

Newsletter of the
Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

May - June 2015

Chairman's Message -- This & That

By Barb Hoffman

To Bee or Not to Bee We have not yet concluded whether "to bee or not to bee". The discussion was tabled at the March Board meeting because Board members wanted more information about costs vs returns. The discussion will continue at our upcoming May 21 Board meeting. We encourage your feedback, so please keep your thoughts and ideas coming till then.

Ken Rowe Birdathon I am so excited about our very first Ken Rowe Birdathon scheduled for June 6 (see page 8)! The event is named for Ken Rowe, a long time Brooker Creek Preserve county volunteer with thousands of volunteer hours, and a member of the Friends Board since the 1990's. Ken served as the Friends Chairman for two years during 2000-2002, and was a beloved teacher for Friends Summer Camps. Ken is an avid birder and plans to be on hand to hand out prizes, in many categories, for the Birdathon.

Audit All Friends groups that support county properties are being audited. Many thanks to our Treasurer, Carson Morrow, for his flawless bookkeeping over the years. This will make the audit a breeze for us.

Amazon Smile Thanks to Treasurer Carson, too, for getting us signed up for Amazon Smile, a service in which Amazon shoppers can donate to the Friends during check out.

Welcome to the Friends All Brooker Creek Preserve County Volunteers! All BCP county volunteers have been given honorary Friends memberships.

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Updated Membership Categories

The new membership categories are now in place beginning April 1! It seems an easy task to simply change the names and amounts, but it took a lot of time and effort by our membership chairman, Jeff Myers, our Treasurer, Carson Morrow, and the executive committee, but *whew* - it's done!

Barb

Many thanks to our website manager, Cathy Ordiway, for keeping our awesome website up to date and looking good!

Amazon Smile -- Did You Know?

Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve Inc whenever you shop on AmazonSmile.

AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service.

Support Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve by shopping at: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/59-3302182>

Save the Dates Friends Events for 2015

May 2	Brooker Book Club
May 12&17	Gopher Tortoise & Fire
May 30	Return the Preserve Work Day
May 30	Wildflower Garden Club
June 6	1st Ken Rowe Birdathon
June 6	Brooker Book Club
June 27	Return the Preserve Work Day
June 27	Wildflower Garden Club
July 4	Four Lakes Hammock Hike
July 13	Deadline Camp Registration
July 19	Music Jamboree
July 20	Deadline Camp Registration
July 20-24	Herpetology Camp
Oct. 2-4	Painting Nature Workshop
Oct. 17	Fall Wildflower Festival
Nov. 7	Friends Annual Meeting & Volunteer Appreciation
Nov. 15	Music in the Woods

Read about the extension of the Pinellas Trail to Brooker Creek Preserve in the current newsletter of the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation - Brooker Creek Preserve is featured!

<http://us2.campaign-archive2.com/?u=8b837b5e6573b389f89688703&id=2e7e59ef53&e=c5ca32ddb>

Many thanks to East Lake Sunrise Rotary Club for the \$1,000 grant for signage for our Nature Store!

**Rotary Club
of East Lake
Sunrise**



Friends Board Member, Brad Wilkins (left) accepting the \$1,000 grant award from East Lake Sunrise Rotary President, Dan Depies (center) and Rotary District 6950 Assistant District Governor, Bob Memoli.

Off the Beaten Path -- March 8

Dr. Huegel led a hike to the only true sandhills of Brooker Creek Preserve.

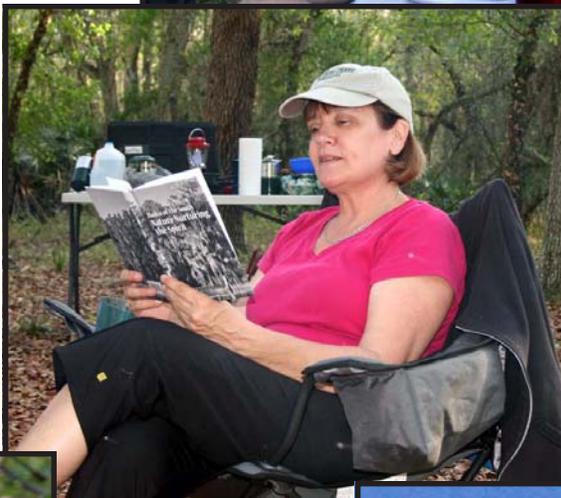


A teaching moment by Dr. Craig Huegel during the March 8 Off the Beaten Path hike.



Friends Family Campout - March 14

Barb Hoffman and Cathie Foster took turns reading aloud to the group during the Friends Family Campout. They were reading from *Haiku of the South, Nature Nurturing Spirit* written by Preserve volunteer, Bill Brown.



Sparkleberry in full bloom, found along the trail at Four Lakes Hammock during the Friends Family Campout. Photo by Barb Hoffman.



