


Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve

January - February 2024

Thankfulness Is Not Seasonal

By Craig Huegel

As we pass from Thanksgiving into the December holidays, I am reminded that thankfulness is not a seasonal phenomenon. We may focus our attention on what we are thankful for in late November and extend it a bit through the month of December, but being aware of the gifts we've been given has to be something we're cognizant of every day. After all, the good things we've been given are often serendipity; they've been bestowed whether we deserve them or not.

By simply being "Friends" we've chosen to form a bond around the very special place we know as Brooker Creek Preserve. No one has strong-armed us into banding together. It was a choice we've all made individually and by forming this bond we have made a visible difference to a place unlike any other in this region of Florida. Each day, month and year those differences are registered and made observable. The buildings and the programs that emerge from them are made possible by us. The land management initiatives have their roots because of us and the mere fact that hundreds to thousands of visitors get to take a walk in real Florida and come to appreciate that is largely because of what we do. I am thankful that all of you care enough to make this happen and that you've cared enough over decades. We've built an impressive legacy together.

I am thankful that government in its many forms has committed itself to purchasing and then managing this land. What was once barely more than 3,500 acres, that included a great many acres of disturbed land, was grown to include nearly 6,000 more; most of which was naturally vegetated. It's been a long road, however, to restore a great many parts to a more-natural condition.



Because of government, Brooker Creek Preserve spilled out over significant acres in Hillsborough County as well. We don't always give recognition to that. I do not know the total current acreage of the Brooker Creek Preserve complex, but it includes at least 2,000 additional acres in Hillsborough. All of this is protected and managed. In a region this developed, putting that many acres into conservation is significant.

I am simply thankful that the great diversity of plant and animal species that made this region their home before this crazy development pressure set in can still find habitat after all that has occurred. Species common elsewhere in Florida, like white-tailed deer and turkey, have their last real stronghold within the conservation lands of Brooker Creek Preserve. The last bobwhite quail and eastern meadowlark in Pinellas County still reside here and listed species like pine lilies and snowy orchids have a place here too. Our region's natural heritage is preserved only within the boundaries of the Brooker Creek Preserve complex.

Each of us is engaged in all of this regardless of our actual roles within the Friends. We remain relevant and effective because all of us are members. Thank you for that. Reach out to those around you in 2024 and help us grow even larger.

Upcoming Events

- Jan. 13 FOBCP Annual Meeting and Brunch
- Jan. 19 Arbor Day in Florida
- Jan. 20 Night Hike
- Jan. 27 Wildflower Garden work day (9-11 am)
- Jan. 28 Beekeepers Club
- Feb. 12 Keystone Rd. Cleanup with KPB
- Feb. 17 Night Hike
- Feb. 18 Closing reception: 3rd Annual Members Photo Exhibition & Invitational
- Feb. 24 Wildflower Garden work day (9-11 am)
- Feb. 25 Beekeepers Club
- Mar. 17 Gallery reception Plein Art 2024

We have less environment now than we ever had in the past, and we have more environment now than we will ever have in the future.

— John Thaxton, Gulf Coast Community Foundation, former Sarasota County Commissioner

Photo of muhly grass, page 1, by Ray Poynor.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

YOU'RE INVITED!

*Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve
Annual Meeting & Brunch*

*Please join us as we
Celebrate the Preserve!*

Saturday, January 13, 2024

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

R.S.V.P. requested

(please include the number in your party)

727-934-2680 or

info@FriendsOfBrookerCreekPreserve.org



Celebrate Florida Arbor Day!

Youth Programs on Friday, January 19th



- **9AM-** Youth Hike
- **11AM-** Youth Papermaking
- **All Day-** Hands-on Exploration Stations in the Ed Center

UF | IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
An equal opportunity institution.



Nature Store News - Free Trees for Arbor Day!

With the onset of colder weather, our Plant Porch is looking a bit sparse. But in just a few weeks it will be awash with a plethora of trees in celebration of **Florida Arbor Day**, which is celebrated on the third Friday of January in Florida. This is in addition to a day of tree-themed programs and activities taking place in the Auditorium and Exhibit Hall. The best news is that all of this . . . including the trees . . . is **FREE!**

AND We have Friends honey again! See page 10.



