

Mark your calendars

Dec 6th - Joint Meeting SPAS. Pinellas County Extension Service 6:30 - 9:30 pm. Silent Auction, Refreshments and Speaker John Moran.

Dec Field Trip
None Scheduled

December Board Meeting
None Scheduled

Jan 3rd - Monthly Membership Meeting. Moccasin Lake Nature Park 7:30 pm. Topic: Don Stillwaugh, Flora and Fauna of Brooker Creek Preserve

Jan 6th - Field Trip to Brooker Creek Preserve
Contact Bill Bilodeau
322-9695

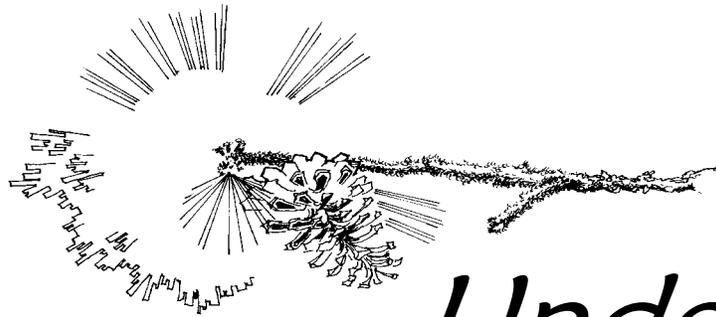
Jan 24th - Board Meeting. Clearwater Library
6:30 pm - 9:00 pm

Welcome New Members

Patrick Henry

Janet Martin

Lesa and Michael McCarty



The Understory

New Email Service

If you've noticed that you're no longer getting email news updates from Pinellas FNPS, it may be because you're no longer signed up for them. In late October the Chapter subscribed to a new email service, in part to simplify distribution of email updates and this newsletter to several hundred subscribers, and in part to conform to the requirements of the Federal CAN-SPAM Act of 2003. At that time, all subscribers were invited to join the new list, but only about half did. We regret losing the rest of you, but still hope to lure you back!

You can subscribe by visiting the Chapter's website at www.pinellasnativeplants.org and providing your email address in the box that you'll find about halfway down the home page. A subscription form will appear. Fill it in, being sure to check the box that says "email updates" and then click the "subscribe" button. Momentarily you'll receive an email asking you to click on a link to confirm your subscription; do so, and you'll be subscribed. To unsubscribe, simply click on the link that you'll find at the bottom of each Pinellas e-news update.

Newsletter Transition

I would like to thank everyone for their support in the transition of the printed newsletter to the electronic edition. This process has proven to be quite successful. I am pleased so many members have seized the opportunity to receive the paperless copy.

This being said, I will also admit to being human which subjects me to errors.

If you are receiving this newsletter in an email and would rather have a printed copy or vice versa, please contact me and I will correct this error. You may also visit our webpage to sign up for the newsletter mailing list.

Thank you all for your patience and assistance. - Lisa Curry

Deadline for the Feb/March newsletter is Jan 1st

Contact lkcurry1@tampabay.rr.com with story ideas

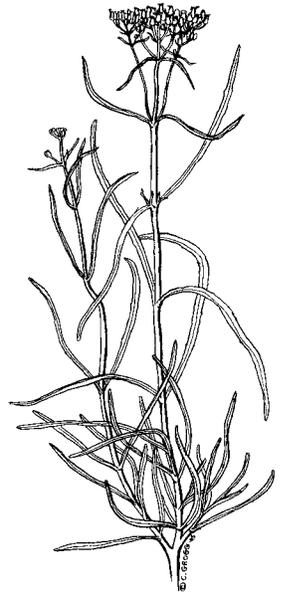
President's Message

This is my last President's message before the new Board of Directors takes over. We have had three very successful plant sales, given the "In Harmony with Nature Program" throughout the community, launched the electronic newsletter, given scholarships to environmental summer camps for children who could not afford to attend, exhibited at environmental venues, given many volunteer hours for our projects, and partnered with other groups on their projects.

We are successful because the Board of Directors and the Committee Chairpersons make decisions that allow our chapter to be innovative. We are successful because our chapter members are involved closely with the community. Most of all we are a group of individuals who come together for a common purpose because we care about the legacy we leave.

I would like to thank everyone for their support and hard work throughout my term as President. Please show your support to our new Board of Directors and Committee Chairpersons so that we may have another successful year.

