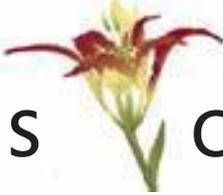


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Newsletter of the  
**Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve**

March - April 2015

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### Chairman's Message

By Barb Hoffman

#### To Bee or Not To Bee?

We are so fortunate to have a beekeeper join our ranks. Robert Burkard recently moved here with his wife, Carole, from the Reading, PA area. He brings with him not only a wealth of information about honey bees and beekeeping, but also a knowledge of the equipment necessary to collect and jar honey. This is great news for our Nature Store as we get many requests for local honey. Honey - a perfect, healthy, natural food and an awesome, potentially profitable item for our store. We expect that people will come from miles away to buy our honey and that this will increase visitorship. Beekeeping may open doors to a huge array of possibilities for educational and fundraising opportunities.

#### But is beekeeping right for the Preserve?

The Preserve is an island of wilderness in a sea of development, an oasis for native plants and animals. It is a living natural history museum. We tout the importance of its ecological health and expound on the evils of exotic species. Honey bees are exotic species, although they occur throughout Florida and already exist in large numbers within the Preserve. Our plan to keep hives at Brooker Creek Preserve may well increase the number of these non-native bees and disrupt the balance between them and native pollinators. It is something that warrants our consideration.

Native plants don't need honey bees. Pollination is accomplished completely and perfectly by native pollinators - an assortment

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of bees, butterflies, flies, moths, wasps, and beetles - that have evolved over time to effectively pollinate our native plants. Honey bees are especially useful for agricultural crops, where acres of such plants require their assistance, places where native pollinators have less interest.

(Chairman's Message, continued)

The Preserve certainly does not need additional honey bees. The question is, will the introduction of more have a negative impact on our native populations of insect pollinators? Science and best guesses by experts suggest that the potential effects would be minimal at most:

(1) Honey bees have been living in Florida for nearly 400 years and they already feed in the Preserve. In fact, man-made hives exist just outside the Preserve and feral colonies most likely live inside the boundary, so the addition of a few more hives shouldn't make a difference.

(2) Scientific studies have shown that the introduction of honey bees to areas previously uninhabited by them show no differences, positive or negative, in populations of native insects.

(3) Science suggests that the land provides enough food resources for native pollinators AND honey bees. Although nectar and pollen

are finite resources, the flowers in the Preserve are plentiful enough to support native pollinators and honey bees. Native pollinators should not go hungry because they must share food supplies with honey bees.

Science and expert opinion aside, my personal issue with the Friends doing beekeeping is that it brings our integrity into question. If we are to be the citizen stewards of Brooker Creek Preserve, guardians of our little wilderness galaxy, then are we doing the right thing by keeping honey bees?

Bob says, "Having the Friends start a beekeeping program near the Preserve would bring only positive benefits without infringing on the integrity and mission of the Friends. Honey bees are already in the Preserve, have lived here for hundreds of years, will not harm the native pollinators, and have such a positive image with the public at large that they would be a great tool for increasing public interest."

To bee or not to bee? That is the question. What do you think?

**Barb**

**Editor's Note:** The County has offered a place for the Friends to do beekeeping just outside the Preserve. Beekeeping itself is not allowed within the boundaries of any Pinellas County preserve.



Ken Rowe and wife, Marge, holding the photo honorarium bestowed upon Ken at the Birthday Bash. Ken was out of town, so Chairman Barb delivered it to his home. The plaque reads:

**LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD  
presented to  
KEN ROWE  
for countless hours and many years of  
volunteering  
at Brooker Creek Preserve.**

## Friends Receive \$5,000 Grant!

Thanks to the diligent efforts of Allyn Childress, our vice-chair and grants writer, we received a much-needed \$5,000 from the National Environmental Education Foundation! The grant is to be used for:

Design and print new brochures  
Update our website  
Develop donor outreach and recognition materials  
Purchase accounting software  
Hire an accounting consultant to get us started with the new software

WOOHOO! Thank you, Allyn!

Many thanks to Evan Earle's "Movie Night" group who chose Brooker Creek Preserve for their \$171 donation!