Saturday, January 20, 2024	6:00 pm
Saturday, February 17, 2024	6:00 pm
Saturday, March 16, 2024	7:30 pm

Join the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve for a hiking experience along the Education Center Trail...*at night!* These special hikes are open to the public and limited to 20 people per hike. **A \$3 per person donation is requested.** Hikes are led by Preserve volunteers who are knowledgeable about nocturnal wildlife. The hike is about one-mile in length and will take about 1.5 hours.

Pre-registration is required! Once you register, more information will come to you via email. Pre-register online by logging onto: <https://nighthikes.eventbrite.com>

These hikes are for adults and families only. Children must be accompanied by parents. Please leave your pets at home. Pets are not permitted in County Preserves.

Questions? Email info@FriendsOfBrookerCreekPreserve.org
Call 727-934-2680

AUDITORIUM GALLERY by Lynn Whitelaw

The Auditorium Gallery is open Saturdays 9 am - 3 pm, and Sundays 11 am - 3 pm, (except for scheduled events and/or upon special request).

Currently on view in the Gallery through Feb. 18:

3rd ANNUAL MEMBERS PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION AND INVITATIONAL

Dec 9, 2023 - Feb 18, 2024

(Closing Reception: Sunday, Feb. 18, 1-3 pm)

The Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve is pleased to host its 3rd annual Members Photography Exhibition, on view through Feb. 18. This year FOBCP members Rick Becker, Jon Burr, Barb Hoffman, Phil Kesel, Karl and Kathleen Nichter, Ray Poynor, and Lynn Whitelaw submitted images, plus photographs by BCP Ranger Randy Goggin and an In Memoriam work by Sue Thomas (d. 2021), donated by her husband to the FOBCP Permanent Collection.

To enhance the exhibition each year, area nature photographers are selected to submit work they have taken in the Preserve. This year retired USF professor and photographer Sally Riggs Fuller from Dade City, Trish Gregory, past president of the Tarpon Springs Art Association, and Lisa Sibley, art teacher and professional photographer from Tarpon Springs, were selected to participate in the exhibition. We are pleased to highlight these photographers who have used their artistic eye to showcase the beauty of Brooker Creek Preserve.

Most of the framed photographs are for sale, so please contact the Nature Store to purchase one of these wonderful images. Pieces may be picked up at the closing reception on Sunday, February 18, with 10% of the photograph sales going to support Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve.

To further support the exhibition, please plan to attend the Closing Reception Sunday, Feb. 18 from 1-3 pm. There will be a refreshment table. The opportunity to meet the photographers and hear comments about their work will highlight the event. Please consider attending or visit the gallery to see these "captured" moments of the unique flora, fauna, and ecosystems of the Brooker Creek Preserve.

For more information on the Auditorium Gallery exhibitions contact:
Lynn Whitelaw, Gallery Curator at rlwhitelaw7@msn.com, or cell: 813-784-4225



Trish Gregory
Wildflower Garden

Lisa Sibley
Pine after Pine



Sally Riggs Fuller
Serenity

Next Art Event and Exhibition in the Gallery:

Brooker Creek Preserve Plein Air 2024

Event: Friday, Feb. 23 and Saturday, Feb. 24

Registration 8-10 am. Hours each day from 8 am - 4 pm

Reception and Awards Program: Sunday, Mar. 17, 1 - 3 pm

Exhibition: March 2 - 17 (works for sale with a 10% donation to FOBCP)

Participation fee: \$20 (Registration form below)

Plein air, the act of creating art outdoors within nature (in drawing, painting, or photography) has inspired artists for centuries. In recent years, plein air events have become popular events all over the United States and around the world. To further the concept of artists using the natural environment of Brooker Creek Preserve to inspire their art, FOBCP has created an annual plein air event (although initially interrupted by COVID). Last year's event had 18 participants who fought off dreaded yellow files to create amazing works. This year the Brooker Creek Plein Air 2024 has been moved to late February to hopefully avoid such unpleasanties and allow the artists to do their best work.

If you know an artist who loves to create art while in nature, please pass the word along. If you enjoy drawing, painting, or photographing in the Preserve (even if you are new to the idea), please consider becoming a plein air participant this year. The Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve hopes to build our plein air event to attract artists from around the region - again, help us spread the word. The Registration form for the event is below as well as on the Friends of Brooker Creek web site.

