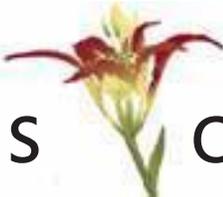


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# Newsletter of the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

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May - June 2012

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## Chairman's Message

By: Barb Hoffman

With Wildlife Safari behind us, I am eager to concentrate on three very important issues for the Preserve.

The first issue is the extension of the Pinellas Trail from the East Lake Road - Keystone Road intersection east to the entrance of Brooker Creek Preserve. As many have heard me repeatedly declare, it is ludicrous that our Preserve, where classes on nature and sustainability are taught, is accessible only by car. There are no bike paths or sidewalks, and it is not on any bus route. It is now the perfect time to add a bike trail to the Preserve now that the County is expanding Keystone Road.



Note the presence of a bike lane on Keystone Road in Hillsborough County (above), but none on the Pinellas County side (left).

## Chairman's Message

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The second issue is the need to perform a tree survey of the area at the northern end of the road loop. The Friends would like to put the restoration of this area on the front burner, and the tree survey is the first step. Dr. Steven Harper (Manager, Natural & Historical Resources, Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources) has provided us with the instructions on how and exactly where to conduct the survey. We'd like to conduct it as soon as possible, so stay tuned...!

The third issue is getting the Wilderness Trail in shape for hiking. Currently, the final half is along a fire break, very sandy, uncomfortable, and nearly impossible for walking. The Friends

(President's Message, continued)  
would like to add a walking lane adjacent to the firebreak that is not tilled when the County does its regular firebreak maintenance. Such a lane would remain easier to walk on.

These are three "small" issues that need our attention, but of course the overlying huge issue is getting the Foundation going in order to make some REAL money to be used for the ecological health of the Preserve. This is big. And it is time to make it happen.

### Barb

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## Friends Honored for Fall Wildflower Festival!

The Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council selected the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve to receive 2nd place in the Public Education category for the 2012 Future of the Region Awards. The Friends received this recognition for our Fall Wildflower Festival, organized and conducted completely by Friends and volunteers. The Future of the Region Awards Program provides honor and recognition for notable achievement in resource planning and management in the Tampa Bay area. The mission for the awards program is to recognize excellence and to encourage future vision and cooperation within the community. The Friends were the only non-profit organization to receive an award for this year and shared the recipients list with entities such as Pasco County, City of Oldsmar, Brighthouse Networks, City of Dunedin, and more. Receiving the award for the Friends were Barb Hoffman, Allyn Childress, Carrie Root, and Commissioner Neil Brickfield.



Barb Hoffman with the Future of the Region Award

**BCP Environmental Education Center -- Staying in the Loop**  
Don't forget to like us on facebook - [Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center](#)

Feel free to join [Timely Topics](#) and [Thinking Green](#) blogs written by various Pinellas County Extension agents on relative issues and topics related to our community

Have a question, but can't find the answer? Visit [www.AskExtension.org](http://www.AskExtension.org) or stop by the Education Center and drop your question into the "Ask an Agent" box.

### Needed: Golf Cart

The Friends require a golf cart for a variety of needs at Brooker Creek:

- To quietly move equipment from one place to another during events
- To transport people from the parking lot to the Education Center during events
- To enable physically handicapped people access to longer trails
- To enable us to give "first class" tours of the facilities to VIP's and potential donors

We do not need a fancy cart, just one that carries at least four people and is a good work horse. If you have a new or newly-used one that you are willing to donate, please call Barb Hoffman at 727-934-2680. We will consider advertising on the golf cart in exchange for the donation. As always, donations to the Friends are 100% tax-deductible.

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

## Wildlife Safari a Huge Success!

Despite the threat of the largest area storm of 2012, over 600 people attended Wildlife Safari on Saturday, April 21. Six wildlife stations were set up along the Ed Center trail where safari kids and their parents were able to see gopher tortoises, red rat snakes, a young alligator, a screech owl, baby raccoons, baby opossums, and a pond-tank with a mud turtle, minnows, and tadpoles. For a \$5 donation, each child received a wildlife passport that was stamped as they visited each wildlife station. At the end, there was a human-sized gopher tortoise tunnel to crawl through. They also could do nature crafts provided by the local 4-H Club, and get a free t-shirt and prize from the Nature Treasure Box. Of the 600 people who enjoyed the event, 191 were paying customers. The impending storm closed the event one hour early in order to get everyone out of the woods before it hit. Overall it was a great day!