The eagle and swallowtail kite photos were taken by Debbie Chayet during the Sunday hike of the Friends Family Campout.

Brooker Creek Preserve Jamboree -- March 15

The first Brooker Creek Preserve Jamboree was a lot of fun! Six perfect strangers arrived with guitars, mandolin, banjo, violin and drums and made beautiful music together. Next one is July 19th!

Our next Music Jamboree is:

July 19, 3:30 - 5:00
Ed Center Auditorium



Return the Preserve Work Day -- March 21

By Evan Earle Jr.

Always welcoming a new challenge, your Friends Of Brooker Creek Preserve Return The Preserve (RTP) Work Day tackled a new area on Saturday, March 25th. We focused on the area at the entrance to the Classroom Building and around the pond in that location. And once again, my prediction of "Oh, this won't take too long at all" was just about as wrong as wrong could be. Three long, strenuous, sweaty hours after we started, you could see the difference. So much for my judgement!

But what a difference. Thanks to Penny Stanisljevich, the Kesel's - Phil, Brian, and Ellen, Adam Robinson, Barbara Hoffman, and Marion Yongue! We removed the heavy overgrowth of grapevines that were blanketing the tops of the trees, causing an over abundance of shade and actually weighing down the trees. With a special shout out to Brian and Adam and their shovels, we removed some wicked smilax, all the way down to the tubers!

So what I saw as a "little job" turned into yet another outstanding RTP Work Day. The result was a more natural, more open environment around the entrance to the Classroom Building and the pond (and an ever increasing pile of debris at the edge of the parking lot). If this area follows with the other areas of the Preserve on which we have worked, it will be a happier, healthier environment for everyone to enjoy and admire. For crying out loud, there is a cypress tree that I never even knew was there! Visitors can now see the Blue Flag Iris growing in the pond for all to admire.

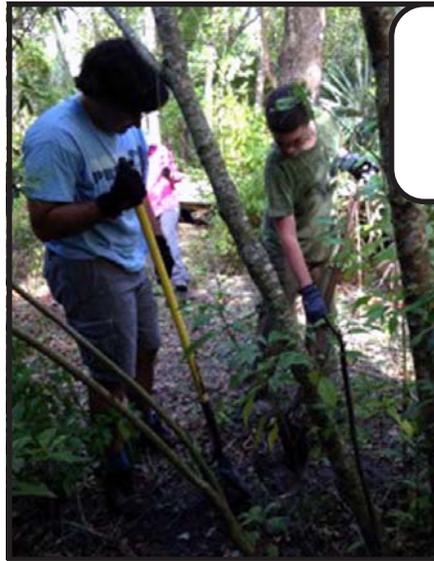
Thanks again to the awesome, hard working group of people who made this another successful RTP Work Day. These work because YOU work!

Our RTP Work Day program is just a little over a year old now. Everyone who has participated should take pride in the difference and the improvements you have made. The next time

you visit Brooker Creek Preserve, take a moment to visit those areas we have tackled and you will see the impact of our hands-on support. Healthier (and happier) environments in and around the main parking lot, the area along the entrance from the delivery parking lot, and now we're focusing on the area around the Classroom Building. Personally, this has been a very rewarding program. I get to meet and work with outstanding people (the HARDEST working people I have ever seen that I can't keep up with) who love Brooker Creek Preserve. And we get to see tangible benefits from our work. Step by step, we are returning the Preserve to its natural beauty. There is no greater reward!

Return the Preserve Work Day -- April 25

Our April 25th Friends Of Brooker Creek Preserve (FOBCP) Return The Preserve (RTP) Work Day was a little extra special. We had a tremendous turnout of volunteers from the Hillsborough Academy Of Math And Science. Students - members of the Academy's honor societies, parents, teachers, principals. They were there one and all. We started with a quick tour of the Education Building and then we got right to work. Our target was the area around the Classroom Building. Specifically, we focused on removing tuberous sword fern and Caesarweed. Remove it we did, and did so safely, with the debris going into specifically designed plastic bags and disposed of properly. We wanted to make sure there was no chance of these exotic invasive plants spreading as a result of our hard work. We also checked ourselves for the Caesarweed seeds that are so eager to cling to our clothes and to us. We made sure we didn't end up playing Johnny Appleseed for these pests. Hasta la vista! And you won't be back!



Our next Return The Preserve Work Days are:

Saturday, May 30
Saturday June 27

Along with the tuberous sword fern and the Caesarweed, we removed a ton of overgrown grapevine. Once more we opened up the trees and shrubs to the sunlight and gave them a chance to recover from their grapevine blankets.

To Mr. Greg Long, thank you for reaching out to the FOBCP and making this RTP Work Day one of the best ever. We got a LOT of work done in a short amount of time. Everyone was great and I think it is safe to say, we all had a good time. You braved the deer flies, the heat, the dirt, and the sweat.

