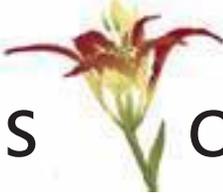


---

---



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

---

---

March - April 2014

### **Chairman's Message**

By Barb Hoffman

Over the last two months, we have been actively lobbying our County Commissioners to allocate additional funds for land management at Brooker Creek Preserve. As you are aware, fire management is truly important to the ecological health of the Preserve and, unfortunately, County budget constraints have limited the amount of active land management required to maintain healthy ecosystems.

Our meetings with six of the seven County Commissioners (we had problems finding a convenient time to meet with Commissioner Welch) were very positive and all of them seemed to understand the need for more land management and the urgency to initiate it as soon as possible. Finding those additional funds in next year's budget will take some creative thinking, but we left those meetings feeling like they would give it their full consideration. We truly appreciated their willingness to take the time from their busy schedules to meet with us and engage in frank discussions regarding our Preserve.

Many thanks to our Land Use Committee - Dr. Craig Huegel (chairman), Evan Earle, Cathie Foster, and Chuck Parsons - for the many hours of meetings and discussion. We sent a letter that summarized our request and it is included here in the newsletter. If you feel you would like to join our effort, emails to the commissioners would be very helpful. Emails are the best way to contact them, and they do listen. Email addresses are below.

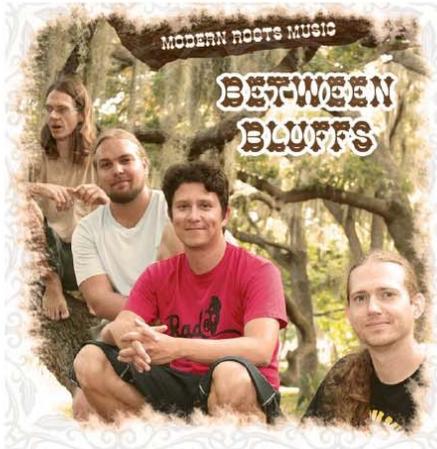
(Continued, page 2)

### Chairman's Message

by Barbara Hoffman . . . . .	p. 1
Fall Wildflower Festival Update. . .	p. 2
Music in the Woods Series . . . . .	p. 2
Happy Birthday to Us . . . . .	p. 2
Water Protection Mini-Grant by Allyn Childress. . . . .	P. 3
Letter to Commissioners by Barb Hoffman . . . . .	p. 4
Night Hikes . . . . .	p. 5
Friends Family Campout 3/22 . . .	p. 5
We Came, We Saw, We Cut by Evan Earle Jr. . . . .	p. 6
Return Preserve Work Day 3/29.	p. 7
Its Iron Ranger by Evan Earle Jr. . . . .	p. 8
Sunlight by Craig Huegel . . . . .	P. 9
Off the Beaten Path Hikes . . . . .	p.11
Seeking New Board Members . . .	p.11
Wildlife Safari 4/5 . . . . .	p.12
Sponsorship Form. . . . .	p.13
Wildflower Garden News & Tip by Pam Brown . . . . .	p.14
Nature Store New by Kathleen Nichter . . . . .	p.14
Volunteer News by Lara Miller. . . . .	p.15
Brooker Book Club News by Laurie Angyn . . . . .	p.16
Upcoming Programs & Events . . .	p.17
Mission Statements/Contacts . . .	p.20

Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve

## Music in the Woods Series presents the modern roots music of



### **BETWEEN BLUFFS**

**Saturday, March 15, 2014**

**6:00–9:00 pm**

**Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center  
Outdoor Music Pavillion**

**Free! But donations more than welcome!**

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

Bring a picnic dinner if you wish!

There will be a drop-off spot for your stuff and nice folks to help carry it.

(Sorry, no pets or alcoholic beverages allowed.)

Questions: [fobcp@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:fobcp@tampabay.rr.com) or 727-934-2680

### **Wildflower Festival Update - Save the Date!**

October 18 is the date we will put it all together for the 2014 Fall Wildflower Festival. A high-level strategy/planning session will be held in April. Regular planning will commence 90 days prior to the event. Stay tuned.

(President's Message, from page 1)

[Janetclong@pinellascounty.org](mailto:Janetclong@pinellascounty.org)

[Nroche@pinellascounty.org](mailto:Nroche@pinellascounty.org)

[Cjustice@pinellascounty.org](mailto:Cjustice@pinellascounty.org)

[Slatvala@pinellascounty.org](mailto:Slatvala@pinellascounty.org)

[Kseel@pinellascounty.org](mailto:Kseel@pinellascounty.org)

[Jmorrioni@pinellascounty.org](mailto:Jmorrioni@pinellascounty.org)

[Kwelch@pinellascounty.org](mailto:Kwelch@pinellascounty.org)

And a fun note...

A huge thank you to Marlene & Len Gravitz for their personal Friends fundraiser, *Dinner & A Movie*, in their home which featured a beautiful spread of Moroccan cuisine, wine compliments of B-21 Fine Wines & Spirits, a big-screen viewing of *African Queen*, and a ton of fun. This personal fundraiser brought in hundreds of dollars earmarked for land restoration. Thank you, Marlene & Len!