## Many thanks to Wildlife Safari Sponsors!

*It is only through your generosity that this event was possible!*

### \$200 Sponsors

Commissioners Susan Latvala & Karen Seel  
The Jon Burr Family  
Dunedin Masonic Lodge  
Hoffman Architects  
Wadell & Reed

### \$100 Sponsors

Council of North County Neighborhoods  
Microaccounting  
Rotary Club of East Lake Sunrise  
Anonymous Friends

## Many thanks to Wildlife Safari Volunteers!

*You make these events happen! It couldn't be done without you!*

### Safari Committee

Allyn Childress  
Cathie Foster  
Barb Hoffman

### Wildlife Stations

Cynthia Grizzle  
- gopher tortoise  
Chuck Parsons  
- mud turtle and tadpoles

### Greeters

Vince Mancuso  
Romeo Scirbo  
Dave Seidel  
Barb & Ron Schultz

### Registration

Toby Brandenburg  
Brenda Klindt  
Mike & Patti Young

### Skin Tent

Tom & Joyce Hansel  
Julie Wade

### Safari Guides

Evan Earle  
Cathie Foster  
Jerry Frensley  
Phil Hirsch  
Barb Hoffman  
Dana Karangelen  
Karl Knichter  
Greg Reich  
Tom Trimmier  
Brad Wilkins

### 4-H Club Craft Table

Cindy Peacock

### Water Boy

Karl Knichter

### Lunch Ladies

Laurie Angyn  
Cathie Foster

### T-Shirt s & Nature Treasure Box

Pat Coughlin  
Carrie Root

### Set Up and Tear Down

Pam & Bill Brown  
Cathie Foster  
Larry Harter  
Barb Hoffman  
Karl & Kathleen Nichter  
Carrie Root  
Brad Wilkins

### Parking

Larry Harter  
Phil Hirsch

(Wildlife Safari photos page 4)



Mike & Patti Young volunteered with registration. "...the kids were just adorable. A few of them came all the way back to the registration desk to thank us for such a great time."



All children who attended the Safari received a free T-shirt. These happy kids had lots of fun and said they "can't wait till next year!"

Safari volunteers, Carrie Root (right) and daughter, Dana Karangelen. "We gave away every t-shirt we had, then took orders."



This screech owl joined Wildlife Safari, thanks to Friends of Boyd Hill Nature Park. Photo by Lara Miller.

## Fungi

By: Craig Huegel

Last issue, I wrote about lichens. This time, I thought it might be fun to discuss another group of "non-plants" that are equally as common and even more important - fungi. Fungi are in their own Kingdom - just like plants and animals. They are everywhere and influence pretty much everything we do, and they are extremely significant to the ecology of every ecosystem across the world.

There are five distinct Phyla (groups, for lack of a better word) within the fungi kingdom. Each is unique and incredibly important in its own right, but all fungi are decomposers. Although this is not a glamorous job, try imagining a world where nothing decomposed... We'd be a million feet deep in dead plant and animal bodies. In a way, we owe our rich petroleum reserves to the Carboniferous Period - and fungi.

Fungi are like icebergs. What we see above the surface is just a tiny fraction of their overall body structure. The above-ground portion is little more than their reproductive parts. This is the part that produces spores. Producing them below ground would be very counterproductive to their reproductive success. Putting them on above-ground stalks and producing them in a type of "fruiting" body allows the mature spores to be shed into the air, and then waft their way great distances from their parent; sometimes for many, many miles.

