



the Tarpaper

The Tarflower Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society



Volume: XXIX February 2007 ISSUE

FEBRUARY PROGRAM: Native Plants, Popcorn & a Movie

The February 6 meeting will include a presentation of *Assessment of Listed Plants and Animals in Ft. Drum Marsh Conservation Area, Part I*, and *A behind the scenes look at fun and perils of two years of collecting plant, mammal, bird, reptile and amphibian data, Part II*.

February 10th Field Trip - Merritt Island Wildlife Refuge

February's field trip will again keep to coastal Florida, this time at Merritt Island Wildlife Refuge in Brevard County. Approximately one-half of the refuge's 140,000 acres consists of brackish estuaries and marshes. The remaining lands consist of coastal dunes, scrub oaks, pine forests and flatwoods, and palm and oak hammocks. Hiking trails will be scouting in the next few weeks to find a route which will incorporate many of these representative habitats. This wildlife refuge implements active management to improve wildlife utilization which includes the use of prescribed fire, exotic vegetation control and the thinning of pine stands. The timing of this location will give us many opportunities to observe migratory birds as well as other wildlife. We will meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Refuge Information Visitor Center located approximately 4-miles east of Titusville. For those interesting in carpooling we will meet at the Burger King at the corner of S. R. 50 (East Colonial) and Alafaya Trail at 8:00 a.m. Be sure to bring sunscreen, bug repellent, bag lunch, plenty of liquids and binoculars for birding.

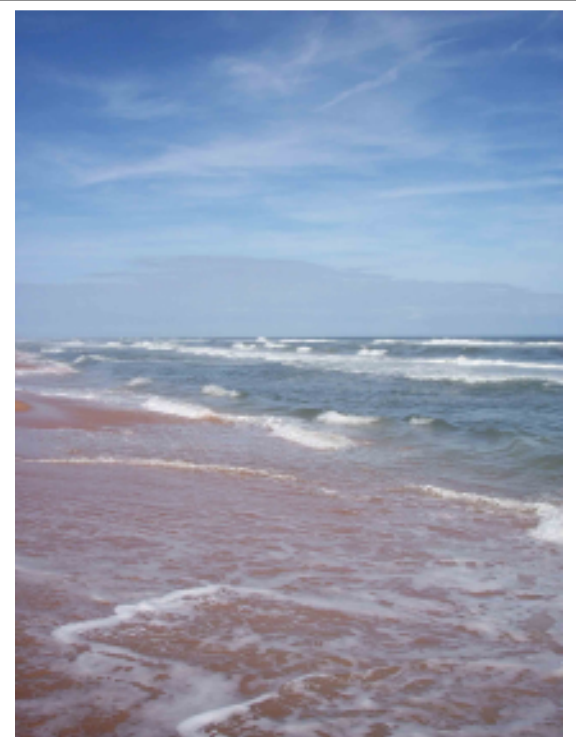
2nd Annual Wekiva RIVERFEST: March 10, 2007

Central Florida's environmental organizations will again join nature artists and authors, musicians and Friends of the Wekiva River in celebrating the federally designated Wild and Scenic River, at the Wekiwa Springs State Park in Longwood, on March 10, 2007, from 10:00am-4:00pm. See "Riverfest" page 3.

January Field trip to North Peninsula State Park and Bulow Creek State Park

Bea Stein, Catherine Read, and Mike Dinardo

It was a very busy but wonderful day over on the Atlantic Coast. About 15 Tarflower members met at a Publix in Ormond Beach, and then traveled over to North Peninsula State Park. We started the morning with a walk through maritime hammock bordered by a salt marsh associated with the Halifax River. The trailhead began adjacent to a remnant mosquito ditch



North Peninsula State Park Beach

that supported salt marsh vegetation including, black mangrove, needle rush (*Juncus roemerianus*), sea oxeye daisy (*Borrchia frutescens*, not in flower), sea purslane (*Sesuvium portulacastrum*), and saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*). Low tide conditions allowed us to observe patches of sprouting black mangrove seeds. The trail continued through densely canopied hammock containing live and laurel oaks, red bay, yaupon holly, occasional wax myrtle and saw palmetto, woodsage (*Teucrium canadense*), bearing remnants of last years. See "January Field Trip" page 2.