**Barb**

# HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US!



Brooker Creek Preserve  
Environmental Education Center

**10 years!**

**UF** | IFAS Extension  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Pinellas  
County  **100 years!**

Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve - **20 years!**

Resurrection Fern  
Photo by Barb Hoffman



## Water Protection Mini-Grant

By Allyn Childress

The Friends are very pleased to be the recipient of a Tampa Bay Water Source Water Protection Mini-Grant. The grant will be used to develop a new child-friendly, hands-on exhibit focused on regional water resources and the role Brooker Creek Preserve plays in protecting those resources.

The exhibit will depict Brooker Creek itself, uplands and wetlands within the Preserve, and Lake Tarpon. The exhibit is aimed toward youth, providing them with a fun, interactive, and educational glimpse into Brooker Creek's water resources. Six spinning elements will allow users to "move" water through the watershed. These will illustrate how surfacewater and groundwater move and sustain habitats and species within the Preserve before finally reaching Lake Tarpon.

We are excited about the new exhibit and hope to have it installed by the Wildlife Safari this spring!

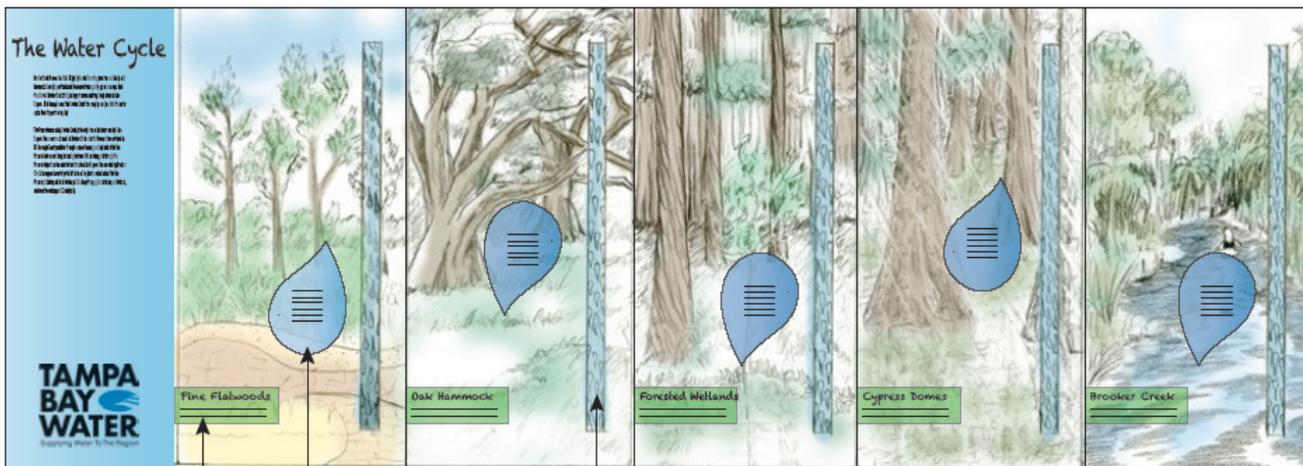
Pine Flatwoods  
Infiltration

Oak Hammock  
Evapotranspiration

Forested Wetlands  
Condensation

Cypress Domes  
Precipitation

Mouth of Brooker Creek at  
Lake Tarpon  
Evaporation



Brief description of Habitat and a chance to emphasize

Brief description of water cycle

Interactive Tumbler; Visitor spins cylinder to see how the water is moving through the different phases of the water cycle



# Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

February 14, 2014

Commission Chairman Karen Seel  
Commissioner Charlie Justice, Commissioner Susan Latvala, Commissioner Janet Long,  
Commissioner John Morroni, Commissioner Norm Roche, Commissioner Kenneth Welch

RE: Budget Request for Equipment and Staff for Brooker Creek Preserve Fire Management

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for hearing us, both in your offices and at the 2/4/14 Workshop.

Background: About 50% of Brooker Creek Preserve is composed of pine flatwoods, an environment that relies on controlled burns and active fire management to keep it ecologically healthy. Many plant species in this environment require fire to germinate, establish, or to reproduce. An active, fire management program eliminates unwanted or nuisance plants, like vines and oaks, and naturally manages the growth of native plants, like saw palmetto. A healthy flatwoods is one in which there is a specific density of pine trees, plenty of open space on the ground for native wildflowers and grasses, and no buildup of flammable undergrowth and debris. Without an active fire management program to provide coordinated, controlled burns, many species of naturally occurring wildlife simply cannot exist, and the risk of large, destructive wildfires increases.

Our concern: We are concerned because approximately 130 acres per year at Brooker Creek Preserve receive the benefit of fire management when the very real need exists for 1,000 acres of controlled, managed burns per year. County staff cannot be faulted. They are doing the best they can under the current budget and staffing limitations. Discussions with staff indicate that a piece of equipment (a Fecon Mower Head and tractor) and someone to operate it are needed to begin the process of providing more frequent controlled burns. We firmly believe that a land manager dedicated to Brooker Creek Preserve would be essential to keep Preserve land management at optimal levels to ensure a healthy and welcoming natural environment for the thousands of citizens who visit and enjoy the Preserve annually.