- Cathy Quindiagan



Audubon Showing

Clearwater Audubon is privileged to partner with Syd Entel Gallery in Safety Harbor for a first time showing of re-created John James Audubon original prints. The show will run from November 11 through December 1, 2006. You do not have to attend to contribute. Re-created Audubon prints will be available for purchase.

The Clearwater Audubon education fund is used to send 4 to 6 science students (high school age), environmental educators from local parks and preserves, and science or environmental teachers (grade school or high school) to a one-week environmental education session at the Audubon-owned and operated Hog Island summer camp in Maine. Additionally, a lesson guide called "Audubon Adventures" is provided to all fourth grade classrooms in northern Pinellas County whose teachers request the

material. The education fund also sponsors pre-high school children to a variety of local summer camps with an environmental theme throughout northern Pinellas County.

For more information regarding the Audubon special reception contact Barbara Carmen at 727/776-2336 or Debbie Trunk at 727/447-4785



Florida Scrub Jay - Aphelocoma coerulescens

A Salute to the Volunteers

Our chapter members are always generous with their time at the fund raising bi-annual plant sales. This is once again the case with this fall's sale at Brooker Creek Preserve. Thanks to all that volunteered, we were able to net \$2,559.70! Congratulations volunteers. You are great!

In addition to the sale of native plants, we were able to provide a variety of outreach programs through-out the day, including programs and activities for children. Thank you Cindy Peacock, Katy Roberts, Jan Allyn, Cathy Quindiagan, and Christina Evans for your presentations.

A special thanks to April Fredericks, Jim McGinity and all the helpers from Brooker Creek Preserve.

We experienced a very special opportunity to partner with Patrick Henry who sold his custom pottery in conjunction with our plant sale. Christina Evans opened her incredible photo exhibit titled "In My Own Backyard, Finding Florida in the Suburbs". Christina, through her photographs, gives us a glimpse into wildlife often overlooked. The exhibit runs to December 15th and is worthy of a trip to the education center at Brooker Creek Preserve to view.

Thank you to all of our chapter volunteers: Will Miller, Roberta Reinfrank, Lucy Trimarco, Bill Bilodeau, Hilary Edenfield, Ray Wunderlich, Mary Ann Beekman, Elizabeth France, Lisa Curry, Joshua Curry, Rose Taylor, Joy Wharton, Sharon Cain and Lorraine Margeson. Thanks to all the drivers that used their own vehicles to move the plants to and from the sale.

Finally, I give appreciative recognition to Don and Lorraine Margeson and Ray Wunderlich who donated plants for this sale.

Again, thank you one and all! - Bruce Turley

"To desire and strive to be of some service to the world, to aim at doing something which shall really increase the happiness and welfare and virtue of mankind - this is a choice which is possible for all of us; and surely it is a good haven to sail for. "

- Henry Van Dyke



Yaupon holly - Ilex vomitoria

Wildlife Beckons at Joe's Creek Greenway Park

Fall's cooler, breezy weather is an ideal time to walk the trails and watch the wildlife at our local parks. There is one tucked away in central Pinellas that you may not have been to, but you should not miss it. Joe's Creek Greenway Park is in the Lealman area and is still a work in progress. The idea for its creation came six years ago when county planning staff and the local community started working together to revitalize Lealman, an unincorporated area bounded roughly by 38th Avenue North and 62nd Avenue North and by I-275 and Park Street on the east and west. Joe's Creek Greenway park is just one of a number of projects that have been undertaken to improve this community, and the Lealman Community Association has been an essential partner in the effort.

Over two million dollars will have been spent by the time all phases of the park project are completed, with funding coming from SWFWMD, Penny for Pinellas, and a Community Development Block Grant. The first phase is nearly complete and includes a parking lot, fencing, a pedestrian bridge, and a paved walking trail that provides a grand view of the creek below. Not yet installed are educational signage, restrooms and open/green space for community events. The property was rife with exotics when the project started, and keeping them under control is a continuing battle. Lead tree, carrotwood, Brazilian pepper, punk trees, rosary pea and cogon grass are just a few of the species that have been removed. Recently 873 native trees, shrubs and ground-covers were installed, including holly, magnolia, live oak, red mulberry, beautyberry and coontie. These plants will provide cover and food for wildlife, will help stabilize the creek banks, and will filter nutrients from storm water before it reaches the creek. More remains to be done, and it's likely that Pinellas FNPS members will be asked to participate in a community work day next spring.