## Save the Dates

### Friends Events for 2015

- Mar. 7 & 21 Watercolor Art Lessons
- Mar. 7 Brooker Book Club
- Mar. 7 & 21 Night Hikes
- Mar. 8 Off the Beaten Path Hike
- Mar. 14 Friends Family Campout
- Mar. 15 Music Jamboree
- Mar. 21 Return the Preserve Work Day
- Mar. 28 Wildflower Garden Club
- Apr. 10-12 Painting Nature Workshop
- Apr. 11 Wildlife Safari
- Apr. 11 Brooker Book Club
- Apr. 25 Night Hike & Star Party
- Apr. 25 Return the Preserve Work Day
- June 6 First Brooker Birdathon
- July 4 Four Lakes Hammock Hike
- July 20-24 Herpetology Camp
- Oct. 17 Fall Wildflower Festival
- Nov. 7 Friends Annual Meeting & Volunteer Appreciation
- Nov. 15 Music in the Woods

Check out the arrival of new native plants for sale in the Nature Store!

**Its Spring! Its Spring!**  
See Craig's article Bird Song, p.15.



Bachman's Sparrow, above, and bobwhite.  
Photos by Christina Evans.



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



**Saturday, March 14, 2015  
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!**  
Contact [fobcp@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:fobcp@tampabay.rr.com) to RSVP or if you have questions.

Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve

## **Brooker Creek Preserve Music Jamboree!**



**Sunday, March 15, 2015**

**3:30 - 5:00 p.m.**

**All Ages Welcome!**

**Dust off that guitar, fiddle, banjo or other acoustic instrument and bring it to Brooker Creek Preserve for an outdoor jam session. Meet other musicians and learn some new songs. Music lovers of all ages are encouraged to attend, listen and enjoy. The jam session will be lead by a local musician.**

**Location: Brooker Creek Preserve  
3940 Keystone Road  
Tarpon Springs, FL 34688**

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

**Park in the main parking lot which is about one-mile from the Keystone Road entrance. Then follow the boardwalk to the Outdoor Music Pavilion.**

Hey Kids!

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



Saturday, April 11, 2015

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

Join in the fun at this educational and fun adventure for children through 12 years old! The children begin with a blank Wildlife Passport, then walk along a one-mile loop of adventure with live owls, snakes, baby raccoons, hawks, and more! As kids visit each Wildlife Station, their Passport gets stamped. At the end, kids get a special prize for completing the journey. Cost is \$5 per child. This event is sponsored by Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve.

Questions? Call 727-934-2680

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

# Sponsorship Form



Saturday, April 11, 2015  
9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
For children ages 4-12

Thank you for sponsoring this fun and educational adventure for kids. Your business name and logo will be placed on a sign in a prominent location as a sponsor of one of the wildlife stations along the safari. Wildlife stations cost \$200 each. You may choose to sponsor one station by yourself (\$200) or share a sponsorship with another sponsor (\$100 each).

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

## Wildlife Safari Volunteers Needed!

We are gearing up for one of our most exciting events of the year! The annual Wildlife Safari, featuring animals native to Brooker Creek Preserve will be Saturday April 11, 9 am - 2 pm.

The Safari will be conducted differently this year. Participants will move through the event at their own pace without the help of Safari Guides. However, Guides are still needed. Please sign up for one or more of the shifts below. We cannot conduct this event without you!

Morning Shift (8:30-11:00) & Afternoon Shift (11:00-2:30):

**Registration Table** - 4 people needed each shift

**Greeter Table** - 2 people needed each shift

**Prize Table** - 2 people needed each shift

**Parking Lot Attendant** - 1 person each shift

**Safari Guides** - 2 assigned to each Wildlife Station, a morning person and an afternoon person. Guides will (1) help set up the station, (2) assist the wildlife experts carry their animals and equipment to and from the parking lot and their wildlife station, (3) assist the experts during the event, (4) stamp the passports, (5) help take down the station.

Morning shift 7:30-11:30 & Afternoon shift 11:00-3:00

**Lunch Attendants** - 2 people needed to set up and clean up lunch in the break room (10:00-1:00)

## Music in the Woods - January 18

By Jane Myers

The day was sunny and cool - good blanket weather for the latest Music in the Woods event. Over 100 people gathered near the music pavilion to hear "2PM" and thoroughly enjoyed their contemporary folk music and wonderful harmonies. I also heard from many that they enjoyed the stories sprinkled in-between songs.

It was a cool evening, but everyone came prepared with blankets and lawn chairs and enjoyed sipping on a hot chocolate or apple cider. Many folks took advantage of the Nature Shop being open as well as walking along the boardwalk during the break between sets. A very enjoyable evening!