Budget request: We urge you to consider the following budget request for Brooker Creek Preserve:

- \$250,000 One-time budget request for Fecon Mower Head & Tractor
- \$150,000 Annual budget request for equipment maintenance and two staff persons

Starkey Wilderness Park, Upper Tampa Bay Park, and flatwoods areas within Hillsborough County parklands are routinely burned and are good examples of well-maintained fire management programs. Cross Bar and Al Bar also are well-managed using funding from Pinellas County Utilities. We urge you to "keep the home fires burning" in Pinellas County. Focus our county resources on the natural jewels that are in Pinellas County and accessible seven days a week to our citizens who are indeed visiting and appreciating our preserves and parks. The ecological health of Brooker Creek Preserve depends on your support and action!

Sincerely,

Barbara Hoffman, Chairman

3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs, FL 34688 727-934-2680 [fobcp@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:fobcp@tampabay.rr.com)

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

*Something New . . . .*

## **NIGHT HIKES!**

Join the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve for a hiking experience along the Ed Center Trail . . . *at night!* These special hikes are open to the public and limited to 20 people per hike. A \$3 per person donation is requested. Hikes are led by volunteers who are knowledgeable about nocturnal wildlife. The following lists the dates and times available so far:

Friday, March 14, 7:40 pm

Friday, March 28, 7:45 pm

Friday, April -- To Be Announced. Please check the website for specific dates/time of our two April hikes: [www.FriendsOfBrookerCreekPreserve.org](http://www.FriendsOfBrookerCreekPreserve.org)

Meet at the main parking lot at Brooker Creek Preserve. You must pre-register for the night hikes! Please RSVP: <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/night-hikes-tickets-10752654479?aff=eorg>

## **Friends Family Campout At Four Lakes Hammock in Brooker Creek Preserve**



**Saturday, March 22, 2014**

Check in starting at 3:00 pm

Check out by 3:00 pm on Sunday

Four Lakes Hammock Campground, part of Brooker Creek Preserve, is a beautiful oak hammock perfect for camping. It is very near the intersection of Trinity Blvd and East Lake Road. The campground only can be used by groups who volunteer for the Preserve. The campsites are a one-minute walk from where we park our cars, and wagons will be available to help move equipment.

Bring your own camping gear, camp chairs, and food. There is one large picnic table and we will set up some portable tables. There is a campfire ring and a portable toilet, but no shower facilities and no running water. We plan to do all the usual camping things - sing, tell stories, listen to the night sounds, hike in the morning, and play some outdoor games.

**You must RSVP for this event! -- [fobcp@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:fobcp@tampabay.rr.com)**

Contact [fobcp@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:fobcp@tampabay.rr.com) to RSVP or if you have questions.

# We Came, We Saw, We Cut

By Evan Earle Jr.



And pulled. And chopped.  
And piled. And hauled.



It is with great appreciation that I can say our first Return The Preserve Work Day was a success. Cloudy skies and predictions of rain did nothing to deter the team that showed up to tackle the grape vines that have taken over areas next to the parking lot.

The goal of our Return The Preserve Work Days is to tackle specific, designated areas of Brooker Creek Preserve and remove exotics, to help return the preserve to its natural, healthy setting and habitat. In the case of this first Work Day, the goal was to remove the unnatural overgrowth of grape vines.

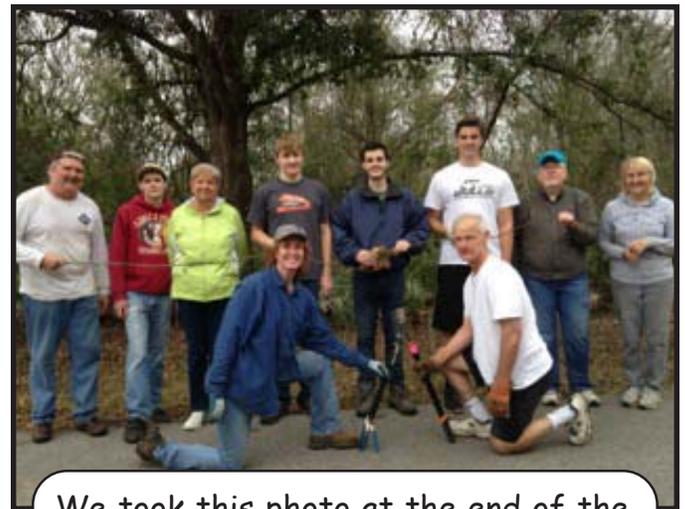
Mark, Avis, Chase, Trevor, Jerry, Scott, Jane, Sarah, Ruth, Lisa, Bill, and Ric were simply amazing. They were like army ants on the attack. The area on the west side of the parking lot was their target and they hit a bullseye! The grapevines and smilax didn't stand a chance. If one person couldn't remove a vine, a second person joined the tug of war. If that didn't work, a third person joined in. And eventually, the vine came down. Work team 1, Vine 0. The large oaks were cleaned out and the blanket of overgrowth was removed from the smaller trees. From the pavement to the the palmettos, the overgrowth and tangle of vines were removed

and hauled off. And a special shout out goes to Ric for hauling away ALL of the debris.

The team never stopped and never slowed down. With only a short break for lunch (pizza on the tailgate), by 1:30, we had accomplished our goal for this first Work Day. And with sore muscles and no small amount of perspiration, the team could look at the results of their hard work. Someone said "Don't the trees look happier?" No one could argue with that. The next time you visit

Brooker Creek Preserve, take a look at what this team accomplished.

I want to thank each person who participated. Your time and hard work is sincerely appreciated. With this first Work Day successfully in the books, we look forward to the next one and continuing our mission to Return The Preserve.