January Field Trip continued from page 1.

seed capsules), and catbrier (*Smilax bona-nox*). As we hiked east we came up into the coastal scrub, through the wind sculpted sand live, Chapman's, and myrtle oaks and beyond the low tree line onto the edge of the ancient protective dunes where saw palmetto dominated. From our vantage point, we could see the ocean in the distance, smell the salt air and hear the enticing surf. In the scrub, we saw prickly pear cactus, tough bully (*Sideroxylon tenax*), red bay, sand pines, innocence (*Houstonia procumbens*, flowering), cedar, shiny blueberry in flower, deerberry (*Vaccinium stamineum*), coontie, hercules club, and devil's walking stick. We lunched at the park beach with abundant



Gaillardia pulchella

blooming *Gaillardia pulchella*, dune sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*), and beach morning glory (*Ipomoea pes-caprae*) along the edges of the sea oats, which was just beautiful. There were few visitors other than our group and some fishermen. Although it wasn't windy, the coastal breeze encouraged some nice rolling waves over the golden coquina sand (that's always such a difference from the SW Florida sand!). The word coquina means "tiny shell" in Spanish. It was the name given to the clam (*Donax variabilis*) that was abundant on northeast Florida beaches. It is the predominant shell in the rock. Sea and shore birds were not numerous;



Group at Fairchild

however, a few sanderlings, black-bellied plover, and ruddy turnstones scurried around in front of us, while a trawling shrimp boat just offshore attracted an assortment of gulls. John Cento and some of his family even took a swim after lunch, while obviously disregarding the very chilly Atlantic temperatures!



Fairchild Oak

After lunch, we reluctantly packed up, but were soon headed over to Bulow State Park to check out the Fairchild Oak and get a group photo in front of the massive trunk. Actually, the gorgeous draping limbs were as impressive as the trunk itself. Just think of all the history that has occurred during the 400 years of its existence! From the Fairchild Oak, we hiked into the oak and palm hammock where we saw many other huge live oaks covered with resurrection fern, and even a few *See*

greenfly orchids (*Epidendrum conopseum*), along with large southern magnolias, pignut hickory trees, more tough bully, and a flatwoods plum just starting to bloom. Both male and female coontie were growing in abundance.

Finally, we moved to another corner of the park where a trail took us through a drier, mixed forested community. Most notable at the start of the path we hiked were the numerous wild olive trees (*Osmanthus americanus*) full of green and purple-black ripe fruit. Catherine Read tasted one, but apparently did not enjoy the taste, based on the facial expression she made. Tracy McCommon, Julie Becker, and I walked up ahead of the group, down a side trail, where we saw the *See " Trip " Page 3.*



Osmanthus americanus

Trip continued from page 2.

most amazing sight of the day (for me at least!). It was a beautiful two-foot long coral snake gracefully sliding away from the edge of the path to safety under the leaf litter. I had only enough time to verify red on yellow and announce coral snake before it was gone. Darn! No posing for the camera.

The side trail took us out to a boardwalk and deck that overlooked an open finger of salt marsh where it extended back into the hammock. The tide was just beginning to come back in, but a few snowy egrets (*Egretta thula*) were foraging in the mud flats. Around the edges of the marsh, cabbage palm overhung sand cordgrass (*Spartina bakeri*), needle rush, saltbush (*Baccharis angustifolia*), and a few Christmas berry (*Lycium carolinianum*). All in all it was a good day with good people. Come early to the meeting and see some of the pictures on the big screen. Thanks to Mike Dinardo and Catherine Read for putting this one together.

February Plant Rescue Jackie Rolly

A plant rescue is scheduled for Saturday, 17 February 2007 at Plantation Oaks, Ormond Beach. Meet at the McDonalds at the intersection of US 1 and I-95 (on the East side of US 1), at 0830 AM. We'll caravan to the rescue site from there. Bring your tools, pots, and plenty of water for the plants and yourself, as well as sunscreen, bug repellent, hat, boots and snacks. We've rescued at this site before, its basically dry with coonties, grasses, nolina, etc. Plants are needed for the Oakland Preserve Restoration if you have extra. Please let Jackie Rolly know by 15 February if you plan on attending so we don't leave anyone behind. Email: j.y.rolly@att.net or phone 407-359-4963.