The below-ground (or below-bark) portion is where approximately 90-95% of the fungi body resides. Here, it is a collective of strands called hyphae; the collective is called the "mycelium." Each mycelia exudes enzymes that digest organic matter. These are extremely strong digestive juices and they are adapted to the food each fungus consumes - wood, dead animals, leaf litter, etc. Fungi which consume petroleum products have been used for a number of years in bioremediation work and recently, in the Amazon, a new fungus was discovered that

actually consumes plastic. Imagine the value this could have in cleaning up our penchant as a species to use and toss away plastic products into landfills. Fungi are also partially possible for turning bare rock into soil. Their hyphae, especially in lichens, sometimes dissolves rock surfaces.

Fungi have unbelievable survival capabilities. Their spores can survive years of drought, cold and heat before better conditions return and allow them to germinate. Unlike most bacteria, fungi can grow just fine in highly salted or sugar-cured food products. Ever leave a jar of jam in the refrigerator too long - even with the cap on - and seen a fuzzy growth across the top? Fungi can get into a hard-boiled egg (through the pores in the shell) in a refrigerator and spoil it. We did that experiment last year after Easter...

Some of the world's most important fungi are invisible to our "naked" eye. The "**glomeromycetes**" form associations with the roots of all of the world's higher plant groups. Such root hyphae, known as mycorrhizal fungi, allow higher plants to more efficiently absorb nutrients from the soil. Without them, some plants could not exist at all, and nearly every other would be stunted and incapable of reaching its true size and character. There is fossil evidence that even the first land plants, 400 million years ago, came with mycorrhizal fungi.

The other major groups of fungi have more common interactions with our visible lives. Bread molds are "**zygomycetes**." "Wonder" bread, twinkies, and the like are heavily dosed with fungicides to control the growth of bread mold. Bread from a bakery, not infused with these, rarely lasts a week on the counter without growing bread mold. These mold types are everywhere.

Other molds, like shower mold, mildews, and leaf rusts are not zygomycetes, but other types of fungi; either "ascomycetes" or "basidiomycetes."

These two groups include nearly all of the fungi that we interact with on a daily basis - and in the woods as we hike places like Brooker Creek Preserve. They are distinguished from each other by their reproductive structures. The **ascomycetes** are often called "cup fungi" because many of them produce cup-like caps from which the spores are produced. They are also called "sac fungi" because their spores are produced inside sacs within those cups.



Ascomycetes, "cup fungi" with lichen. The fruiting structures in this lichen are those of the ascomycete fungi inside of it.

The **basidiomycetes** are often called "cap fungi" because they are the ones that form the "caps" we are so familiar with. The spores of basidiomycetes are produced on the surface of "gills" inside these caps. Most of the fungi that we eat are basidiomycetes. The most notable exceptions are the truffles and morels that are ascomycetes.

Most of the fungi we see while hiking are basidiomycetes. Some are brightly colored and obvious while others are small and diminutive. This important group also includes a great many that do not form caps. The shelf or bracket fungi, that so commonly attach themselves horizontally to dead branches and trunks of woody plants, are in this group. So are the leaf rusts and smuts that discolor leaves and destroy grains, respectively.

All fungi photos by Craig Huegel except as noted.

Because of their incredible survival power, fungi problems are notoriously difficult to control. Thankfully, most fungi are valuable - even those that are toxic to us if we consume them. And, their incredible, enzyme-producing hyphae are often extremely effective in killing bacteria; thus, their widespread use in producing antibiotics.

So, while hiking Brooker Creek Preserve, watch out for the incredible diversity of fungi present there and understand how important their role is in maintaining those ecosystems - and our lives.



Three cap fungi.



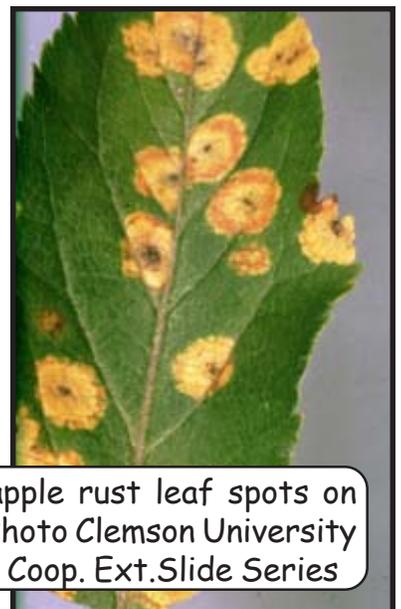
Four forms of basidiomycete fungi.