We took this photo at the end of the work. We are all lined up holding a vine. We were trying to emulate the teams that go into the Everglades to remove exotic boas and hold up the catch for the photographer. Okay, it's a stretch. But we all had a good laugh.  
Photos by Evan Earle Jr.

Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve

***Return The Preserve***  
**Work Day**

**Saturday, March 29, 2014**

The next “Return The Preserve” workday will be Saturday, March 29, 2014. We will be removing grape vine and other overgrowth from the main parking lot area.

We will meet in the parking lot at 7:45. The goal is to start at 8:00 and work until 12:00 noon. Please bring clippers, loppers, and hand saws. Don’t forget your gloves, hat, and sunscreen. Long sleeve shirts, jeans, and closed shoes are recommended.

We will have water and snacks to help keep you energized, and lunch at noon to finish our day.

For more information and to sign up, please

contact: Evan Earle

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

Phone: 727-515-9545

## Move Over Iron Man! It's Iron Ranger!

By: Evan Earle Jr.

Sorry Iron Man, but the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve now have an Iron Ranger! And we are predicting super results!

What is an Iron Ranger you ask? Well, quite simply, it is a secure, permanently installed, weather resistant donation box. The FOBCP will be working with county staff to determine the best location for our newest addition to the preserve, but it will be situated to provide easy access from a vehicle. This way, visitors have another option for making a donation to the FOBCP when they visit Brooker Creek Preserve. Proceeds collected will go to the FOBCP and support the many projects, programs, and events we sponsor.

A special thank you to Charles Keller of Keller Angelillis Design & Manufacturing in Dunedin, FL. Charles worked with Evan Earle to come up with a secure, functional design, built the Iron Ranger out of stainless steel, and provided great technical advice on its installation. All at an economically viable cost!

We are going to have a friendly, eye-catching sign to go with our Iron Ranger. The creation of that sign is the next step. But you can look for these new additions in the near future. And while our Iron Ranger may not fly or have its own comic book or movie franchise or have a secret identify, it is going to do a super job!



Evan Earle, Jr. with the newly built iron ranger.



### Did you know?

The donations we receive in the donation boxes in the Education Center are earmarked for programs at the Preserve. Nearly all natural history programs at the Preserve are sponsored by the Friends using this funding.

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

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

### Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

#### New Members:

Jerry and Sharene O'Dell  
Louis Petersen  
The Wilhelm Family  
William and Gail Beardsley  
Kathryn and Joel Barber  
Betsy Murdock  
Chris Warwick  
Alan Friedman  
Richard & Linda Hicks

## Sunlight

By: Craig Huegel

Sunlight plays an incredibly complex and important role for plants. Most of us already know that to some extent, but too few of us understand it well enough to use it effectively in our landscapes or to make informed land management decisions. Plants use sunlight for photosynthesis - the engine by which nearly everything else in the world depends on. It is a simple equation; solar energy is converted to chemical energy and then used to turn  $CO_2$  into carbohydrates. While this happens, water is split and oxygen is released. Photosynthesis generates all the stored energy that we ultimately use as wood, coal and fossil fuels. It releases all the oxygen we breathe and it gets turned into all our food and clothing. Our world is run on solar power whether we understand it or not.

To a plant, however, not all sunlight is equal in its usefulness in photosynthesis. Plants only use a portion of the light spectrum. Solar energy entering our atmosphere as ultraviolet light has too much energy and plants are unable to process it. On the flipside, infrared doesn't have enough energy to trigger the photosynthetic process. Plants can only use the relatively narrow part of the spectrum known as "visible light" - the part we see and the part that is split by rainbows and prisms, but even within this band only the reds and blues actually get effectively used and the green portion is nearly useless. If you were to put a plant under only the green portion of the

spectrum, it would not be able to photosynthesize. In fact, plants are green because they reflect the green portion and absorb the others.

Sunlight is absorbed by the chlorophyll molecules inside the plant cells known as chloroplasts. Most plants concentrate their chloroplasts in upper layers of their leaves. Herbaceous plants also often have green stems - the indication that they have chloroplasts there too. Woody plants, like oaks and maples have herbaceous, green stems when they are very young to maximize their rate of photosynthesis and, therefore, their rate of growth. Chlorophyll is not the only molecule that aids in photosynthesis, however. Many plants have accessory pigments, known as carotenoids, mixed with their chlorophyll. In trees and shrubs that lose their leaves, these carotenoids get left long after the chlorophyll stops being manufactured. That is why leaves turn color in the fall. Carotenoids are in shades of yellows and reds and the relative amounts of each are what give deciduous plants their distinctive fall colors. They are never blue.



Sunlight in early spring provides the energy required for spring ephemerals, like these trout lilies to bloom

In a way, sunlight is what plants eat. The fertilizers we might supply are not their real food; they are composed of elements necessary for plants to photosynthesize most effectively. They are necessary for various catalysts and enzymes that drive the photosynthetic reactions. When they are in short supply, plants cannot make full use of the sunlight they receive, but they really are not "plant food." Sunlight is.