# PAINTING NATURE

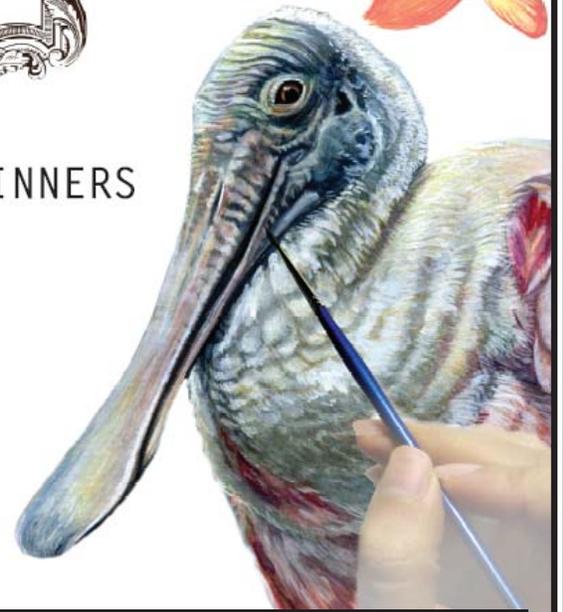


## WATERCOLOR FOR BEGINNERS

April 10- 12, 2015 \$220 US  
BROOKER CREEK PRESERVE  
Environmental Education Center.

Dictated by: Emmanuel Laverde and Paula Andrea Romero  
[www.arteyconservacion.com](http://www.arteyconservacion.com)  
Friday 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM; Saturday & Sunday 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Hosted by: Friends  of Brooker Creek Preserve



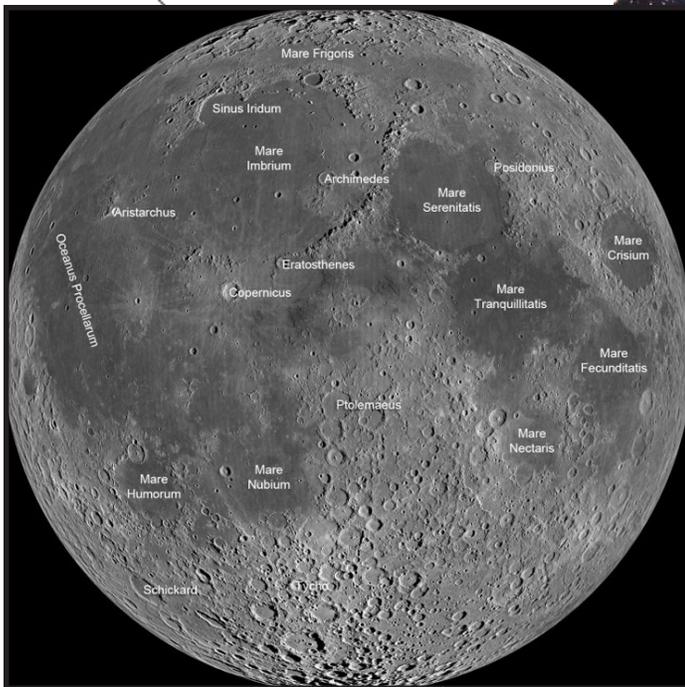
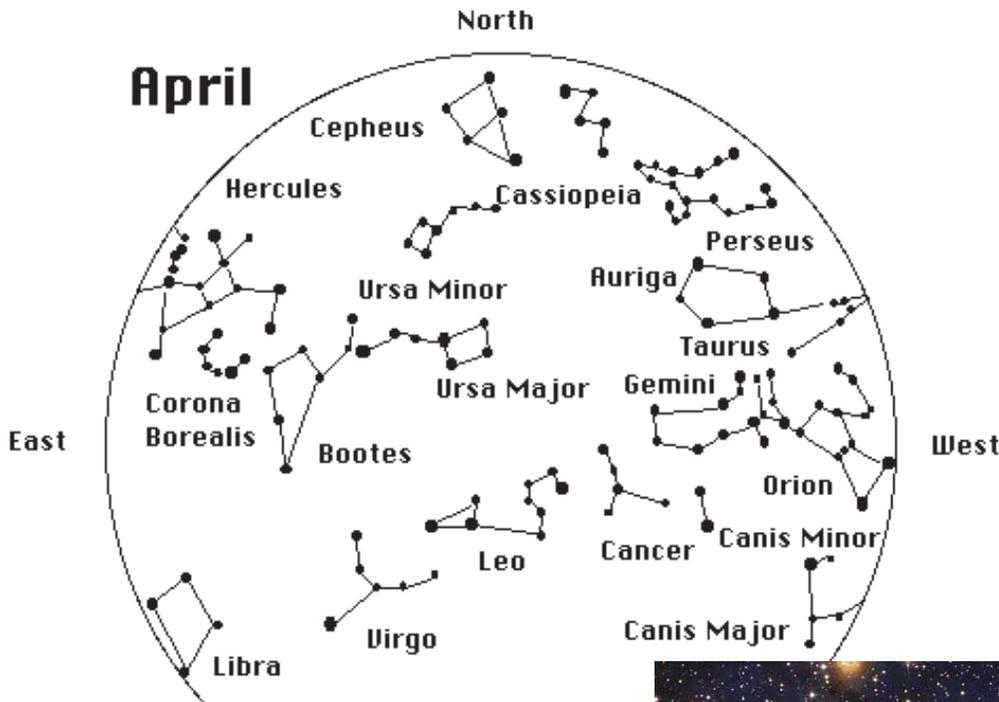
The Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve is honored to host this two-and-a-half day Watercolor Workshop by the very famous Columbian artists, Paula Andrea Romero and Emmanuel Laverde. Their art and workshops focus on the relationship between art and nature, and they cater to beginners as well as advanced 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.