The centerpiece of the 38-acre park, and the feature that draws wildlife, is a large pond, a wide bend in Joe's Creek created in 1988 to hold storm water and prevent flooding. Water from Joe's Creek flows west to McKay Creek and then southwest into Boca Ciega Bay. The shoreline at the creek bend is marshy and shallow, with pickerel weed, duck potato, and other aquatic vegeta-

tion, ideal for wading birds. Cypress, southern red cedar, maple and other tall trees provide lookout points for songbirds, woodpeckers, and hawks. On a recent trip, Pinellas FNPS member Don Margeson recorded over 30 different species of birds! Standing on the pedestrian bridge, you can see fish swimming in the creek below and osprey circling above, hoping to catch them. Bald eagles have been spotted nearby. Wood storks, limpkin, roseate spoonbills, and most every other wading bird common to this area are found here. The creek is home to dragonflies, alligators and turtles, and bees and butterflies are drawn to the many wildflowers that grow along the walking trail.

So put on your walking shoes, get out your binoculars and come to Joe's Creek Greenway Park, located at 4303 46th Avenue North. Right now it's a little-known oasis, so you'll probably have it all to yourself!



Muhly grass - Muhlenbergia capillaris

Story ideas? Would you like your yard or some portion featured in our newsletter? Would you like to tell us what planting natives has enhanced your outdoor experience?

***Please contact Lisa Curry at
Lkcurry1@tampabay.rr.com
or call 727/595-2073***

Weedon Island Preserve

Mark Your Holidays “Green”

**Sun, Dec 17th,
2:00 pm - 3:00 pm**

The holidays add 25 million tons of garbage to our landfills yearly. Most wrapping paper, greeting cards and decorations can't be recycled. Come learn environmentally-friendly ideas for gift wrapping and decorations for the holidays.

Hall Gallery Artist

**Wed, Oct 31st, – Sun, Jan 2nd
10:00 am – 4:00 pm**

Artist Angela Kendall specializes in photographing listed species of birds and other wildlife found on the state's published list of *Florida's Endangered Species, Threatened Species, and Species of Special Concern*. In this

exhibit, Angela's stunning photography captures the beauty and mystery of Florida's diverse bird life.

Rewilding North America: A Deep-Time Perspective. Fri, Jan 5th,

6:30 pm - 8:00 pm Join Connie Barlow, Author and Conservation Biologist as she talks about rewilding a small portion of America's natural heritage to conditions that prevailed just prior to the first human incursion some 13,000 years ago. Presentation will include the American cheetah, camel, plains lion, mastodons and mammoths and their vital roles as shapers of ecological landscapes.

Contact Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center (727) 453-6500 to learn more about these exciting upcoming programs and to register.

Brooker Creek Preserve

Upland Ecology Presentation

**Wed, Nov 29th
6:30 pm - 7:30 pm**

The first of a two component program. This workshop focuses on the upland ecosystems found in the Brooker Creek Preserve including pine flatwoods, xeric oak hammocks and sandhills.

Upland Ecology Field Excursion

Sun, Dec 3rd, 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm

The second component. This field experience allows participants the opportunity to venture into the wilds of Brooker Creek Preserve. Please dress appropriately for this excursion and bring drinking water.

Cypress Swamp Café - Sustainable Holiday Gifts and Parties.

**Wed, Dec 6th
6:30 pm - 8:00 pm**

Join us to explore ways you can make your holiday parties and gifts more sustainable. The evening will begin with a social hour with refreshments including shade grown coffee, followed by the presentation and discussion session. Discuss alternatives to traditional gift giving and sustainable gifts you can feel good

about giving.

The Ghosts of Evolution: Nonsensical Fruit, Missing Partners and Other Ecological Anachronisms Sun, Jan 7th

2:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Join us for what promises to be a stimulating presentation from Connie Barlow, Author and Conservation Biologist. She will offer a richly illustrated slide show as well as talk about ecological relationships and what happens when one partner goes extinct. She will cover fruits that lost their seed dispersal partners when mammoths, mastodons, giant ground sloth's and American camels and horses went extinct.

Brooker Creek Preserve is located at 3940 Keystone Rd., Tarpon Springs, in northeast Pinellas County. To pre-register for events or upcoming sessions, call the Environmental Education Center at (727) 453-6800. Learn more about Brooker Creek Preserve at www.pinellascounty.org/environment.

Members of the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve receive a discount on admission fees.

Learn how to become a Friend of Brooker Creek at <http://www.friendsofbrookercreekpreserve.org/>



Featured program:
JOHN MORAN
*Journal of Light:
 A Photographer's
 Search for the
 Soul of Florida*

HOLIDAY CONSERVATION CELEBRATION



Wednesday, December 6, 2006

Pinellas County Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo
Free admission ~ Public invited!