In addition to the tremendous team from Hillsborough Academy Of Math And Science, I want to give a special shout out to Phil and Brian who take great pleasure in removing only the biggest and toughest grapevines! To Lou for his always tremendous help and positive attitude. To Cathy for helping me coordinate all of our busy volunteers and keeping us on target in removing the "bad guys" and leaving the "good guys". To Marion for his tireless support and lead role in removing the debris and for so thoroughly cleaning up after we were done! All of you shined in making BCP shine!

Thank you everyone. You made a tremendous difference in helping the RTP Work Day team successfully take another step towards our goal of returning the preserve to its natural beauty!

Our next RTP Work Day will be on Saturday, May 30th. If you want a good work out, if you want to spend a Saturday morning with some hardworking fun people, if you want a hands on experience at BCP, please join us.

2015 Wildlife Safari -- April 11

by Brad Wilkins

On April 11, 2015 a dedicated team of volunteers, and licensed animal experts, came together to present the 6th annual Wildlife Safari. Featured were not only common backyard critters like baby possums, raccoons and squirrels, but powerful and sometimes mysterious Florida natives like owls, hawks, snakes, gopher tortoises, and Florida bats. These animals, and their expert handlers, were situated along an easy, half-mile trail through exquisite native Florida woodlands, on a pristine, bright blue, Florida Spring day.

The Safari has become one of the enduring rites of spring here at Brooker Creek Preserve. The kids get a passport stamped at each wildlife station and a prize at the end for completing the trail. The experience is priceless -- for both the volunteers that make it happen and the families that are enriched by the "real Florida" experience.

What many don't know, is that this sublime event is not a fundraiser -- yes, it's more important than that. It's a mission of outreach and of education. It's a day of open doors, open minds and open hearts. It honors the animals that make this area their home, and invites in the human neighborhoods that literally surround this island of wilderness. It gives folks that live nearby a chance to connect with something truly exceptional -- a living museum that is right in our backyard, and open all year long, but often overlooked in the rush of our daily lives.

Thank you to the sponsors who contributed financially to each wildlife station. And to each volunteer who gave up other important obligations to make this day happen. And thank you to all in the community who attended. It is the lucky ones who know about, and appreciate, the value of this local treasure -- and who intimately know the experience of spending some time in paradise -- Pinellas County's last wild place.





THANK YOU 2015 SPONSORS!

Barry & Cathie
The Burr Family
CNCN

Delta Hydronics

East Lake Sunrise Rotary Club

Mona Gardner, Janet McNew, Dixie Mills

Hoffman Architects

Jeff & Jane Myers

Pampered Gardeners, LLC

Louis Petersen

Volunteers of Brooker Creek Preserve

Julie Wade

Wilcox Nursery & Landscape

Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve New Members:

Joanne Pistorius
Judy Fisher
Barry Address
Susan Syroski
Patrick & Skyler Bradley
Marilyn Waldorf
Betty Rossie
Francine Prager
Anthony Ciufolo
Barbara Walker



Star Party -- April 25

Telescopes and astronomers getting ready for the Star Party held April 25 which was a great success! About 68 people enjoyed seeing stars, galaxies, and planets up close as well as a hike through the woods at night.





June 6, 2015

5:30 am - 11:00 am Birding

11:00-12:30 Lunch & Prizes

Birders of all levels are welcome and encouraged to attend!

Teams of 2-4 people, \$10/person, includes lunch

**Prizes will be awarded in a variety of categories
including most species per team and many more...**

Birding will take place by teams at their own pace at a choice of several areas within the Brooker Creek Preserve boundary, most not open to the public. Maps indicating entry/parking sites, including "hot spot" locations, will be provided to participants. Data collected will be used to help monitor breeding bird populations.

Team leaders must RSVP by June 5. For questions and to sign up:

fobcp@tampabay.rr.com or (727) 934-2680

Sponsored by: Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve

Calling All Brooker Creek Preserve Friends & Volunteers!