Please see our website for more information: [www.friendsofbrookercreekpreserve.org](http://www.friendsofbrookercreekpreserve.org) and click on Painting Nature Watercolor for Beginners. To sign up, please contact Claudia Lewis at [clewis.consulting@gmail.com](mailto:clewis.consulting@gmail.com) or call 727-542-3328.

*Bangsia aureosincta*- Gold-ringed tanager (critically endangered)  
Painted by Paula Andrea Romero.

## Star Party! Saturday, April 25, 7:30 - 10:30 or so

Join us as we celebrate International Astronomy Day along with the St. Petersburg Astronomy Club. Observe the stars through telescopes provided. Night hikes will be conducted as well along the .75 mile Ed Center Trail through the woods. Please bring a chair, water, insect repellent, and your own telescope if you have one. As always, pets, smoking, and alcohol are not allowed. Arrive between 7:30 and 8:00 p.m. - the front gates will be open only during this time. A \$3 per person donation is requested; registration is required. Register by calling 727-934-2680 or online at <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/star-party-tickets-15831651897>





## WATERCOLOR ART LESSONS

By Carol Loiacono

\$15 / class

Saturdays, 9:30-noon

January 10

January 24

February 7

February 21

March 7

March 21

Class begins at 9:30. Students should be at the Preserve by 9:00 to get ready. Students may take as many classes as they wish. These are plein air sessions, outside, in a beautiful Preserve location. Payment can be made on class day.

### Supply List

#### **Paints - transparent watercolors**

Cadmium Yellow Light	Cobalt Blue
Alizarin Crimson	Phthalo Green
French Ultramarine Blue	Sap Green
Phthalo Blue	Yellow Ochre
Cerulean Blue	Burnt Sienna

**Paper** - 140 lb. weight or thicker-block, pad, or individual sheets (foam core or other board to clip individual sheets onto).

**Pallet** - plastic pallet with lid in a large size is best

#### **Paper towels**

**Brushes** - assorted sizes & shapes (pointed, square, & rigger) suitable for watercolor (short handled )

**Easel & Chair** - if you wish to sit while painting

#### **Water Container**

**Pencil** - #2b eraser

**Small Pen Knife** - or a cut up credit card

**RSVP** by emailing [fobcp@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:fobcp@tampabay.rr.com)

Questions and more information Carol Loiacono (artist) (727) 934-1482

## 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.

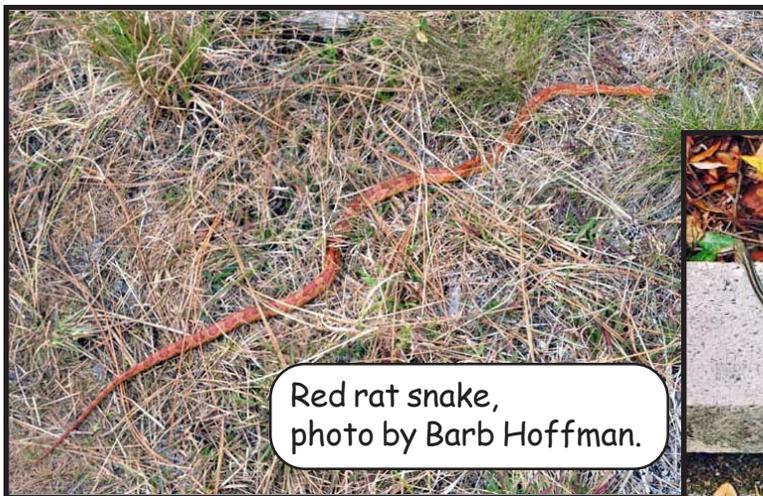
Saturday, March 21 (1:30 pm): Brooker Creek Preserve