A coral fungi.



Two shelf fungi



Cedar apple rust leaf spots on apple. Photo Clemson University - USDA Coop. Ext.Slide Series

## News from the Wildflower Garden

By: Pam Brown

Our garden has started the seasonal progressive bloom sequence with the violets. They have finished blooming with the lyre-leaf sage, verbena, and a lantana that I think is wild sage (*Lantana involucrata*) currently blooming. The Gaillardia is in bud and will be open any day and when I was there on April 20<sup>th</sup> there were several butterflies visiting. We did not have a workday in March since I was visiting the chilly, wet Pacific Northwest. The next workday will be Saturday May 5<sup>th</sup>. Come join us and remember to bring your own tools and gloves. We will provide breakfast snacks, coffee and juice. I hope to see you there.

## Pam's Gardening Tip of the Month

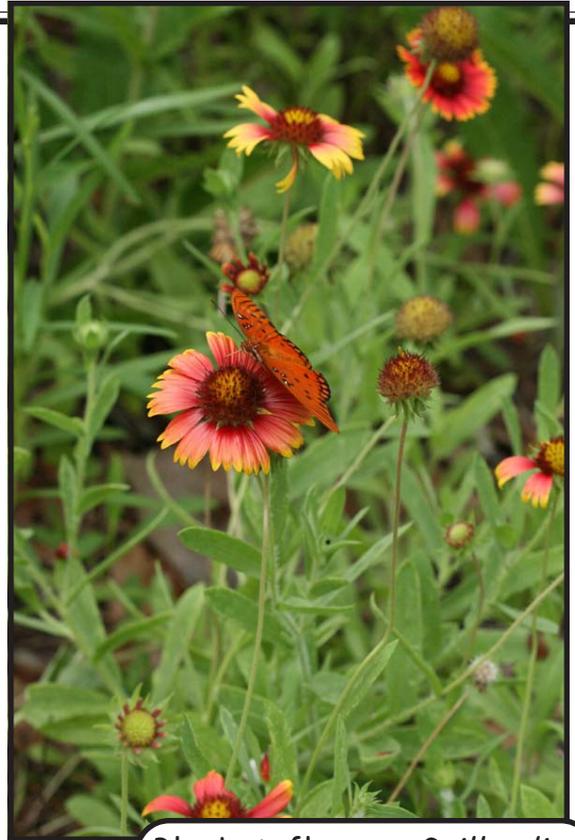
By: Pam Brown

Are you looking for drought tolerant, almost care free flowers that will bloom all through our hot, humid summer? Blanket flower (*Gaillardia pulchella*) will be a good choice. It is a Florida native that re-seeds readily so that you always have fresh plants. The two inch wide flowers come in yellow, orange, red, or bicolors that are attractive to butterflies, and they make excellent, long-lasting cut flowers. Each plant can grow one to two feet tall and up to three feet wide. They look wonderful in mass plantings, are salt tolerant, and pest free. What more could you ask of a flower!

Come join us for  
**Breakfast with Butterflies!**  
(aka...Wildflower Garden Workdays!)

Saturday, May 5, 8-10 am  
Saturday, May 26, 8-10 am  
Saturday, June 30, 8-10 am

Coffee, OJ, and treats will be provided.  
Please bring your own gardening tools  
and gloves.



Blanket flower, *Gaillardia pulchella*, with gulf fritillary.  
Photo by Craig Huegel.

### Important Phone Numbers for Injured or Abandoned Wildlife

Small animals: Wildlife Haven 727-515-3723

Large animals: Pinellas County Sheriff

Emergency: 911

Non-emergency: 727-582-6200

To report poachers: Pinellas County Sheriff 727-582-6200

## Volunteer News

**Saturday, July 7, 12:00**

Our Second Volunteer Update Meeting will be held at noon in the Classroom. Lunch will be provided!