Not all plants need the same amount of sunlight, however. Many have evolved to feed on as much sunlight as they can get, but others can't cope with a full diet. These species are the "shade tolerant" ones and they tend to grow in the forest understory or in locations where sunlight is not as accessible. Two factors are important in this equation: 1) the number of hours of sunlight received, and 2) the strength of those wavelengths. For example, many shade-tolerant plants can cope with 6 hours of direct sunlight if it comes in the early morning and/or the late afternoon. When the sun is lower on the horizon, its energy is intercepted to a greater extent by the atmosphere than during the middle of the day. For the same reason, winter sunlight is less "energetic" than summer sunlight.

Many shade-tolerant plants, however, need the energy of sunlight to flower and set seed. The flush of color seen in a deciduous woodland is far different than what you would encounter in an evergreen forest. Spring wildflowers, like violets, jack-in-the-pulpits, and azaleas need the energy of the sun in winter and early spring to complete their life cycles. Often, they do not get enough solar energy when grown under trees like live oaks and southern magnolias that hold their leaves through the winter. If you want spring color, you'd be best to plant it under a deciduous canopy.

In a place like Brooker Creek Preserve, the effect of sunlight is seen most noticeably in plants, like Catesby's lily, that occur in the pineland understory.

Many pineland plants fail to flower and set seed when fire is removed from the system and canopy plants, like saw palmetto and pines, produce too much shade below them. Fire is a factor that stimulates a great many things, but it also resets the table and allows for more sunlight to reach the ground layer. Sensitive plants, therefore, are the first to disappear. Sometimes, they survive in a state of "suspended animation" waiting for the sun, failing to flower and set seed. So, when we talk about the need for many upland systems to receive regular fire, the need is sometimes simply a need for sufficient sunlight.

Violets thrive throughout much of Florida, but do best when they receive adequate light in early spring



Wild coffee performs fine in very low light

Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve

*Back by popular demand...*

## **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 with 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.

### **Hikes Off the Beaten Path:**

**\*\*Please note that the Sandhill hike, originally scheduled for March 16 has been rescheduled for March 8, 2015\*\***

**June 8 - Cypress Swamp Stomp** - Located in the central part of the Preserve, this site features orchids, ferns, and epiphytes. We might get wet, really wet, as we plunge into the depths of the swamp!

**Sept. 14 - In Search of the Catesby's Lily** - Located in the eastern part of the Preserve, we will search for the threatened Catesby's Lily. In so doing, we will see a profusion of beautiful fall wildflowers in full bloom.

**Dec. 7 - 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!

**March 8, 2015 - 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.

**Cost:** \$80 donation for the series or \$25 donation per hike

**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.

### **Seeking New Board Members!**

We are a "working board" whose members take on and follow through with projects. The only requirement is that you be a self-motivator and have the Preserve in your heart. These are voluntary positions - you are paid with the pride of a job well done!

Board Positions Available:

**Community Liason** - this person will actively solicit memberships and donations from local businesses.

**Grant Locator** - this person would scour the internet looking for grants for which we could apply.

**Music in the Woods Chairman** - this person would organize our new outdoor concert series.

If you are interested, please submit a short bio to [fobcp@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:fobcp@tampabay.rr.com) - *thank you!*

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



Saturday, April 5, 2014  
9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
\$5 per child

Join this fun and educational 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, turtles, an alligator, and more! As kids visit each Wildlife Station, their Passport gets stamped. At the end, kids get a special prize for completing the journey. This event is co-sponsored by Pinellas County Extension Service and Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve.

Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve

Questions? [fobcp@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:fobcp@tampabay.rr.com)  
727-934-2680

# Sponsorship Form



Saturday, April 5, 2014

9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

For kids 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).

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? Call Barb Hoffman 727-410-0939

## News from the Wildflower Garden

by Pam Brown

At our January meeting of the Wildflower Garden Club the volunteers present collected many of the seeds from our garden. We are trying to sprout some of these seeds to grow plants to sell in the Nature Store nursery. We also continued to remove plants that did not belong in the garden, like oak seedlings and invasive sword fern. Violets and Lyre-leaf sage have been blooming along with an occasional Gaillardia and Coreopsis. We are planning to clean out some overgrowth along the north edge of the garden at our work day on February 22. We meet on the last Saturday of each month and everyone is welcome to join us. In the winter (November - March) we meet from 9:00 am to 11:00 am. The work hours for April through October are 8:00 am to 10:00 am. So, March 29<sup>th</sup> will be the last of the winter hours. Please bring your own gloves and gardening tools. We will provide breakfast snacks. I hope to see you there.

### Pam's Gardening Tip

I read an article on the Florida Native Plants Nursery web site about using native plants in our landscapes and what we might expect from them. The author states that many of the claims about natives such as needing less water or pesticides in the landscape have not really been researched. He also is concerned that natives from one area of Florida might not be native in another area. One example is the silver saw palmetto that is native on the east coast of Florida, but not our west coast.

The main benefits of using native plants in our landscapes are creating a sense of place and as habitat for native wildlife. We know we are in Florida when we are around native plants. Animals, butterflies and insect pollinators depend on native plants for their existence since they evolved along with them. Using native plants in our urban or suburban landscapes helps to replace the habitat that is lost to this native fauna by development.

Here is the link to the whole article should you want to read it: [http://www.floridanativeplants.com/article\\_the\\_case\\_for\\_native\\_plants.html](http://www.floridanativeplants.com/article_the_case_for_native_plants.html)

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

## Nature Store News, Feb. 2014

By: Kathleen Nichter

Happy Spring! The cooler, rainier weather we had this winter made me more eager than ever to get outside and get the garden going. Please remember we have native plants available at the Nature Store to help you plant your spring garden.