Saturday, April 25 (10:00 am): Weedon Island Preserve

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](mailto:george@heinrichecologicalservices.com) or (727) 865-6255.



## Brooker Creek Preserve's Herpetology Camp (July 20-24)

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.

## Return the Preserve Work Day By Evan Earle Jr.

Yo Ho, Yo Ho, A Brooker Life For Me -- **Saturday, January 31st.**

The City of Tampa was busy fighting off invading pirates during the annual Gasparilla Day celebration. Meanwhile that same day, the Friends Of Brooker Creek Preserve were busy fighting off our own invaders in January's Return The Preserve (RTP) Work Day. But instead of sword bearing, bead laden pirates, we faced an insidious invader. St. Augustine grass! This exotic turf grass had staked a claim to the area next to the sidewalk from the delivery parking lot to the auditorium and gazebo. It was choking off the grouping of muhly grass residing in this area and continuing it's invasion towards the pine trees. A more fiendish foe would be hard to find! In December, our RTP Work Day started working on removing the blanket of overgrown St. Augustine grass. Well, in January, we finished it off.

The Return The Preserve Work Day team called in the big guns. We asked Pam Brown and the Wildflower Garden group if they would tag team with us on this RTP Work Day. Pam and her team said yes and we formed a super team. The St. Augustine grass didn't stand a chance. We were a lean, mean, grass eradicating machine. Some of us dug up the grass and loosened it. Some of us pulled up the loosened grass and piled it up. Some of us transported the grass to the collection area designated by Pinellas County. And the pièce de résistance? In the newly opened area, we planted wildflowers and in some spots, muhly grass, to fill in. Where there once was a non-native, exotic, out of control mono culture, there is now a beautiful area that reflects the real Brooker Creek Preserve. And we did it all without cannons, swords, and pirate ships.

I can't thank the members of this RTP/Wildflower Garden super team enough. All of you certainly did a super job. Anyone that has seen the pile of D-E-A-D St. Augustine grass as you leave the parking area knows how hard each of you worked and what a difference you made! It was a cool morning that warmed up into a beautiful day that was made more so by the camaraderie and fun we shared. Did I say fun? It was hard work and dirty work. But I do believe it is fair, and accurate, to say we had fun. I know the St. Augustine grass didn't enjoy it. We capped off our work sharing a delicious pizza lunch in the music pavilion, under the clear blue sky.

Once again, step by step, we continue to make a difference. We can take pride in knowing and seeing that we are making tangible improvements enjoyed by everyone who visits. We are returning Brooker Creek Preserve to its natural beauty.

Our next Return The Preserve Work Days are:

**Saturday 3/21**

**Saturday 4/25**



## Hello from the Brooker Book Club!

Hello Brooker Bookers! The booklist can be found under the calendar of events at [brookercreekpreserve.org/eventbrite](http://brookercreekpreserve.org/eventbrite). Seating is limited, please use the event registration page at [brookercreekpreserve.org](http://brookercreekpreserve.org).



