Brooker Creek Preserve, along the hiking trails or in the wildflower garden. Florida is home to more than 300 species of bees within six different families. That's a pretty large number, but it pales in comparison to the number found throughout all of North America (more than 4,000) or worldwide (more than 20,000).

The most-diverse family of bees in Florida is the Apidae. This includes the common, but non-native, European honey bee which has become an indispensable pollinator of many agricultural crops in this country. It also includes my favorite group - the bumblebees of which I have previously written. A third important member, and the subject of this article, is the carpenter bee.

Carpenter bees are found throughout Florida. Two species are present here, the eastern carpenter bee (*Xylcopa virginica*) and the southern carpenter bee (*X. micans*). Both of these species are robust bees, but the eastern carpenter bee is a bit larger than its close relative and the most common. Carpenter bees occur across the southern United States from Florida to Arizona and in the eastern United States, north to New York. Throughout this range, the species are relatively similar to each other.

Carpenter bees can be confused with bumblebees. In fact, I used to do this frequently before I began to really look at them with a keener eye. They are similar in size, perhaps just a bit smaller. Female carpenter bees share the fuzzy-looking thorax that is mostly yellow, but unlike bumblebees, their abdomen is shiny and black. Male carpenter bees are shiny black throughout and lack the fuzzy yellow "hairs" on the thorax. In this way, the sexes can be easily told apart from each other. Only the female carpenter bee is capable of stinging, but rarely does so unless handled or severely agitated.

Carpenter bees are solitary, meaning that they do not form hives or colonial nests. As their name implies, they create their nests in dead wood. Females use their large mandibles to tunnel into the wood, not eating the wood, but discarding it as sawdust or small shreds near the entrance hole. Some of the small pieces are used to form partitions between individual cells in the nest. A single egg is then laid in each cell.

Because of their "carpentry work", they are sometimes considered to be pests. This is really unfair because they do not damage structurally sound wood and rarely drill into wood that is painted, varnished, or otherwise

Female carpenter bee. Photo by author.



treated. Weathered woods are a common target of carpenter bees; thus, they are often found tunneling into fence posts, lawn furniture, the roof and eaves of buildings, decks, window shutters, wood shingles and siding. Under normal conditions they are not very destructive; however, if several generations of carpenter bees have been tunneling in the same area, extensive damage is possible.

To deter their tunneling work, keep exposed wood surfaces, including nail holes and saw cuts, coated with polyurethane or oil-base paint. Consider using non-wood building materials, such as vinyl siding, to avoid possible damage by carpenter bees. If tunnel entrances are found in buildings, seal tunnel entrances immediately with caulk after the young bees emerge in spring.

Carpenter bees are important pollinators. As pollinators, they are generalists in our gardens and landscapes and seek out a wide variety of flowers. In a vegetable garden, they often seek out the bell-shaped blooms of eggplants and tomatoes. In a wildflower meadow, they often prefer this shape of flower also. Like their close cousins, the bumblebees, carpenter bees are early morning foragers.

Carpenter bees have very powerful thoracic muscles. When they land on flower blossoms, they can become living tuning forks and vibrate the dry pollen grains out of the flowers' anthers. This type of pollen collection is known as "buzz pollination."

On occasion, carpenter bees can be quite ingenious in their foraging for nectar. Because of their large size, carpenter bees are not capable of entering long, tubular flowers such as those produced by salvias and penstemons. In these situations, they become nectar robbers. Using their mouthparts they cut a slit at the base of of corolla and steal away with the nectar without having pollinated the flower. I have noticed this many times with my shiny blueberries (*Vaccinium myrsinites*).

Watch closely for carpenter bees as you walk the trails of the Preserve or sit beside the wildflower garden near the auditorium. You are especially likely to see them in the spring when the lyre-leaved salvia (*Salvia lyrata*) is blooming in mass or when a patch of red salvia (*S. coccinea*) is doing the same.

Don't forget to "like" Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center on Facebook and share the page with your friends! We are also on Instagram now, you can follow us under @brookercreekpreserve.



Sundew, photo by Julia Myers.

**ACRE ADOPTIONS FOR  
BROOKER CREEK PRESERVE**

Brooker Creek Preserve's Adopt an Acre Program was established to enhance its restoration and land management programs. We thank the donors listed below who have chosen to commemorate others by adopting an acre of the Preserve.

**In honor of Dolores McGrew by Ray & Rose Poyner**

**In memory of Bob Hunt & Betty Hunt by Barb & Eddie Hoffman**

**In honor of Sue, Martha, & Lois by Lois Barth**

See page 24 for the Adopt an Acre Form and additional information.