REGISTRATION & RELEASE FORM - \$20 per artist

(make check out to Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve, Inc.)

Pre-register by sending this form and payment to the above address (two weeks in advance)

or call 727-934-2680 to RSVP and bring completed form and payment on Feb. 23 or 24.

Day of the event registration accepted on a space available basis.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Art Medium: _____

Phone (cell): _____ Email: _____

RELEASE & MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

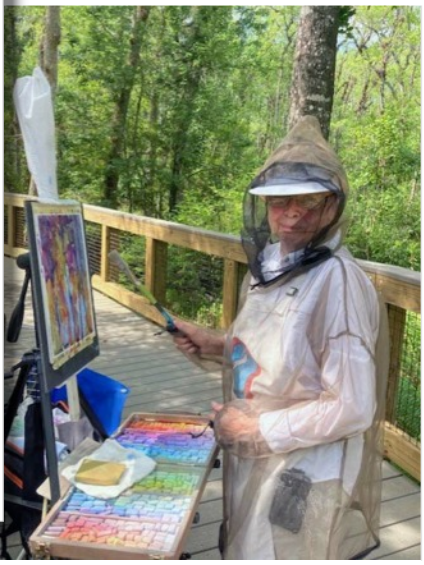
I fully release and hold harmless Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve, Inc. and Pinellas County for any injury or loss to myself, my possessions, and/or my artwork during the activities of **Brooker Creek Plein Air 2024**. I understand that:

- I must check in at the boardwalk entrance pavilion at Brooker Creek Preserve on Feb. 23 or Feb. 24 between 8 and 10 am. Orientation to the Preserve and maps will be provided and Pinellas County rules for Brooker Creek Preserve are to be followed.
- I will provide all required paperwork and will verify, by dated signature, that all work was done during one of the event days and within the boundaries of Brooker Creek Preserve.
- I may submit up to two presentation-ready pieces for the competition judging (works are to be framed or canvas wrapped with a wire on the back for hanging and with submission form attached). Juried prizes will be awarded for Best in Show (\$100), First (\$75), Second (\$50) and Third (\$25), and Visitor's Choice (\$25) Awards.
- The completed art must be turned in to the *Friends Nature Store* in the Education Building on each participation day up until 4 pm. Photography (with pre-approved paperwork) may be submitted on Sunday, Feb. 25 from 10 am to noon in the BCP Auditorium Gallery.
- My artwork will be on display in the Auditorium Gallery at Brooker Creek Preserve from March 2 through March 17 and will be offered for sale (unless designated as not-for-sale) with the understanding that 10% of artwork sales will be donated to Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve, Inc.
- Artwork, sold and unsold, must be removed from the premises between 3 - 4 pm on March 17, 2024.

Signature

Date

Participants in the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve Plein Air 2023 Frank Pascoe (left) Kathy Detrano (right)



RECENT EVENTS:



Dec. 2nd - Our latest Music in the Woods concert, with the duo Wildflower Honey, was held at the outdoor music pavilion. A good crowd showed up for the entertainment

. . . And to enjoy the lighting recently installed on our new boardwalk! Thank you to the crew. Beautiful job!



Beekeepers Club News

What a great experience we had on Sunday, January 7 extracting honey! We had a nice big group to share the work; from trekking to the apiary to get the honey supers, to setting up the extraction equipment in the auditorium kitchen and labelling the jars, to cleaning up at the end (it's a sticky undertaking.) The total jar count was 98, so we almost tied our record of 100 jars.

If you would like some honey, you can purchase it in our Nature Store. \$10/jar, limit 2 per person. But don't wait too long...it always sells out really quickly!

Store hours are Thur-Sat 9 am- 4 pm and Sun.. 11 am-4 pm.



The hive frames were transferred into the Brooker Creek Kitchen where club members used hot knives to slice off the honeycomb caps (below). Then the frames, 12 at a time, were placed into an electronic spinner (left), where honey was separated from the honeycomb by centrifugal force. A spout at the bottom of the spinner (bottom left) allowed honey to pour out, then through a sieve that removed all wax bits.



News from the Wildflower Garden

By Pam Brown

The garden is basically asleep for the winter. There might be a random flower still in bloom, but most of the plants are producing seeds to feed our birds and for next year's growth. As I mentioned last month, leaving the seeds and stalks over the winter helps to feed birds and serve as a space inside hollow stems for insects to mature.