## Book Club Reads for 2015

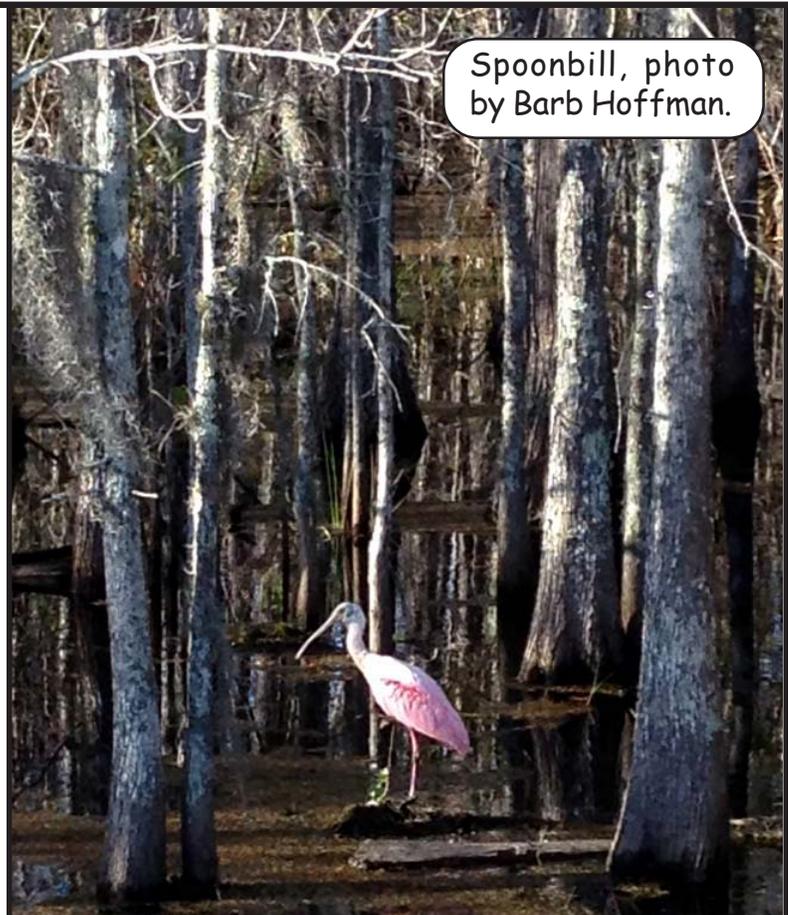
Co-leaders: Jon Burr & Kathleen Nichter

- Mar 7: "Walkin Lawton" by John Dos Passos Coggin  
Apr 11\*: "Tales of Old Florida" by Frank Oppel & Tony Melsel (Chapters 1-13)  
\*Note April 11th: First Saturday is Easter weekend  
May 2: "The Trouble with Panthers" by William Cuyler Hall  
Jun 6: "Florida's Big Dig: The Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway" by William Crawford  
Jul 11\*: "Tales of Old Florida" by Frank Oppel & Tony Melsel (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 Melsel (Chapters 28-40)  
Nov 7: "Back Country Lawmen" by Bob H. Lee  
Dec 5: "Home Grown in Florida" by William Mcheen, ed.

Check out the arrival of new native plants for sale in the Nature Store!



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



Spoonbill, photo by Barb Hoffman.

## Bird Song

By: Craig Huegel

With spring rapidly approaching, the Preserve (and hopefully your landscape) is once more filled with the songs of birds. Birds are visual animals, but they use song for a number of important uses; most significantly, to advertise their territories and to attract a mate. Both of these functions are unimportant in the dead of winter, but the advent of spring makes them critical.

Song is a risky venture. To sing creates exposure. That is its purpose, but the attention it brings increases mortality. What we hear as joy is actually a desperate cry for attention that can just as easily bring death from a predator as the love of a good woman. Nature measures success as the number of offspring we leave behind, so the risk is worth it if the result of our singing is another nest full of eggs.

In spring, most male birds molt their drab winter feathers for a fresh plumage of more-exciting color. The increased hours of daylight, bring about changes in hormones and these make the males bolder and more aggressive. All of this is significant, because most birds find their mates in the spring. Few mate for life; most remain together only for the breeding season. Though males are the showy, pugnacious half of the partnership, females are the ones really in charge of everything (so what else is new?). Females choose their partners each spring and all the males can do is advertise their fitness. As the males sing their hearts out, often exposed at the end of a branch or the top of a tree, females sit by and evaluate their performance in relation to the others. The more mature,

reproductively well-conditioned females choose partners that sing the best. Males with the loudest calls, those that repeat it most frequently (without a break to catch their breath), and those that spend the most daylight hours singing are the ones that most interest the girls. Of course, those are also the ones most likely to get eaten by a hawk or cat... It's a tradeoff. Finding a partner and producing children is worth the risk.

Birds sing in the spring, but they call throughout the year. There is a difference. Bird song is the melodious sound we hear in spring and it comes from males. It communicates fitness. Birds communicate other things all year, just like we do. They talk to communicate how they feel, to stay in touch with each other, and whether there is danger in the vicinity. These are bird calls, not songs. Most birds have more than a half dozen calls and some have up to one hundred. Birds, like parrots, have a complex social structure and this requires a complex language. They have a lot more to tell each other than solitary birds do. If you listen to birds a lot, you will recognize some of their calls. When a snake or a cat ventures into my yard, I quickly know it from the distress calls the blue jays generate. When they are at the

bird bath and "happy", they make different calls; and when they are traveling together through the tree tops, they talk to each other with another completely different call.