**News from the Wildflower Garden**

by Pam Brown

Compared with last spring, the Wildflower Garden is a bit sparse of blooms this year. The hot dry fall and warm dry winter has conspired to keep the spring growth to a minimum so far. There were a few lyre leaf sage plants in bloom and a rare coreopsis bloom. At our workday in January we deadheaded and pruned back many of the plants. We also pulled up some larger weeds and a few invasive sword ferns. We could use a couple of male volunteers with strong backs to help out at our February or March workdays. The Gulf Muhly grass plants need to be thinned and replanted in another area of the preserve. The plants are quite large and heavy.

If you can help, it will be greatly appreciated. Our next workdays are February 25<sup>th</sup> and March 25<sup>th</sup> 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. I will provide breakfast snacks and coffee. I hope to see you there!

## Pam's Gardening Thoughts

By Pam Brown

I am not fond of grass lawns, but many of us live where there are Home Owner Associations that make rules about grass. Several years ago the Florida Legislature passed the Florida Friendly Landscaping law that instructs HOAs to allow Florida-friendly landscaping. This means that you might be able to reduce the amount of actual grass that you have and replace it with groundcovers or other low maintenance plants (follow your HOAs rules for changing landscapes). My HOA allowed me to replace the grass in my front yard completely with a mix of native and non-native plants (see picture). I do have to maintain the grass strip between the sidewalk and street so that there will be a consistent look down the street.

I have found over the last few years that this strip of grass can be maintained mostly by adding a top dressing of compost in the spring and again in the fall. The nutrients in compost are released very slowly so the flash of new growth that so often follows the addition of fertilizer is avoided. Over fertilizing has been linked by research to an increase in some insects that damage lawns. This is especially true of chinch bugs on St. Augustine grass. These insects are attracted to the tender new growth. During the summer, you can also green up your lawn without fertilizer (remember the Pinellas County Fertilizer Ordinance) by applying Iron to the lawn. I do find that I might need to add a small amount of fertilizer right before summer (end of May) to keep the grass growing well and healthy.

If you have grass, you might want to consider reducing the size of your lawn and try using some compost for one of more of the regular fertilizations.



## Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve Readers Club 2017

By Jon Burr

We continue 2017 with the overall theme of "Florida" to include all types of reading relating to our home state. Our selections for the next four months are:



Photo by Karl Nichter

**March 4** — *Best State Ever, A Florida Man Defends His Homeland*, by Dave Barry. Dave has written many books and articles about Florida. Weeki Wachee and Tarpon Springs are just a few of the places that get the Barry treatment.

**April 1** — *War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy. A little ditty that tells of events happening in Europe while Florida was not yet a state.

**May 6** — (Look at the April date...) In APRIL we read, Craig Pittman's *Oh, Florida, How America's Weirdest State Influences the Rest of the Country*. The title speaks for itself. In MAY we read Carl Hiaasen's, *Hoot*. This book is becoming a young person's classic.

**June 3** — *Moon Pool* by A. Merritt. Merritt lived at Randolph Farms in central Pinellas at the end of his life. He and his wife Eleanor are buried at the Serenity Gardens Memorial Park right across Indian Rocks Road from Randolph Farms. *Moon Pool* is one of several fantasy novels that A. Merritt wrote.

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**Possible topics for the second half of the year: not set in stone...**

**July 1** — The July book is by a Florida State University professor, Robert Olen Butler. *Perfume River, A Novel* is about a Florida family and the Vietnam War.

**August 5** — *The Nature of Florida*, John Perry and Jane Greverus Perry: the title tells it.

**October 7** — Ernest Hemingway's novel, *To Have and Have Not*

**Other books we are now evaluating include:**

--Frank Morsani's memoir, *To Be Frank* (Morsani is a Tampa business leader).

--Jason Vuic, *The Yucks: Two Years in Tampa with the Losingest Team in NFL History*.

--*Alligator Candy* by David Kushner: a book about the murder of his brother in Tampa.

-- Any book by Michael Connelly whose connection to Florida is that he lives here.

--*Close to Crisis: Florida's Environmental Problems* by Robert B. Rackleff (1972)

## Volunteer News and More!

By Julia Myers, Education Support Specialist, Brooker Creek Preserve

**We have some big news!** Most of you have met our new Education Support Specialist, Trevor. Trevor

has done some great work for us and has allowed us to open our doors to the public on Sundays! Unfortunately for us, and fortunately for him, he will be moving to a new position with Extension that is full time. His new office will be in Largo at the Botanical Gardens, so look for him if you are ever down there. We will miss Trevor, but word on the street is that he may be back at Brooker Creek as a volunteer.