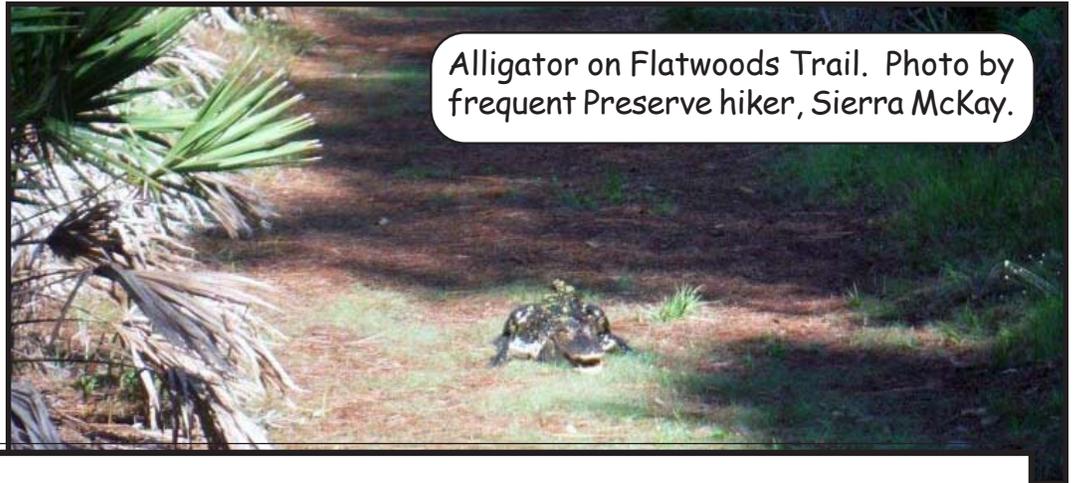
A Special Hike at Four Lakes Hammock Just for YOU!

Saturday, July 4, 2015, 9:00 am

Four Lakes Hammock, part of Brooker Creek Preserve, is a beautiful area consisting of cypress swamp, oak hammocks, man-made lakes, and sandhills. It is very near the intersection of Trinity Blvd and East Lake Road. It is the site of the only campground within Brooker Creek Preserve. This date was chosen because the wild orchids growing there will be in full bloom!

There is a short hiking trail there, less than a mile in length, that is beautiful and very interesting. The hike starts at the campground, follows the nature trail, and ends at the campground. The hike will last about 1.5 hours; the adventurous can go on a second loop if they wish. Please note: there are no rest room facilities.

You must RSVP for this free event! Once you RSVP, directions on how to get there will be sent to you. Contact 727-934-2680 or fobcp@tampabay.rr.com to RSVP or if you have questions.



Alligator on Flatwoods Trail. Photo by frequent Preserve hiker, Sierra McKay.

Series: Gopher Tortoises + Prescribed Fire = Increased Biodiversity

The Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve have partnered with the Friends organizations from Weedon Island Preserve and Boyd Hill Nature Preserve to sponsor this series. George L. Heinrich (Heinrich Ecological Services) will present on the significant ecological role played by this threatened keystone species. Find out how returning fire to upland habitats can greatly benefit plant and animal communities. Two sessions remaining:

Tuesday, May 12 (7:30 pm): Boyd Hill Nature Preserve - PowerPoint lecture

Sunday, May 17 (10:00 am): Boyd Hill Nature Preserve - guided interpretive hike

Register for the BCP program at <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/gopher-tortoises-prescribed-fire-increased-biodiversity-tickets-14803633065>. For registration information at the other preserves, please contact george@heinrichecologicalservices.com or (727) 865-6255.

See more on prescribed fire in this issue:

The Role of Fire, by Craig Huegel: page 14

Photos from 2012 wildfire: page 15

Brooker Creek Preserve 2015 Prescribed Burn Requests: page 16

Burn at BCP on April 9: page 19

FireWise Workshop

Saturday, July 18, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm.

Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center, 3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs, FL.

Increase your knowledge and understanding of fire in nature. Learn the benefits of prescribed fire and how you can protect your home in the case of a wildfire. Free. Registration required -- register online at <http://brookercreekpreserve.org>. If you have any questions, please contact Lara Milligan, lara317@ufl.edu or 727-453-6905. Thank you!



**Brooker Creek Preserve's Herpetology Camp --
July 20-24, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm**

Back for its 10th year, this popular, hands-on, science-based nature day camp is designed for children (ages 7-11) with a strong interest in nature. Campers will explore the fascinating world of amphibians and reptiles side-by-side with field herpetologist George L. Heinrich (Heinrich Ecological Services). 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. The registration period is now open and a number of spaces have been filled. We encourage interested families to register soon as only one session will be offered at BCP. Additional information and registration at www.brookercreekpreserve.org



2015 Nature Summer Camps:

Wetland Adventure Camp -- July 27-31

Junior Naturalist Camp -- August 3-7

2015 Nature Summer Camps!

Exciting ♦ Life Experiences ♦ Fun

**Brooker Creek Preserve,
Tarpon Springs**



July 27-31, 2015: Wetland Adventure Camp

Meet all the things that walk, wiggle and unfurl within our magical Florida wetlands during this fun-filled week. Explore beautiful swamps, marshes and even the gooey mucks with Sensing Nature's professional biologists and certified UF Florida Master Naturalists. Dip net a dragonfly nymph, swamp tromp where ferns grow, learn the tales soils tell, discover the secrets of water and help make a difference for tomorrow's wetland critters.