John Moran's remarkable "Journal of Light" speaking programs highlight a 20-year odyssey to discover the essence of one of the most photographed states in the country. They have been called "exquisite," "lyrical," "powerful," and "like nothing I have ever seen."

Learn more at www.JohnMoranPhoto.com.

Annual Joint Meeting & Fundraiser for:



6:30–7:30 p.m.:

Mix & Mingle • Refreshments • Book Signing by John Moran • Silent Auction (books, plants, crafts, holiday gift items) • Environmental Exhibits

7:30–8:00 p.m.:

Welcome • Announcements • Awards

8:00–9:30 p.m.:

Photography Program by John Moran • Claim Auction Items & Door Prizes

For information call the Pinellas FNPS Info Line 727-544-7341 or visit:

pinellas.fnpschapters.org

www.stpeteaudubon.org



Ethnobotany with Dr. Daniel Austin

Dr. Daniel Austin attracted a full house from throughout the Tampa Bay area for his lecture and hike on Nov. 11-12 at Weedon Island Preserve.



He is an emeritus professor at the University of Arizona, and a research associate at both Florida International University and Fairchild Tropical Garden. His recently-published book "Florida Ethnobotany" is the most comprehensive resource on the subject, combining information from published sources and Dr. Austin's discussions with Central and South American indigenous people as well as scientists who study the worldwide distributions of plants and their chemical composition. His talk Friday night focused on the different native

American groups who inhabited Florida and some of the plant species that they used throughout millennia and after the Spanish occupation of the state in the 1500s.

Corn (maize) was a relatively late introduction and was only grown north of Lake Okeechobee, with the Calusas depending primarily on the sea for sustenance rather than agriculture. He believes that heart of palm was not eaten by Florida's native people until after the arrival of the Spanish and their metal tools because without them early Floridians had no good way to chop out the center of the plant. There is evidence that Florida's early inhabitants used a much larger proportion (about 33%) of the available flora than groups in other states, where the number is closer to 20%-25%.



The hike on Saturday was a pleasant ramble along Weedon Island's trails, with the 30 participants stopping to hear about the uses of the plants that the group passed: wax myrtle, Sabal palm, prickly pear cactus, Cuban hemp, millets, dodder, blueberries were just a few of them. It was a beautiful morning and Dr. Austin was a charming, easygoing, knowledgeable guide!

Photographs courtesy of Bill Bilodeau.

Story courtesy of Jan Allyn

Adding Color to Hammocks

The literature is replete with stories regarding the origin of the term “hammock.” Whatever the origin, we generally understand that hammocks are shady woodlands. Whether “hydric” to “xeric” in terms of soil moisture, hammocks are dominated by canopy trees such as oaks, magnolias, hickories and the like. Some hammocks are largely comprised of evergreen species, but most have a large component that is deciduous. For that reason, most hammocks get increased sunlight into the understory during the winter to early spring (in Florida that translates to December – February) and very little sunlight at other times.

This situation restricts our palette when we are faced with landscaping hammock areas. Though most of us do not have true hammock in our yards, many of us have areas that are “too shady” for conventional plantings. In suburban areas, we often use hardwoods to establish the backbone of our landscape – post-development. Laurel and live oak, red maple as well as a great number of non-native shade trees are commonly planted and eventually form hammock conditions to challenge the landscaping prowess of the eventual homeowner. Throughout my many years in Florida, I have frequently conversed with folks stymied by their inability to grow turfgrasses under these conditions and wondering what their alternatives might be. And, in these years, I have modified my responses to them as I have learned more about Florida and the potential choices available.

In the very old days, I would have simply asked them to look at a good example of intact hammock to see what they might use. Places like Dunedin Hammock Park or Highland Hammock State Park are wonderful places to see true hammock. The problem, as I see it, with this approach is that it is not realistic. No one has a “hammock” if all they have is a standard lot to work with. A hammock is much more than a small assemblage of plants that produce shade. It is a complex community with a great diversity of natural processes that cannot be replicated within a backyard, for example. You might have hammock conditions, but you don’t have a hammock. The other problem I have is that it limits creativity unnecessarily. It restricts your palette for no good reason. I believe in landscape architecture and the need to have your landscape fulfill your aesthetic needs – just as it should meet the needs of the environment. I believe that it is permissible to mix species in a home landscape that might not be from the same community as long as they function together within the environment you have and meet your goals. While some might object to this approach, I believe that it simply acknowledges our need to feel comfortable in our own surroundings.