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

### Gator Bait

Many Pinellas County parks and preserves post "DO NOT FEED" the alligator signs around lakes and ponds. These educational signs teach the public about the dangers of feeding alligators while also helping to protect alligators from unnatural interactions with humans. These signs are increasingly important as human population increases have placed tremendous pressure on wildlife habitat. The list below highlights some of the reasons for educating the public about the urban-wildlife interface:



- 1)Habitat destruction has forced many alligators to adjust to living in a world surrounded by man.
- 2)When people feed alligators, they lose their fear of humans and begin to relate man with food.
- 3)Once alligators become a "nuisance" or even life-threatening, personnel are called in to evaluate the situation and remove the alligator if necessary. Alligators that are "removed" are typically killed and processed for their meat and hide. Occasionally they are sold to an alligator farm, exhibit or zoo.

State law makes it illegal to feed alligators; it doesn't matter if it's chicken or marshmallows, all of it is against the law. This law was put in place in an effort to prevent alligators from becoming a pest and thus further being killed. As Auxiliary Ranger, Larry Harter put it, "People think that feeding alligators is being kind to them but it upsets the balance of nature and causes them to them to lose their natural fear of humans."

The lesson here is that alligators are native and wild animals that are best if left alone. Mid-April through May is mating season for the alligators, making both males and females more aggressive. Avoid becoming gator bait; read the signs and follow the law.

For more information on the American Alligator, please visit the sources below:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw230>

[http://webworld.freac.fsu.edu/cameras/saw\\_grass/enviro/alligatorflorida.htm](http://webworld.freac.fsu.edu/cameras/saw_grass/enviro/alligatorflorida.htm)

[http://myflorida.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/1173/related/1](http://myflorida.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1173/related/1)

**Brooker Creek Preserve  
Environmental Education Center  
Upcoming Events**  
3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs.  
(727) 453-6800  
[www.brookercreekpreserve.org](http://www.brookercreekpreserve.org)

**May 2012 Programs**

**May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31**

**Book Time at Brooker.** 10:30-11:15 am  
Children ages 3 to 5 connect to the wonders of the natural world through a story and a craft, game or other hands-on activity. Free; advance registration required.

**May 5, 19, 26**

**Brooker Creek Guided Hike.** 9:00-10:30 am  
See how the land has changed over time and the ecological footprints left by those changes. Wear closed-toe shoes; bring water and a hat. Best for ages 6 and older. Free; advance registration required.

**May 5**

**"Wildlife Sentinel" (Restoring Nature's Balance © - Program 2)** 10:00am-12:00pm  
Join Sensing Nature and learn success stories about protecting our important Florida wildlife including the bald eagle, Florida black bear, gopher tortoise, Florida panther and others. Learn how we are helping these species, ways we still need to improve their protection, notice others that may need our help and discover ways



to take action. After the indoor presentation, participants will experience Florida's natural wonders on a nature walk. Best for adults.

**May 12**

**Birds of Brooker Hike.** 8:00 to 10:30 a.m.  
Visitors on this hike will discover and collect observational data on the diverse bird species found in the preserve. Wear closed-toe shoes, bring water and a hat. Bring along binoculars, spotting scopes and cameras. Best for adults.

**May 12**

**Rain Harvesting.** 9:00 to 10:00 a.m.  
Learn how to save rainwater in a recycled plastic barrel. One or two rain barrels may be purchased at the time of registration. Free; advance registration required.

**May 12**

**Discovering Wildlife with Your Child.**  
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 p.m. to participate in a variety of self-guided nature games and activities. A Brooker Creek Environmental Center volunteer will be available to answer your questions. Free; advance registration required.

**May 19**

**The Balancing Act©.** 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.  
Without healthy habitats, wildlife faces permanent eviction. When should nature take its course and when should a helping hand be offered? Join a Sensing Nature guide and learn ways to ensure how a healthy balance can be achieved in backyards, communities and throughout the state. After the indoor presentation, participants will experience Florida's natural wonders on a nature walk. Free; advance registration required.