Registration Deadline: July 13

August 3-7, 2015: Junior Naturalist Camp

Come test your investigative skills while identifying tracks, scats and signs of our native Florida wildlife with Sensing Nature's professional biologists and certified UF Florida Master Naturalists. "Read" the secrets that nature has left for your discovery. Learn the skills that biologists use for documenting our natural world including creating your own nature journal notebook, exploring the hidden treasures found in owl pellets, and testing your own observational awareness during our last day scavenger hunt challenge!

Registration Deadline: July 20

Summer Camp Ages: 7 – 12 years of age

Cost: \$150 per youth per camp

**Before-care & After-care is optional; additional \$20 per week per camper*

Hours: 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Before-care Hours*: 7:30 AM – 9:00 AM

After-care Hours*: 4:00 PM – 5:30 PM



Register at www.SensingNature.com ♦ (727) 397-2306 ♦ Email jmurphy@sensingnature.com

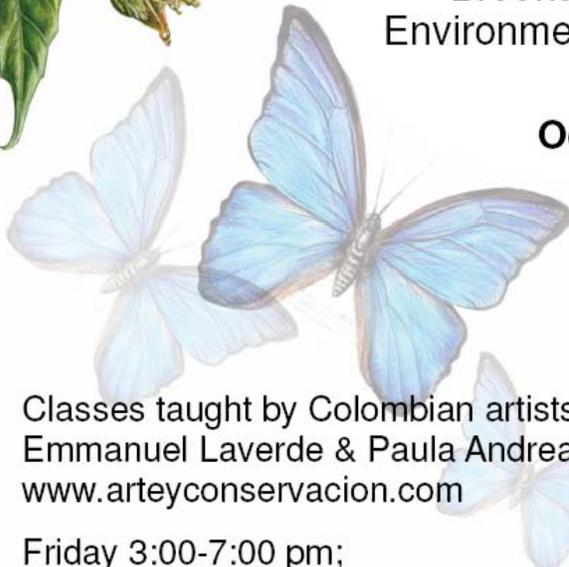


PAINTING NATURE WORKSHOP WATERCOLOR FOR BEGINNERS

Brooker Creek Preserve
Environmental Education Center

October 2-4, 2015

\$220 per person
Ages 15 and up



Classes taught by Colombian artists:
Emmanuel Laverde & Paula Andrea Romero
www.arteyconservacion.com

Friday 3:00-7:00 pm;
Saturday & Sunday 9:00-3:00 pm
You do not need experience to take this course.



The *Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve* is honored to host this two-and-a-half day workshop by the very famous Colombian artists, Emmanuel Laverde and Paula Andrea Romero. Their art and workshops focus on the relationships between art and nature and they cater to beginners as well as advanced painters. Their work has been published by Discovery News, National Geographic, and BBC News. They have exhibited and held workshops at the New York State Museum, Museum of Fuegian Art in Patagonia, Argentina, National Museum of Colombia, Bogota Botanical Garden, and much more.

This class is limited to 20 people.
RSVP by Sep. 18, 2015

For more information and to register, please contact
Claudia Lewis clewis.consulting@gmail.com or 727-542-3328

Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve

Further information can be found at:
www.friendsofbrookercreekpreserve.org

The Role of Fire

By: Craig Huegel

If you watch the news when the media covers a major wildfire, they often use the word "destruction" to describe its influence; something like: "The X wildfire has already destroyed 500 acres of National Forest Y." Regrettably, such teaching moments reinforce a negative impression of the role of fire in natural systems. The public is taught that fires are destructive and must be fought, not that they are integral components of natural systems and must be incorporated into good land management. Fire destroys public/private property such as homes and infrastructure. However, it reenergizes wild lands. Our approach to fire (and the adjectives we use to describe it), therefore is dependent on context.

Nearly every natural system has evolved to respond to a certain fire cycle. A few, like oak hammocks, are fire retardant communities because they inhibit fire, but most are dependent on some regular fire interval. In Florida, that is especially true as fire, started by lightning, is a common occurrence. Systems dominated by grasses, pines, and palmettos actually encourage fire. These are pyrogenic communities. If you doubt that, light a match to a clump of grass or a green pine bough and see how quickly the plants ignite. They have evolved to burn. Pinelands and grasslands across North America all share this trait. Oak-dominated woodlands do not.

Fire is important for various reasons. Perhaps the most important is that it resets the clock on plant succession. Vegetation in natural systems becomes denser over time. Saw palmetto grows taller and throws a greater shadow around the plants beneath it. Pines, especially slash pine, produce larger numbers of seedlings when fire is excluded for any length of time. Such pinelands develop a dense canopy that shades the understory. Excluding fire creates too much shade on the otherwise diverse understory and many of these species decline and eventually disappear. The beautiful pine lily which is featured on the Friends logo, is a good example of an understory plant that requires an open understory to thrive - the type of understory that only comes from fire. Fire-managed systems are significantly more diverse than systems where fire is excluded for too long.