Starting in March, we will be offering a natural paint set. This small company in California has created botanically handcrafted powdered paints to mix with water. We also will have some natural Easter Egg dye sets available from the same company. Both are natural and eco-friendly.

Many of you have requested a natural insect repellent. Our search continues, and we think we may have found a local company. We will be setting up an account and getting an initial order soon.

Some ideas from other visitors to the store:

- Several people purchased our note cards featuring scenes from the preserve to use as their holiday cards.
- One person bought a number of postcards, and told us she intended to use them as wedding invitations for a wedding to be set at the preserve.

As always, we thank you for making the FOBCP Nature Store a success.

## Volunteer News and More!

By Lara Miller  
Natural Resource Agent  
Pinellas County Extension  
University of Florida/IFAS



### Goodbye Julie

Saturday, February 15<sup>th</sup> was Julie's last day as the Education Support Specialist at Brooker Creek Preserve. Julie was offered a full-time county position with the Department of Environment and Infrastructure in Watershed Management. As the Environmental Scientist there, she will be working with the restored Adopt-A-Pond program which is funded through the newly implemented stormwater fee in unincorporated Pinellas County. This is a very exciting move for Julie and we wish her the best! Julie and I are already planning how we can work on some projects together so we will still be in touch. She does miss Brooker a lot! Wishing Julie well...

Julie can still be reached at [jvogel@pinellascounty.org](mailto:jvogel@pinellascounty.org) if you wish to send her a message. We are in the process of filling Julie's position, but it will take a few months before everything is finalized. We hope to have a new Environmental Support Specialist by the end of May. James will be filling most of Julie's roles and responsibilities in the interim and I am very grateful for his efforts. So next time you see James, give him a pat on the back for the extra work he has taken on without hesitation.



### Volunteers Needed

Social media is a big deal these days and Brooker Creek Preserve's Environmental Education Center Facebook page is in need of a manager. We continue to gain fans and "Likes" on our Facebook page, but we want to build consistency in how we post messages and photos. If you are interested in helping to draw attention to Brooker Creek Preserve through social media, please contact Lara at [lara317@ufl.edu](mailto:lara317@ufl.edu). The Volunteer Facebook Manager position will only take about 1 hour of your time per week (depending on how involved you want to get). I hope to hear from one of you soon!



### More Volunteer Opportunities

One way you can help promote this amazing place is by spreading the word! We have been invited to represent Brooker Creek Preserve at a few upcoming events. Let us know if you are interesting in volunteering at a booth to showcase everything we have to offer:

**March 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>** - Volunteers needed to run a booth at the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Wildlife Weekend at Boyd Hill Nature Preserve in St. Petersburg. This is an all day event from 10am to 4pm. If interested please contact James ([JStevenson@pinellascounty.org](mailto:JStevenson@pinellascounty.org)) or (727) 453-6812.

**March 21, 22, 23-** Outdoor Expo in Hillsborough River State Park estimating they'll attract 3000 interested outdoor enthusiasts. More details to come if you're interested. Thanks!

**Ongoing-** Volunteers needed to assist with a Gopher Tortoise Burrow Survey at Boyd Hill Nature Preserve. If interested please contact George Heinrich at:

[George@heinrichecologicalservices.com](mailto:George@heinrichecologicalservices.com) or (727) 865-6255. Please note that this will be labor intensive and often times you will be walking through dense saw palmettos. Please wear long pants, sleeves and gloves if you choose to participate.



### **Upcoming Programs/Events**

Program Highlight: UF/IFAS Extension in Pinellas County offers an array of educational programs. To find out about programs offered outside of Brooker Creek Preserve, visit [www.pinellascountyextension.org](http://www.pinellascountyextension.org). One program I thought might be of interest to all of you is Sustainable Floridians, so I wanted to highlight that here:

## **Hello from the Brooker Bookers!**

by Laurie Angyn

Lost in Space? You might think so - but only for Q1. This quarter we are exploring the solar system with "2001: A Space Odyssey" which we discussed in January. In February we toured the Gemini, Apollo and Space Shuttle programs with "Forever Young:

A :Life of Adventure in Air and Space." After we look into the economic feasibility of mining celestial objects in March, we will descend from lunar orbit and go "Around the World in 80 Days", with the first of three Jules Verne novels we will discuss this year.



### **2014 Book List:**

March 1: Mining the Sky: Untold Riches from the Asteroids, Comets and Planets by John S. Lewis

April 5: Around the World in 80 Days by Jules Verne

May 3: To Conquer the Air: The Wright Brothers and the Great Race for Flight by James Tobin

June 7: The A-Z of Global Warming: Climate by Simon J. Rosser

July 5: 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea by Jules Verne

August 2: Jacques Cousteau: The Sea King by Brad Matsen

September 6: Silent Spring by Rachel Carson

October 4: Journey to the Center of the Earth by Jules Verne

November 1: Surviving the Volcano by Stanley Williams and Fen Montaigne

December 6: Florida's Geological Treasures by Iris Tracey Comfort



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

### **March 2014 Programs**

**Sat., Mar. 1, 9:00 - 10:30 am**  
**Explore the Ecosystems:** Brooker Creek Preserve certified guides will lead the hike along the 0.75-mile walk along the Education Center Trail. Observe through the forested wetland, oak hammock and pine flatwood ecosystems. Closed-toe shoes, water and hat recommended. Children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult; those younger than 6 may find the hike challenging. Free, but donations appreciated.