I see no reason not to mix species from various areas in the state simply because they do not occur together naturally. Birds do not care if their nesting area is “artificial” or if the fruit they are feeding on is from a local native plant or one that more-naturally occurs 100 miles away. There might be good reason why some of these species do not occur naturally in your neighborhood, but often no good reason why they can’t exist in a home landscape – with some husbandry. Perhaps someday we will discover that our widespread use of Simpson stopper, for example, will lead to it invading large areas of Florida where it did not naturally occur, but I am not worried that we will see that day. For thousands of years, native Florida plants have found their geographic range and settled into it. If green haw, for example, were to invade Pinellas County, it would have done so by now. If I plant one in my yard, it will do fine under the right conditions. If it survives and produces fruit, I do not expect it run rampant throughout the County. That is not true of non-native species, however.

This entire preamble is to set the stage for the next series of articles that I will write, aimed at describing native plants that I have found to be suitable in adding color to shady locations. For, while many shady spots are mostly “green”, a good number of species are effective at creating splashes of color at certain times of the year. In my next article, I will discuss the mid-canopy – that region below the oaks or maples

dominated by what I call small trees. These are single-trunked woody plants. Following that, I will describe the shrubs – multi-trunked woody species, by my way of thinking. Next, I will write about the understory. This layer includes wildflowers and grasses. My tome will conclude with a discussion of vines – a group of plants that often grow into the canopy and affect the landscape in a very unique way.

I hope that you will stick with me over the next months and that you will find this discussion useful. I also hope that you will use the information as a springboard for further discussion. Never use anyone's list as gospel. Please use it only as a starting point. - Craig Huegel

Be sure to watch for the continuation of this series in upcoming issues.

"E-grass": Renewable, But Not Sustainable

In May of this year Progress Energy signed a deal with BioMass Investment Group, Inc. to purchase electricity from a 130-kilowatt power plant fueled by burning *Arundo donax*, a fast-growing form of bamboo. The power plant BioMass is proposing would be a small one; by way of comparison, the Bartow plant near Weedon Island produces 631 megawatts. While the idea of using a fuel other than mercury- and sulfur dioxide-producing coal is laudable, the crop BioMass proposes to grow to feed its power plant could prove to be a future nightmare for environmental land managers. *Arundo donax*, also called giant reed, oboe reed or bamboo reed and dubbed "e-grass" by its promoters, might better be called "I-grass" for its invasive tendencies. The worldwide Invasive Species Specialist Group counts it among the 100 most invasive species, which includes plants AND animals. Northern California has a "Team Arundo" devoted to controlling the spread of the plant. Currently, *Arundo donax* is not listed as invasive by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council. However, it has been reported growing outside of cultivation in 23 out of 67 counties, and its range includes the entire state. Anastasia State Park has found it necessary to institute an *Arundo* eradication program, and stands of *Arundo* are known to be growing along the St. Johns River. Though its seed is thought not to be viable here, it self-propagates easily from rhizomes. BioMass has been reported to be considering a huge plantation of the stuff--8,000 to 15,000 acres--and the fear is that the rhizomes could be spread unintentionally, traveling in irrigation water, on farm maintenance equipment, or by a hurricane, tornado, flood or other weather-

related event. There is insufficient data at this time to determine just how invasive *Arundo donax* is in Florida, but it certainly has the potential to become a huge problem. Florida's history is rife with examples of other well-intentioned plans involving plant species that later engendered huge, expensive eradication projects, and another such occurrence is to be avoided if possible.

Therefore, on October 28th, the board of the Florida Native Plant Society registered its extreme concern in the following policy statement:

"The Florida Native Plant Society opposes the agricultural production of *Arundo donax* (giant reed, E-grass, bamboo reed, Arundo grass, giant bamboo reed, etc.) as a biofuel in Florida due to its invasive characteristics and empirical evidence of impact on native plant communities. The Society further encourages the eradication of existing stands of this species and the banning of its sale as an ornamental to prevent invasion of native plant habitats in Florida."

As of early November, FLEPPC also has formally requested that the Florida Division of Plant Industry list *Arundo donax* as a "Noxious Weed" that may not be sold or propagated in the state.

You are encouraged to visit the Society's website at www.fnps.org to read the complete report about *Arundo donax*.

- Ray Wunderlich and Jan Allyn

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