Each major plant community in Florida has a defined fire interval. This interval has evolved over millennia due partly to the regularity of lightning and the speed at which fuel accumulates. Grasses are extremely quick to regenerate after a fire so grass-dominated communities such a dry prairie and longleaf pine sandhills tend to burn every 1-3 years. Palmettos don't recover quite as quickly, therefore, pine flatwoods have a normal interval of 3-7 years. Marshes are composed of a lot of grasses, cypress swamps are not. Fire is important to them also, but the intervals between fires are quite different.



Fire reduces competition in the understory and fertilizes new plant growth

Besides creating elbow room for the rest of the understory, fire is a major fertilizer. Florida soils are relatively low in nutrients. Those that are present are quickly absorbed by the existing vegetation and then "sequestered" in their stems and foliage. Fire releases these nutrients as potash, etc. and makes it available once more. Moving nutrients from plants such as palmettos and pines to understory species such as pine lilies is a cycle that is absolutely important to the health of most of Florida's plant communities. These nutrients improve growth, flowering, and seed production and this improves wildlife habitat too. In the year of a fire, the vast majority of understory species flower and fruit at significantly higher levels than in other years.

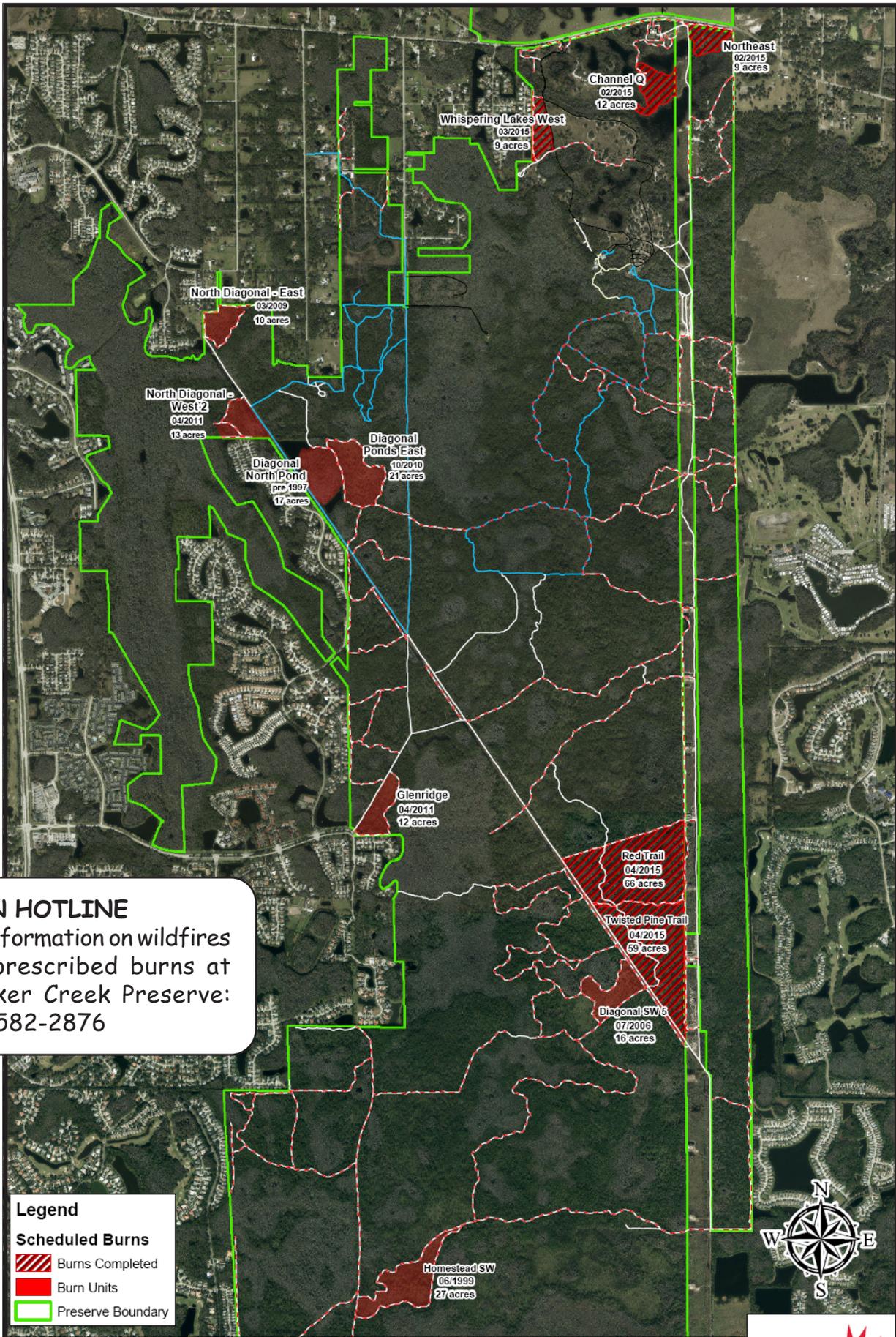
Fire can be destructive to natural systems if the temperatures become too intense. Natural fire intervals occur as fuels reach a minimal