**Sat., Mar. 1, 9:30 - 10:30 am**  
**Brooker Book Club:** Hosted by the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve, the Brooker Book Club meets the first Saturday of each month. Geared toward adults, the book list includes works by Florida authors, past and present, with archeology, biography, politics and history storylines. The book selected for March discussion is *Mining the Sky: Untold Riches from the Asteroids, Comets and Planets* by John S. Lewis. Free; seating is limited.

**Sat., Mar. 1, 10:30 am - noon**  
**Family Wildlife Series Part III - Frogs:** Join Avalon Theisen, the 12-year-old founder of Conserve It Forward, Inc. for Florida Frogs. Learn why frogs are so important to the world and how by saving them, we save the environment. Explore challenges frogs are facing as well as some ways that ordinary people of all ages can

help. Attend 3 parts of the 4 sessions and receive a Certificate of Completion. Free.

**Thurs., Mar. 6, 13, 20, 27, 10:30 - 11:15 am**  
**Book Time at Brooker:** 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.

**Sat., Mar. 8, 8:00 - 10:30 am**  
**Birds of Brooker Hike:** Join this beginning bird hike and learn how to identify the county's common birds while meandering along a one-mile trail. Bring water and binoculars. Free.

**Fri., Mar. 14, 9:00 - 11:00 am**  
**Botany Hike:** Join a Brooker Creek naturalist to explore the fascinating plants found on the preserve while identifying wildflowers, ferns, epiphytes, trees and more. The ecology of various plant communities will also be examined. Best suited for adults; come prepared with a camera and questions. Free.

**Sat., Mar 15, 9:00 - 10:30 am**  
**Footprints on the Land Hike:** Certified hike guides will lead a hike along the Education Center Trail. Learn of the many "footprints" that be found during this 0.75-mile walk. Sturdy closed-toe shoes are a must; water and hat recommended. Children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult; those younger than 6 may find the hike challenging. Free.

**Sat., Mar. 15, 10:30 am - noon**  
**Family Wildlife Series Part IV: Birds of Prey:** Several live birds of prey will be used to illustrate aspects of predator-prey relationships, adaptations that ensure success as predators, and their role in maintaining healthy, balanced ecosystems. The basic natural history of each species is also discussed along with the impact of humans on their habitats and populations. Great for all ages. If you attend 3 sessions out of 4 in the series, you will receive a Certificate of Completion! Free.

**Fri., Mar. 21, 9:00 - 11:00 am**

**Wildlife Hike:** an experienced naturalist and hike along boardwalks and natural trails at Brooker Creek Preserve. This is a learning experience for everyone so come prepared with binoculars, cameras, and questions. Questions that cannot be answered by the hike guide will be researched in the Resource Room upon return to the Education Center. Free.

**Sat., Mar. 22, 9:00 - 11:00 am**

**Extended Brooker Creek:** See how the land has changed over time and discuss the ecological footprints left by those changes on this 2.8 to 4-mile walk. Sturdy closed-toe shoes are a must and water and hat recommended. Those younger than 10 may find this hike challenging; all children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult. Free.

**Sat., Mar. 22, 10:30 am - noon**

**Backyard Habitat Series Part I - Landscaping for Wildlife:** Florida has a diverse wildlife population, but rapid growth throughout Florida is destroying native wildlife habitat. The loss of birds, butterflies and other wildlife in our communities is noticed but do not realize that our landscapes and maintenance practices can be part of the problem. Learn to create a habitat that encourages wildlife in this class. By making a few basic changes to landscaping plans a yard that will provide habitat for a variety wildlife can be created. Free. Best suited for adults.

**Fri., Mar. 28, 9:00 - 11:00 am**

**Woods Walk:** Join a local natural resources agent and hike along two miles of boardwalks and natural trails at Brooker Creek Preserve. Come prepared with binoculars, cameras and questions. Inquiries can also be researched in the resource room upon return to the education center. Free.

**Sat., Mar. 29, 8:30 - 10:30 am**

**Guided Photography Hike:** In a brief classroom session, local photographers and master naturalists Karl and Kathleen Nichter highlight the seasonal features that help participants

capture the natural beauty of the Brooker Creek Preserve, then hike the boardwalk and trails looking for those shots that reflect the season. Recommended for adults and children 12 and older. Free.

**Sat., Mar. 29, 9:00 - 11:00 am**

**Wildflower Garden Club:** Join the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve and get gardening hands dirty in the preserve's wildflower garden. Bring garden gloves and hat. Morning snacks are usually provided. Free.

**Sat., Mar. 29, 9:00 - 10:30 am**

**Our Wildest Place Guided Hike:** Brooker Creek Preserve certified hike guides lead along the Education Center Trail. Learn why the preserve has been called "Our Wildest Place" during this 0.75-mile walk. Sturdy closed-toe shoes are a must, and water and a hat are recommended. All ages are welcome although children younger than 6 may find the hike challenging. Children younger than 16 must be accompanied by an adult. Free.