Bird songs and calls are not just innate vocalizations. It's true that birds are born with a crude "knowledge" of what they are supposed to sound like (the "instinct" part of their repertoire), but much of their vocabulary is learned. Research on birds has clearly demonstrated that baby birds learn their



Eastern meadowlark,  
photo by Christina Evans

vocalizations from their parents. Birds, taken from their parents and raised in isolation, never truly master their songs and this relegates them to failing forever in the mating competition, if released back into nature where other males are present. Baby birds listen to their parents, and the songs/calls of their neighbors of the same species. They recognize these sounds early in the nest and then they practice them. If deafened at this "practice stage", they also will fail to fully master the art of singing. Learning to sing is critical to their future success and it is complicated. Some birds learn everything by the time they reach puberty and never vary their vocabulary after that. Others, like parrots, jays, crows, and mockingbirds are lifetime learners and expand their vocabulary throughout their life.

Because so much of a bird's vocabulary is learned by listening, they develop regional dialects. Just as we can often tell people apart who grow up in the Deep South from those born in New England or the Midwest, birds develop

subtle regional differences in their songs that are obvious to them and recognizable to us if we listen carefully. Red-winged blackbirds in Wisconsin have an additional note to their mating song that is not present in red-winged blackbirds that reside in Florida. Sometimes, these differences are so great that regional populations don't interbreed with each other. The song is a mighty weapon... Eventually, such local populations can become so distinct that they become separate species. Eastern and western meadowlarks are a good example of this.

Bird songs can be beautiful to our ears. They can help us in identifying individual species even when we can't see them, and they bring a life to the landscape not created by other sights or sounds. They also are a critical component to the daily life of the birds and have a serious message for the world around them. As you listen to the birds around you, perhaps this insight will give you a greater appreciation for the complexity and the beauty of nature.



## Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

*Back by popular demand...*

### **OFF THE BEATEN PATH**

**A nature-based fundraising hike series!**

**Description:** This is the last of a series of four hikes to 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. The hikes are not only educational, but a lot of fun as well! The hike will begin at 9:00 am and be about 3-4 hours long. Bring water and lunch.

**Cost:** \$25 donation per hike. 10% discount for members of Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

**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.

**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.

## Nature Store News

By: Kathleen Nichter

As the weather gets better and the urge to get out there and work in the garden takes hold, remember that the Nature Store has a Native Plant Nursery with a selection of flowers, trees, and other plants that are native to Florida.

Thank you to those who donated lightly used items to our *Second Nature* section. Often the items come in and are sold within the same week! We also have a very good selection in our used book section of paperback novels about Florida, and usually by Florida authors. We also just received a donation of recent issues of *Nature*, the well-known international weekly journal of science. Stop in and browse when you get a chance, and thank you for all of your support.



Buckeye, photo by Lara Miller.

### New Membership Categories Begin in April!

We wanted to begin the year with these new membership categories, but we have experienced some administrative glitches which have put this off until April.

## News from the Wildflower Garden

by Pam Brown

Spring flowers are starting to bloom - violets and lyre-leaf sage. Our group volunteered with the Return the Preserve group in January to plant wildflowers where non-native St. Augustine grass was being removed near the sidewalk from the drop-off area to the auditorium. We had a couple of new faces and I really appreciate their help. We planted blazing star, golden aster and skullcap. In addition, we transplanted several clumps of the Gulf muhlygrass from the Wildflower Garden to plant in this area. I am looking forward to the fall when these will all be in bloom. We would love to have more volunteers. We meet the last Saturday of each month from 9 - 11 am during November through March. Our summer hours are 8 - 10 am from April through October. Wear closed toed shoes and bring garden gloves, tools, hat and water. We will provide coffee and breakfast snacks. We would love to see you there.

### Pam's Gardening Tip

Spring has sprung, I think. We had our coldest weather of the winter in late February and there were a few plants nipped by the freezing temperatures. If you have some plants in your landscape that look like they were damaged or dead, it is best to wait a few weeks to see if they will put out new sprouts. Do not prune until you see where they sprout, then prune back to that spot. You can also lightly scrape along the bark of a stem, if it is green under the bark, it is still alive.

### Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve New Members:

Kathy Abbott  
Grace Dulaney  
Brian Hecht  
Claudia Lewis  
Janet McNew

## Volunteer News and More!

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



**Trail Conditions:** We have a lot of guests calling to find out about trail conditions lately, particularly how wet certain trails are. Luckily, Thomas Trimmier has volunteered to check on trail conditions weekly for us! THANK YOU Tom. Also in general, everyone can help with this, if you are out on the trails and have a trail condition update to report please let the front desk know so we can keep our guests informed!

**Volunteer Outreach:** We have a need for outreach volunteers at various community events throughout the year. There are some great opportunities to promote our programs, events, & education center! Please let me know if you are interested.

**Car Break-ins:** Just a reminder that we have continued to have car break-ins in our parking lot. They always happen when the guest has left their purse on the seat. Help us remind people to bring their valuables with them when possible. Thank you!

### **Birds of Prey Program, January 31:**

Thank you to the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve for sponsoring the Birds of Prey program in January! It had a wonderful turnout and received amazing feedback!



Gabe Vargo introducing a friend at the Birds of Prey Program. Photo by Julia Myers

### **April 9: Volunteer Celebration StarLite Cruise Dining Yacht**

Volunteers Set the Sail for Pinellas County: April 9 is the date to save! Mark your calendars and look for your email invitation during the first week of March! Volunteers must have volunteered at least 20 hours in the past 12 months.

Lupine photo by  
Lara Miller.



(Volunteer News, continued)

## Recent Sightings:

We had a special Otter show the first week of February! They were hunting fish and every time they caught one they would bring it on shore, eat for a minute and then go catch some more. As they were away hunting, we watched their catch get stolen by a great blue heron, a red shouldered hawk, and a black crowned night heron!



Otters, great blue heron, red shouldered hawk. Photos by Lara Miller.



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

**BROOKER CREEK PRESERVE**  
**MARCH 2015**

*Cool calendar for your refrigerator!*

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
5 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	6	7 Guided Hike 9-10:30 Book Club 9:30-10:30 Watercolor Art Lessons 9:30-12 (\$15/person) Mushroom Identification 1:30-3 Botany 101 10:30-12 Night Hike 6:30-8:30 (\$3/person)	8 Off the Beaten Path Hike 9-1 (\$25/person)
12 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	13 Botany Hike 9-11	14 Beginning Bird Hike 8-10:30 Recycled Materials in the Landscape 10:30-12 Pollution, Disease, Amphibian Decline 1:30-3 Friends Campout - arrive 3pm or later till noon on Sunday	15 Music Jamboree 3:30-5
19 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	20 Wildlife Hike 9-11	21 Return the Preserve Work Day 8-11 Guided Hike 9-10:30 Watercolor Art Lessons 9:30-12 (\$15/person) Gopher Tortoises 1:30-3 Night Hike 8-10 (\$3/person)	22
26 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	27	28 Photography Hike 8:30-10:30 Wildflower Garden Club 9-11 Extended Guided Hike 9-12 Nesting Ecology - Shorebirds & Seabirds 10:30-12 Tegus in Florida 1:30-3	29

**APRIL 2015**

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
2	3	4 Book Club 9:30-10:30 Life of Lichen 10:30-12 Night Hike 8-10 (\$3/person)	5
9 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	10 Botany Hike 9-11  ***** 3-Day Watercolor Workshop (\$220/person) *****	11 Guided Hike 9-10:30 Wildlife Safari 9-2	12
16 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	17	18 Guided Hike 9-10:30 Photography Workshop 10:30-12 Perilous Plants 1:30-3	19
23 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15	24 Wildlife Hike 9-11	25 Wildflower Garden Club 8-10 Return the Preserve Work Day 8-11 Extended Guided Hike 9-12 Invasive Wildlife 10:30-12 Swallowtail Kites 1:30-3 Star Party 8-10pm (\$3/person)	26
30 Pre-School Book Time 10:30-11:15			

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:**

**Officers**

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Vice Chair: Cathie Foster  
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Restoration of Loop Area: Len Gravitz  
Return the Preserve Work Days:

Evan Earle, Jr.

Fall Wildflower Festival Chair: open  
Wildflower Garden: Pam Brown  
Wildlife Safari Chair: Brad Wilkins

**Further Leadership**

Book Club: Jon Burr & Kathleen Nichter  
Membership: Jeff Myers  
Nature Store Manager: Kathleen Nichter  
Newsletter Publisher: Cathy Vogelsong  
Website Master: Cathy Ordiway

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

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