Advanced Plant Identification with James is back! This year it will be at Brooker during the last 3 Fridays in March from 10am to 2pm. Register at: <http://advancedplantid.eventbrite.com>

**So, we are pleased to announce our new, new hire!** Many of you may know her, the wonderful **Sheree Scheuer!** Sheree knows the Preserve very well as she has been a volunteer hike guide for the past 10 years at Brooker Creek! She is a certified Florida Master Naturalist and a Master Gardener. Sheree will be working Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays and we are thrilled to have her join our staff team. Her first day in the office will be Sunday, February 26<sup>th</sup>. Please help us in giving her a warm BCP welcome!

**We have a new Tracks of Brooker Creek exhibit here at the Education Center!** Kids (and adults) can make animal tracks in

the sand to learn how to recognize our native wildlife. Then we encourage them to go out in the preserve and look for real tracks. It's a great family activity!



All photos by Julia Myers.

  
 Friends of  
 Brooker Creek Preserve

**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](mailto:fobcp@tampabay.rr.com)

FEID #59-3302182 tax-exempt, non-profit corporation

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## BROOKER CREEK PRESERVE

Cool calendar for your refrigerator!

March 2017

\*Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve events

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
2 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	3 Guided Hike 9-10:30 <i>(Florida Forests)</i>	4 Splash Trash Tour Exhibit Guided Hike ( <i>Ecosystems</i> ) 9-10:30 <b>*Friends Readers Club 9:30-10:30</b> ID Non-Marine Turtles 10:30-12 Microplastics (ages 7-11) 1-2 pm	5 Splash Trash Tour Exhibit Splash Trash & You 1-2 pm <b>*Music in the Woods 2-4</b> <i>featuring music made with items headed for the trash can</i>
9 Splash Trash Tour Exhibit Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	10 Splash Trash Tour Exhibit Guided Hike 9-11am <i>(Native Plants)</i> Microplastics 101 11am-12pm	11 Splash Trash Tour Exhibit 9-2 Beginning Bird Hike 8-10 am Advanced Plant ID-Part 1 10:00-2:00 <i>(Registration required - \$30 for all 3 parts)</i> What's in Your Water? (ages 7-11) 1-2 pm <b>*Night Hike 6:30-9:00 pm \$3 donation</b>	12 Education Center and <b>* Nature Store</b> <i>open 11 am-4 pm</i>
16 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	17	18 <b>*Return the Preserve Work Day 8-11</b> Guided Hike 9-10:30 <i>(Footprints on the Land)</i> Advanced Plant ID-Part 2 10:00-2:00	19 Education Center and <b>* Nature Store</b> <i>open 11 am-4 pm</i>
23 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	24 Family Fun Friday 10-11 am	25 Photography Hike 8:30-10:30 <b>*Wildflower Garden Work Day 9-11</b> Extended Hike 9-11 Advanced Plant ID-Part 3 10:00-2:00	26 Education Center and <b>* Nature Store</b> <i>open 11 am-4 pm</i>
30 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	31		

## APRIL 2017

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
		1 Guided Hike ( <i>Ecosystems</i> ) 9-10:30 <b>*Friends Readers Club 9:30-10:30</b> Swallow-Tailed Kites 10:30-12	2 <b>*Off the Beaten Path Hike</b> <i>9am-1pm \$25 donation</i> Education Center and <b>* Nature Store</b> <i>open 11 am-4 pm</i>
6 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	7 Guided Hike 9-10:30 <i>(Florida Forests)</i>	8 <b>*Wildlife Safari</b> <i>9 am-2 pm</i> <b>\$5/child donation</b>	9 Education Center and <b>* Nature Store</b> <i>open 11 am-4 pm</i>
13 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	14 Guided Hike 9-10:30 <i>(Native Plants)</i>	15 Guided Hike 9-10:30 <i>(Footprints on the Land)</i> Ferns of Brooker Creek 10:30-12 <b>*Night Hike 7:30-9:30 \$3 donation</b>	16 Education Center and <b>* Nature Store</b> <i>open 11 am-4 pm</i>
20 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	21 Family Fun Friday 10-11 am	22 <b>*Return the Preserve Work Day 8-11</b> <b>*Wildflower Garden Club 9-11</b> Intro to Beekeeping Part 1 10am-12pm	23 Education Center and <b>* Nature Store</b> <i>open 11 am-4 pm</i>
27 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	28	29 <b>*Wildflower Garden Work Day 8-10</b> Guided Hike 9-10:30 <i>(Our Wildest Place)</i> Lakes and Ponds Education Day 9-12:30	30

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 one hour before sunset

Friends events are noted in green.

**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.

**Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve Board of Directors:**

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