### **April 2014 Programs**

**Thurs., Apr. 3, 10, 17, 24, 10:30 - 11:15 am**

**Book Time at Brooker:** 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.

### **April 5 - WILDLIFE SAFARI!!!**

**Fri., Apr. 11, 9:00 - 11:00 am**

**Botany Hike:** Join a Brooker Creek naturalist to explore the fascinating plants found on the preserve while identifying wildflowers, ferns, epiphytes, trees and more. The ecology of various plant communities will also be examined. Best suited for adults. Come prepared with a camera and questions. Free.

**Sat., Apr. 12, 8:00 - 10:30 am**

**Birds of Brooker Hike:** Join this beginning bird hike and learn how to identify the county's common birds while meandering along a one-mile trail. Bring water and binoculars. Free.

**Sat., Apr. 12, 10:30 am - noon**  
**Aquatic Life of Brooker Creek Preserve:** Brooker Creek Preserve contains several wetland habitats that are home to an interesting variety of plants and animals. Join us to explore the underwater world of the Preserve. Both classroom and outdoor activities included. Prepare to get wet! Free. Great for all ages!

**Fri., Apr. 18, 9:00 - 11:00 am**  
**Wildlife Hike:** an experienced naturalist and hike along boardwalks and natural trails at Brooker Creek Preserve. This is a learning experience for everyone so come prepared with binoculars, cameras, and questions. Questions that cannot be answered by the hike guide will be researched in the Resource Room upon return to the Education Center. Free.

**Sat., Apr. 19, 9:00 - 10:30 am**  
**Footprints on the Land Hike:** Certified hike guides will lead a hike along the Education Center Trail. Learn of the many "footprints" that be found during this 0.75-mile walk. Sturdy closed-toe shoes are a must; water and hat recommended. Children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult; those younger than 6 may find the hike challenging. Free.

**Sat., Apr. 19, 10:00 am - 12:30 pm**  
**Dragonfly Discover Walk:** Join local dragonfly expert Paul Trunk as we explore some of the habitats at BCP looking for dragonflies. Brooker Creek Preserve is an excellent area that is home to approximately 20+ species of odonates. We will learn about the natural history of dragonflies and their importance to a healthy ecosystem. Bring you binoculars and also a camera if you enjoy taking pictures.

**Sat., Apr. 19, 10:30 am - noon**  
**Big Birds for Beginners:** This course is designed for those curious about the large birds seen in Pinellas County. Join Lynn Sumerson and learn how to identify these large birds and how they can be easily identified. Great for all ages. Free.

**Fri., Apr. 25, 9:00 - 11:00 am**  
**Woods Walk:** Join a local natural resources agent and hike along two miles of boardwalks and natural trails at Brooker Creek Preserve. Come prepared with binoculars, cameras and questions. Inquiries can also be researched in the resource room upon return to the education center. 9 to 11 a.m. Free.

**Sat., Apr. 26, 8:30 - 10:30 am**  
**Guided Photography Hike:** In a brief classroom session, local photographers and master naturalists Karl and Kathleen Nichter highlight the seasonal features that help participants capture the natural beauty of the Brooker Creek Preserve, then hike the boardwalk and trails looking for those shots that reflect the season. Recommended for adults and children 12 and older. Free.

**Sat., Apr. 26, 9:00 - 10:30 am**  
**Our Wildest Place Guided Hike:** Brooker Creek Preserve certified hike guides lead along the Education Center Trail. Learn why the preserve has been called "Our Wildest Place" during this 0.75-mile walk. Sturdy closed-toe shoes are a must, and water and a hat are recommended. All ages are welcome although children younger than 6 may find the hike challenging. Children younger than 16 must be accompanied by an adult. Free.

**Sat., Apr. 26, 9:00 - 11:00 am**  
**Wildflower Garden Club:** Join the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve and get gardening hands dirty in the preserve's wildflower garden. Bring garden gloves and hat. Morning snacks are usually provided. Free.

**Sat., Apr. 26, 10:30 am - noon**  
**Backyard Habitat Series, Part II - Bats in Your Backyard:** Bats can be an extremely beneficial animal to have around the house. Join UF/IFAS Natural Resources Extension agent to find out why and how to attract these flying mammals to yards. Program is best suited for adults. Certificates of completion will be presented for everyone attending all three programs. Free.

**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, conserva-

tion, restoration or protection of the land and resources of the Brooker Creek Preserve.

**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:**  
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. Store 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

**Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve Board of Directors:**  
**Officers**  
Chair: Barbara Hoffman  
Vice Chair: Cathie Foster  
Vice Chair: Allyn Childress  
Secretary: Chuck Parsons  
Treasurer: Carson Morrow

**Directors**  
Director Emeritus: Ken Rowe  
Land Use Chair: Dr. Craig Huegel  
Membership Chair: Dr. Carrie Root  
Newsletter Editor: Dr. Craig Huegel  
Night Hikes: Mark Yeager  
Past Chairman: Walt Hoskins  
Publicity Chair: Barbara Schultz  
Restoration of Loop Area: Len Gravitz  
Return the Preserve Work Days:  
Evan Earle, Jr.  
Wildflower Festival Chair: Laurie Angyn  
Wildflower Garden: Pam Brown  
Wildlands Trail Rerouting: Brenda Klindt  
Wildlife Safari Chair: Brad Wilkins

Newsletter Publisher: Cathy Vogelsong

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

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (1-800-435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE. REGISTRATION NUMBER CH. 16077