amount to "carry" a fire through the area. In a naturally managed plant community, fuels almost never build up significantly. They are burned off with regularity. When fire is excluded beyond this normal interval, fuels like dense palmetto fronds accumulate to extents not seen in naturally managed systems. Fires in these areas, therefore, burn far more intensely than most plants are adapted to and such fires can kill many species that are otherwise considered "fire adapted." Fire is not just fire; it has nuances that must be considered. Failing to do that can cause more harm than good.

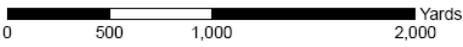
As we approach the summer fire season, you will see stories about wildfire and there might even be one or two emanating from Brooker Creek Preserve. As you listen to those news reports, understand the real ecology of fire and its role in the real world.



On May 25, 2012 two wildfires, caused by lightning, occurred in the Preserve. Pictures on the left are from May 31 and the pictures on the right show the rapid recovery of this area as of June 21, just twenty-one days later. (credit, Lara Miller)



BURN HOTLINE
 For information on wildfires
 and prescribed burns at
 Brooker Creek Preserve:
 727-582-2876



BROOKER CREEK PRESERVE
 Prescribed Burn Requests for Florida Forest Service 2015



Brooker Creek Preserve Book Club

by John Burr

The February book club meeting was a real treat. The book was **Weeki Wachee Mermaids** by Lu Vickers and Bonnie Georgiadis. While the book was delightful with lots of history and photographs, by far the most wonderful part was the presence of one of the authors: Bonnie Georgiadis. Wow, what a lignape. Bonnie's recollections and behind the scenes explanations of how it was all done were mesmerising.



In March we read **Walkin Lawton** by John Dos Passos Coggin. Florida Governor Lawton Chiles was known for his campaign walk from north Florida to south Florida (hence the title). The book was generally unsatisfying stylistically but the story of Lawton Chiles was about an amazing man.

By contrast, April's book - the first thirteen segments of **Tales of Old Florida** - was at first stodgy and stylistically quite different. Tales of Old Florida is a collection of public domain articles from various magazines from the 1870's to the 1910's. But it repaid wading through. Ultimately the group seemed to find it interesting the way it was written, as well as for the subject matter.

All the books for this year are Florida themed. Those who are new to the area say they like learning about the history or stories of their new home. Those of us who are native Floridians find that there's still a lot to be learned about the state we live in. Every one is invited to attend. The books are available from various sources and in various formats with no requirement for any specific copy.

Coming up in May (Saturday May 2, 2015, 9:30am at the Ed Center) is a novel set in contemporary central Florida: **The Trouble with Panthers** by William Culyer Hall. And in June (Saturday June 6, 2015, 9:30am at the Ed Center) we will be discussing **Florida's Big Dig: The Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway** by William Crawford.



Book Club Reads for 2015

Co-leaders: Jon Burr & Kathleen Nichter

- May 2: "The Trouble with Panthers" by William Culyer Hall
- Jun 6: "Florida's Big Dig: The Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway" by William Crawford
- Jul 11*: "Tales of Old Florida" by Frank Oppel & Tony Mysel (Chapters 14-27)
*Note July 11th: The Fourth is on the first Saturday.
- Aug 1: "Deep Shadow" by Randy Wayne White
- Sep 5: "Alligators in B Flat" by Jeff Klinkenburg
- Oct 3: "Tales of Old Florida" by Frank Oppel & Tony Mysel (Chapters 28-40)
- Nov 7: "Back Country Lawmen" by Bob H. Lee
- Dec 5: "Home Grown in Florida" by William Mcheen, ed.

Nature Store News

By: Kathleen Nichter

The Wildlife Safari attracted a lot of new visitors to the store, and the stuffed animals of wildlife found at the Preserve, and the various children's books and guidebooks proved popular for the day.

We started to expand our new book section, and over the next few months plan to add new titles to the children's section, the guidebook section, and the adult reading section. We select our new book titles based on their relevance to Brooker Creek Preserve first, then relevance to Florida in general. When visiting a place like the Preserve, most people want to purchase something to enhance their visit, or increase their knowledge of what they saw or the local area.

If you know of any books that might be of interest to our visitors, please let us know and we can work with our distributors to find them. Thank you for your support of the Nature Store.