Our next workday will be January 27th from 9:00 - 11:00 am. We meet the last Saturday of each month except November and December due to the holidays.

We are always looking for new volunteers to help maintain the Wildflower Garden. If you would like to join us, please register by emailing Pam at pamperedgardeners@gmail.com. Due to the fragility of the plants in the garden, we limit the number to five volunteers, including any children 10 or more years old. Bring your gardening tools, gloves, hat, and bug repellent, and wear closed-toed shoes. We will provide a light snack.

Pam's Thoughts

Many people put out bird feeders and seed to feed the birds, especially during the winter. I prefer to feed the birds by planting Florida native plants that produce lots of berries and seeds. I have had bad luck with feeders and raccoons. Plus, I am basically inattentive to making sure there is seed in the feeders. Some of the natives that can provide copious berries or seeds to feed the birds that I have in my landscape are:

American Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) is a medium to large sized shrub that produces clusters of pink blooms along the stems that mature to magenta berries that birds love. This plant takes pruning well to control size. Be aware that pruning can decrease the bloom and berries.

Wild Coffee (*Psychotria nervosa*) is a fairly large shrub that produces white blooms followed by red berries. Pruning to control the size can affect the bloom and number of berries.



Female Yaupon Holly (*Ilex vomitoria*) is an evergreen shrub or tree with flowers that bloom in spring and attract a variety of bees and other insects. In the fall the abundant small bright red fruit provides food for birds and small mammals. The dense evergreen foliage provides year-round cover for wildlife. I recommend buying the tree in the fall to assure that it is a female bearing fruit, since holly plants are either male or female plants.



Simpson's Stopper (*Myrcianthes fragrans*) is a shrub to small tree that takes pruning well, but as mentioned for the other plants, pruning can affect blooming and fruiting. The showy, fragrant white flowers appear in spring and are followed by orange to red berries in late summer and early fall. This plant is great for attracting butterflies, bees, and birds. Simpson's stopper is a threatened plant species and is listed on the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' threatened list. With this status, it is always important to obtain plants from a reputable nursery and *never* from the wild.



I also have a number of native wildflowers that provide seeds in the fall for a variety of birds.



A hawk nestling. Photo by Ray Poynor.

Volunteer News

Education Center Updates
November/December 2023

By Julia Myers, Education Support
Specialist, Brooker Creek Preserve




The Value of Volunteers: It's hard to believe that 2023 is over. We accomplished a lot last year and it's only possible because of our incredible volunteer team. We can't thank the BCP volunteers enough for choosing to give their time and energy to the Preserve. With their support and efforts, we can continue to strive to achieve our mission. Our mission is to empower citizens to improve their quality of life and establish a connection with their environment through research-based educational programs focused on natural, cultural, and historical resources. I know I say it all the time, but we really do have the BEST volunteers. We greatly appreciate every single volunteer. Thank you for being an integral part of the Brooker Creek Team. We look forward to another wonderful year ahead! In **fiscal year 23**, BCP volunteers served a total of 4,877 hours, which is an equivalent of \$134,955 of service to our Preserve. Way to go, BCP Team!

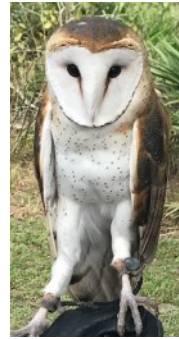
Florida Arbor Day: This year Florida Arbor Day is on Friday, January 19th. We are celebrating with a free tree giveaway and multiple programs to bring awareness to the importance of trees! Be sure to check Eventbrite (and page 4) for all the details.

BCP Rangers: We are truly blessed to have such an incredible ranger team. Our four amazing rangers do so much behind the scenes, but their efforts do not go unnoticed! From maintaining trails and firebreaks, to upkeeping the ecological health of the Preserve and even rescues, our rangers do it all! They also go above and beyond to support our efforts in the Education Center, and we couldn't be more grateful. Thank you to the BCP Ranger Team for caring for our Preserve with the utmost respect and dedication.



Left to right: Randy Goggin, Kaitlin Jenkins, Tony Contarino, John McGlone (front).


 Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve
ADOPT AN ANIMAL - \$35/adoption



*A program to enhance restoration and land management programs to help provide improved habitat for wildlife in **Brooker Creek Preserve***

The **ADOPT AN ANIMAL** program was established by the Friends in 2020 to give individuals the opportunity to help keep intact the ecological integrity of the Preserve. Funding will be used for:

- Removing exotic and invasive plants
- Restoring natural water flow
- Fire management
- Restoring natural plant communities

Animal adoptions make perfect gifts for birthdays, anniversaries, memorials, and more!

Upon receipt of your donation, the honoree will be sent by mail an adoption package with an adoption certificate, a fact sheet about the adopted animal, and a cuddly plush animal chosen for adoption. The donor will receive a thank you letter that can be used for tax purposes.

Donor Name: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ Email: _____

in honor of in memory of for myself

Honoree Name: _____

Send packet to this address. This is the donor or honoree address (circle one):

I wish to adopt (\$35 each):

- | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gopher Tortoise | <input type="checkbox"/> Deer Buck | <input type="checkbox"/> Raccoon | <input type="checkbox"/> Eagle | <input type="checkbox"/> Otter | <input type="checkbox"/> Alligator | <input type="checkbox"/> Owl |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gray Squirrel | <input type="checkbox"/> Deer Fawn | <input type="checkbox"/> Opossum | <input type="checkbox"/> Bat | <input type="checkbox"/> Coyote | <input type="checkbox"/> Bobcat | <input type="checkbox"/> Fox |

Total Due: \$ _____ Questions? info@FriendsOfBrookerCreekPreserve.org, 727-934-2680

Check endorsed to: **FOBCP**. Mail to: FOBCP, 3940 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs, FL 34688

FEID #59-3302182 tax-exempt, non-profit corporation

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

Friends  of
Brooker Creek Preserve

ADOPT AN ACRE



*A program to enhance restoration
and land management programs in
Brooker Creek Preserve*

The **ADOPT AN ACRE** program was established by the Friends in 2016 to give individuals the opportunity to help keep intact the ecological integrity of the Preserve.

100% of funding will be used for:

- Removing exotic and invasive plants
- Restoring the natural flow of water
- Fire management
- Restoring natural plant communities

Acres make great gifts for birthdays, anniversaries, memorials and more!

Upon receipt of the donation, the donor or honoree's name will be placed on the **ADOPT AN ACRE** display inside the Environmental Education Center for one year. A certificate will be sent to the honoree acknowledging the adoption.

Donor
Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (_____) _____

Email: _____

___in honor of ___in memory of ___for myself

Honoree
Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (_____) _____

I wish to adopt _____ acres @ \$100/acre

Total Due: _____

Make check payable to: FOBCP

Mail to: 3940 Keystone Road
Tarpon Springs, FL 34688

info@FriendsOfBrookerCreekPreserve.org

FEID #59-3302182 tax-exempt, non-profit corporation

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

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

Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve:
www.FriendsOfBrookerCreekPreserve.org
Email:
info@FriendsOfBrookerCreekPreserve.org
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
Hours: Thurs. - Sat. 9am - 4pm, Sun., 11am - 4pm.

Friends Nature Store is located in the Education Center. Hours: Thurs. - Sat. 9am - 4pm, Sun., 11am - 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

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.

FOBCP Leadership 2023

Board of Directors

Officers

Chair: Cathie Foster
Vice Chair: Robert Burkard
Secretary: Allyn Childress
Treasurer: Ed Helvenston
Business Director: Barb Hoffman

Directors:

Pam Brown: Wildflower Garden
Robert Burkard: Beekeeping
Allyn Childress: Grants
Evan Earle, Jr.: Return the Preserve Work Days
Cathie Foster: Nature Store Manager
Barbara Hoffman: Membership/
Owl-O-Ween
Walt Hoskins: Guiding Documents
Dr. Craig Huegel: Land Use/Newsletter
Editor/Off-the-Beaten-Path Hikes
Chuck Parsons: 4th Grade Coordination
Ray Poynor: Craftsman, Night Hikes
Barbara Schultz: Publicity
Cathy Vogelsong: Newsletter Publisher
Julie Wade: Communications/Outreach

Further Leadership

Mona Gardner & Dixie Mills: Nature Store
Bookkeepers
Cathy Ordiway: Website Master
Lynn Whitelaw: Art Gallery Curator

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

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