**Chuck Roux rescuing sundews.
(last rescue)**

Riverfest continued from page 1.

Activities to be offered include hikes, pontoon boats rides, children's nature crafts, book-signings and entertainment. Food will be available.

This year's RIVERFEST will be held in conjunction with the first-ever Wekiva River Paint-Out, March 5-9, in which artists paint on location, then make their work available for purchase, during the week and on the day of the Riverfest. Patrons are invited to visit artists' locations and watch them as they interpret the wonder and beauty of central Florida. Details will be available at friendsofwekiva.org, as arrangements are finalized.

Why Protect Alligators? Bill Partington

Alligators seem to appeal mostly to kids who wish they'd lived 70 million years ago, when dinosaurs were everywhere. But as with most large predators their impacts are fas reaching, even to native plant communities, so maybe we should appreciate them more.

In the late 1960's I was assistant director at Florida Audubon Society and was given the task of cleaning up a heavily edited and almost illegible manuscript on the impact of alligators on Everglades' plant communities. The manuscript was written by Dr. Frank Crasighead, a leading authority on Everglades botany, and published in *The Florida Naturalist*. At the time, alligators were being exterminated for their hides which sold for \$5.00 a foot in the fashion trade.

I no longer have the article but remember the facts presented. The movement of numerous alligators through wetlands carved trails that allowed fresh water to flow to estuaries, nourishing wetlands plants and providing habitat for fish and shellfish. If water had been ponded in the poorly drained Glades it would have warmed and evaporated at a higher rate and estuarine productivity would have suffered.

Historically, it is a well known fact that gators dug and deepened water holes during the winter dry seasons. These "gator holes" became survival ponds for small fish, frogs, snakes, turtles, crustaceans and other invertebrates that supported the food chain of the abundant Everglades wildlife. When the rainy season returned these "holes" helped restock the wetlands.

Alligators have managed the wetlands and its occupants for millennia. A future decline in the gator population could have significant environmental impact. For fifteen years I conducted natural history tours around Florida and delighted many visitors with gator sightings. What a shame to lose the ability to relive those memories in the future.

See "Gators" page 4.

Gators *continued from page 3.*

Alligator exhibits at Gatorland and other attractions herald terrific bird-nesting shows in the spring when hundreds of egrets, herons, cormorants and anhingas arrive to nest in bushes overhanging ponds seething with large gators. The gators protect the nests by gulping down any foolish raccoon, possum, otter or snake that might plan an attack. In return for their support, the birds provide snacks for the gators by pushing the weaker fledglings out of the nest. Gatorland provides a great place for nature photographers to take up-close photos of wildlife without the distraction of lugging equipment through the swamp. Everything has its purpose, but we must keep in mind that without the gator in the first place, there'd be no Gatorland Zoo.

March 10th Field Trip - Ft. Drum Marsh Conservation Area See March Tarpaper for details.

Receive Tarpaper on Line! If you wish to receive the *Tarpaper* on line please send your email address to fnps@WinterParkHoney.com. All future changes/corrections to email addresses should be sent to this address also.

Local Native Nurseries

Biosphere Consulting Inc

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14908 Tilden Rd
Winter Garden, FL 34787

B B Brown's Gardens

(352) 429-5566
11490 Montevista Rd
Clermont, FL 34711

Green Images

(407) 568-1333
1333 Taylor Creed Rd
Christmas, FL

\$25 Individual - \$30 Family
\$50 Non-Profit
\$100 Business
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\$15 Full-time Student
\$15 Library or School

Make Checks Payable to:
FNPS
Florida Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 278
Melbourne, FL 32902-0278
Phone: 321-271-6702

SOCIETY NEWS:

Chapter Meetings

Chapter meetings are held the first Tuesday each month at

HARRY P. LEU GARDENS, (1920 N. Forest Avenue, Orlando). The next meeting is **Tuesday, February 6** at 7:00 P.M. Refreshments 6:30. See you there! (For directions, call 407-246-2620 option 1)

Executive Committee

The next board meeting will be TBD. For more information contact Catherine Read. Members are welcome to attend.



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