**May 23**

**Fertilizer/Pesticide BMPs:** Training to obtain limited certification for urban landscape commercial fertilizer (LCULCF). BMP certification awarded upon passing the exam. 4 FDACS pesticide CEUs provided. 9 a.m. to 5

p.m. at Brooker Creek Preserve, 3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs. Cost is \$15, but free to employees of Pinellas County and the Pinellas County School Board and Pinellas County Master Gardener Volunteers (must present ID on day of class). Advance registration required. Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo. (727) 582-2100;

<http://pce-commercialhort.eventbrite.com>.

**May 24**

**Roundup License Training or Limited Lawn & Ornamental Review:** This class provides training and testing necessary to obtain a limited commercial landscape maintenance license or as

a review and testing for the limited lawn and ornamental license - this class is NOT for renewal CEUs. \$60. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Brooker Creek Preserve, 3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs. Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Road., Largo. (727) 582-2562.

<http://pce-commercialhort.eventbrite.com>.

### **June 2012 Programs**

**June-August Adult Ecology: Plant ID Series.** Look for this series coming up in June.

**For June events:**

Please visit [www.brookercreekpreserve.org](http://www.brookercreekpreserve.org) and click on the "CALENDAR" link.

\*Advance Registration can be completed here: <http://brookercreekpreserve.eventbrite.com/>

The Friends of Brooker Creek have two scholarships available for summer camp.

## **Toad-ally Terrific Field Camp at Brooker Creek Preserve**



The Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve is offering two one-week field camps for young adventurers. This science-based nature day camp is designed for children ages 9 - 11 with a strong interest in experiencing a hands-on, up close investigation of the various plants and animals that inhabit Brooker Creek Preserve. An optional overnight camp-out is planned for Thursday night.

Dates:

June 18-22 (Monday-Friday)

June 25-29 (Monday-Friday)

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Ages: children ages 9-11

Registration: \$150.00/camper

For more information or to register  
please call **727-934-2680**

or email

[info@friendsofbrookercreekpreserve.org](mailto:info@friendsofbrookercreekpreserve.org)



Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

## **Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve - Mission Statement**

The mission of the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve is to provide public support for the Preserve through fund raising, volunteer programs, and education to ensure that the Preserve remains a natural wilderness for future generations.

## **Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve - Land Use Position Statement**

The Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve support land uses within the boundaries of Brooker Creek Preserve which have a main purpose that furthers the preservation, conservation, restoration or protection of the land and resources of the Brooker Creek Preserve.

**Current mission statement of the Parks Department** - it is at least three years old and does not reflect the many changes in staffing and resources over that time. The newly formed Parks and Conservation Resources Department has not yet developed mission/vision statements.

The mission of the Pinellas County Park Department is to provide a continuing program of acquisition, development, maintenance, and protection of park areas for healthful outdoor activities.

### **Friends of Brooker Creek website:**

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

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

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

Phone: (727) 934-2680 (please leave a message and your phone number for a return call)

### **Brooker Creek Preserve:**

Phone: (727) 453-6900

Website: [www.brookercreekpreserve.org](http://www.brookercreekpreserve.org)

**The Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center** is located at 3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs, Florida, 34688.

Phone: (727) 453-6800

Center Hours: Thurs. - Sat. 9 am - 4 pm

Preserve Hiking Trails open 7 days a week (except for day after Thanksgiving and Dec. 25), 7:00 am to sunset.

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

Friends Trail is now open. The bridge is fixed and ready for hikers!

### **Friends of Brooker Creek Officers**

Chair: Barbara Hoffman

Vice Chair: Cathie Foster

Vice Chair: Allyn Childress

Secretary: Chuck Parsons

Treasurer: Carson Morrow

### **Board Members**

Business Affairs: Robert Host

Publicity Chair: Barbara Schultz

Land Use Chair: Dr. Craig Huegel

Membership Chair: Dr. Carrie Root

Newsletter Editor: Dr. Craig Huegel

Bird Feeders & Historian: Ken Rowe

Wildflower Garden: Pam Brown

Past Chairman: Walt Hoskins

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

Newsletter Publisher/Artist: Cathy Vogelsong

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