News from the Wildflower Garden

by Pam Brown

In February it rained and the three intrepid volunteers talked about plants and ate snacks before adjourning and going home. March was much more productive. We had wildflowers that were picked up by Dixie Mills (Rosin weed and Scutellaria) along with Coreopsis that Lois Weber provided to plant. Lois Weber's son was visiting and he helped plant as well. She has taught her children well! I watered the plants several times while it has been so dry. Come join us on the last Saturday of each month from 8 to 10 a.m. if you would like to volunteer in the Wildflower Garden. Bring your gardening tools, gloves, hat and bug repellent and wear closed toed shoes. We will provide coffee, juice and breakfast snacks.

Pam's Gardening Tip

We have all heard about the problem with declining pollinator insects, especially bees. One thing we each can do is plant more blooming plants (especially natives) that provide blooms in succession during the year so that pollinators have a more constant source of nectar for food.

One of my favorite flowering native trees is the Yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*). Female trees bloom early in February and are usually covered with a multitude of pollinators. I have one in my front yard and you can hear the buzzing before you get to the tree. Yaupons have male and female plants so, if you want a female, choose it in the fall when the berries have formed. All of the dwarf Yaupon shrubs are male, so there are usually plenty of male flowers for pollination. The female trees are covered with red berries all winter. These berries are a favorite of birds, especially mockingbirds.

Also consider planting some native wildflowers that bloom at different times to attract and feed pollinators. You can get some ideas for what flowers do well in our area by visiting the Wildflower Garden at Brooker Creek Preserve.



Volunteer News and More!

By Lara Milligan, Natural Resource Agent
Pinellas County Extension, University of
Florida/IFAS
and Julia Myers, Education Support Specialist
Brooker Creek Preserve



Two summer camps will be held at the Preserve this summer! Herpetology camp with George Heinrich will take place July 20th - 24th & Wetland Adventure camp with Sensing Nature will take place July 27th - 31st. If there is a 7 to 12 year old in your life please see our website for more information & to register.

Our Lara got married on March 21st; she is now Mrs. Lara Milligan! Congrats to Lara and her new husband Allen!



Jackie & Isobel volunteering at the front desk during Wildlife Safari

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

We are so grateful for the amazing volunteers we have here at BCP. In March we had a few that went above and beyond. Thank you Terri Gonzalez & Jane Myers for stepping up and helping out as hike guides when a large unexpected group showed up to our Wildlife hike! Jane came to attend the hike and Terri was on the front desk and luckily they were up to the challenge, thank you for saving the day Terri and Jane! Another special thank you to Adam Robinson for volunteering to spend hours in our pond by the Ed Center clearing out the leaves that have built up over the years.

UF Bug Week is happening May 18th - 23rd this year. We will be celebrating on social media so if you find any cool bug pictures please send them to us!

Brooker had a prescribed burn on April 9th! About 125 acres were burned in the center of the preserve just east of Ridgemoor. There is a fire burn hotline if you'd like to stay up to date on prescribed burns in the county. 582-2876 (582-BURN)

Fire at BCP on April 9



(Volunteer News, continued)

Recent Sightings:



Left, Florida Scrub Roseling *Callisia ornata*. Above, Blackberry flower.



Above, a water moccasin eating a banded water snake during Wildlife Safari. Right, a coral snake slithered past Tom Trimmier as he was checking conditions on the Preserve's Blackwater Cutoff Trail 3/19.



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

**BROOKER CREEK PRESERVE
MAY 2015**

Cool calendar for your refrigerator!

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
	1	2 Guided Hike 9-10:30 Book Club 9:30-10:30	3
7 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	8	9 Beginning Bird Hike 8-10 Introduction to Beekeeping 10-12 Night Hike 8:30-10:00 pm	10
13 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	14	15 Guided Hike 9-10:30 Plastic in My Toothpaste? 10:30-12 4-H Explorers 2-3:30	16
21 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	22	23 Wildflower Garden Club 8-10 Guided Hike 9-10:30 Entomology 101 10:30-12 Introduction to Composting 1:30-3	24
28 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	29	30 Return the Preserve Work Day 8:00-11:00 Photography Hike 8:30-10:30 Guided Hike 9-10:30 Birding 101 10:30-12	31

JUNE 2015

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
5 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	5	6 Ken Rowe Birdathon 5:30 am-12:30 pm Guided Hike 9-10:30 Book Club 9:30-10:30	7
11 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	12	13 Beginning Bird Hike 8:00-10:00 Guided Hike 9-10:30 What's That Wading Bird? 10:30-12	14
17 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	18	19 Guided Hike 9-10:30 Featured Creature: The Coyote 10:30-12	20
25 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	26	27 Wildflower Garden Club 8-10 Return the Preserve Work Day 8-11 Guided Hike 9-10:30 Introduction to Permaculture 10:30-12	28

Hiking Trails are open every day from 7:00 am until one hour before sunset

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

Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve - Land Use Position Statement: The Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve support land uses within the boundaries of Brooker Creek Preserve which have a main purpose that furthers the preservation, 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:

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Book Club: Jon Burr & Kathleen Nichter
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