FEBRUARY CHAPTER MEETING
At the Hillsborough County Extension Office

Perico Preserve, A Story of Transformation
Presented by Damon Moore
Wednesday, February 15, 7 PM

The restoration of Perico Preserve, a 176-acre property in Manatee County, is a story of transformation. The land has undergone significant changes from its original acquired state of farmland to the beautiful mix of habitats we see today. Featured at this site are the coastal wetlands expected in this area as well as carefully planned scrub hills and upland areas that were part of the historic coast. There are hiking trails and birding opportunities here. After last year’s opening, Perico Preserve restoration continues with projects such as the seagrass lagoon, shorebird nesting island, and waif gopher tortoise relocation habitat.

Damon Moore, Environmental Program Manager for Manatee County, will talk about the county’s restoration project that won them a Landscape Award Of Excellence for Restoration from FNPS in 2016.

From FNPS.org -
Primary Restoration Goals:
• Restore and re-create a diversity of high quality upland habitats on the site
• Create wetland habitats on the site with a focus on supporting wading birds.
• Provide excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing and passive recreation.

Site Background:
• 176 Acre Parcel
• 56 Acres of Upland (pre-restoration)
• 98 Acres of Wetland (pre-restoration)
• 22 Acres of Bay Bottom (Submerged Land)
• Acquired by Manatee County on 11/26/2007
• Purchase price for property was $6,000,000

Light refreshments are served and a native plant auction follows the presentation.

- submitted by Donna Bollenbach & Janet Bowers
USF Plant Sale - April 8 & 9

We need YOU - please give back to SNPS with a few hours of your time, we have jobs for everyone!

- **Setup** - Friday April 7 starting about 9 AM.
- **Saturday, April 8 Sale** is from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., **Setup** starts at 7 AM!
- **Sunday, April 9 Sale** is from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., **Breakdown** needed at 3

The USF Plant Sale is SNPS’s biggest fundraiser, and is the most important outreach effort we do. We are counting on you to help us continue this great event. Thanks for your continued support.

If you are available to help, please let Gar Reed know at gar0426@yahoo.com.

---- Some of the opportunities to help ----

**Friday setup** - usually about 9 AM, set up the tables, unload and arrange the plants, water the plants, set up the sign stakes and label the plants with a profile and price tag, great way to learn plant names.

**Saturday setup** - starts at 7 AM, continue getting the plants ready, additional plants arrive and need to be labeled.

**Saturday & Sunday Sale** -

- **Cashier helpers:** We have one or two people taking money (they already have the credit card app on their phone), but others are needed to assist them by pulling the price markers from the plants and totaling the purchases. If you can stand for 30 minutes at a time, while admiring the native plant purchases of others, this is the job for you. **Cashier helpers are mostly needed in the mornings starting at 9:30**

- **Book Sales and Outreach:** We need one or two people behind or in front of the display table to talk about the books we sell, and explain the free literature. These people will answer questions about native plants, talk about SNPS and FNPS, and most of all, Ask for Memberships. If you like to talk to people about your favorite native plant books, point out the features of plants as noted in our literature, or relate all the educational and fun aspects of the Native Plant Society, this job is for you. Consider helping in the morning or afternoon.

- **Plant Sales Advice and Help:** Depending on the day, we need four or five people to walk the native plant sales area and help people find and choose native plants for their landscape. You should be knowledgeable about “right plant, right place,” willing to share your own garden experiences and have a willingness to mingle and talk to potential customers. You don’t have to have all the answers, but may turn to others or check the brochures, etc. These same helpers may be needed to water or move plants during the day. If you are someone who can’t sit still, prefers to move and converse, this is the job for you. Consider helping in the morning or afternoon.

- **Sunday Breakdown:** On Sunday afternoon, we need people to help breakdown tables, move plants, help load plants into trucks and pack up the SNPS display table. The supplies go back to our storage unit. From 3 pm – 4:30.

UPCOMING SPEAKERS-

- March 15 & April 19 TBD
- May 10 – Note date change due to conference – Open Mic meeting

Thanks for helping with the January meeting -

Cliff Brown, Bunny Worth, Janet Bowers for providing native plants for the plant auction

--> Don’t forget that we need help from everyone bringing plants for the Auction!

Joann Hoffman for bringing snacks

Joel Jackson for auctioning the plants
Letter from the President:

The native plant garden at lettuce lake seems to be in winter sleep, with few blossoms and little color, and it was a bit chilly for Florida, but that didn’t stop people from coming out for the native plant walk on Saturday, January 29.

We began with a presentation by Joel Jackson. Joel showed some images of the park as it was being developed. He pointed out that lack of burning at the park has resulted in a loss of much of the pine flatwoods that once covered much of the uplands. He also showed us slides that illustrated the differences between some commonly confused natives in the park; Cabbage palm (Sabal palmetto) and Saw palmetto (Serenoa repens); Poison ivy (Toxicodendron radicans) and Virginia creeper (Parthenocissus quinquefolia). Joel showed some images of non-native plants like Japanese climbing fern and Caesar weed so we would recognize how invasive they are while on our walk.

After the native plant presentation we walked on the boardwalk. As always, everyone took a step backward when they saw the long, sharp thorns of the Water Locust (Gleditsia aquatica). We pointed out a large mass of Climbing asters (Symphyotrichum carolinianum) that had gone to seed, and even found a flower or two, so they could imagine how beautiful it was at its peak. In the water below there were still the scattered blossoms of the yellow swamp marigolds (Bidens laevis).

The clusters of Pop Ash (Fraxinus caroliniana) trees were developing new crops of 3-winged seeds or samaras, and some of the maples were still flashing crowns of bright red leaves. One of our favorite native plants that was blooming was Walter’s viburnum (Viburnum oubanatum), the young shoots sporting a reddish fuzz and the creamy white flowers in flat-topped cymes.

There are also many birds in Lettuce Lake this time of year. There was a pair of Osprey’s building a nest in a tree just inside the boardwalk. Farther down, I was drawn to a black crowned night heron perched only 10 feet away, his head tucked into his body, with only his orange eye visible. Then at the end of the boardwalk we spotted a barred owl. He was tucked in the crook of a tree over the river, his feathers puffed out, like a thick winter coat.

The point: It was a bit chilly that morning. As I hurried to layer myself in warm clothes, I thought I would rather sleep a little longer, or curl up in a chair with a book. However, I gathered together my Lettuce Lake plant journal, camera, FNPS membership brochures, and poured a hot cup of coffee for the ride to Lettuce Lake. I was glad I did, because It’s Always Special.

Donna

---

**Lettuce Lake Walk**  
**February 25, 9:30**

$2 per car (up to 8 people).

There should be birds, alligators and a few plants blooming by the boardwalk. The lyonias will be blooming in the garden and on the flatwoods path. The Coral Bean in the garden should be in bloom. See you there!
FNPS News....

The 2017 Conference May 18-21

Connections: Above and Below

Conference registration will open soon. To get lodging information or the latest updates on the conference, visit our website:  http://www.fnps.org/conference/2017.

There is a preliminary fieldtrip list and it looks Great! From the Lake Wales Ridge to Kissimmee Prairie, you can’t go wrong. Looking for an easier trip? Check out the Bok Tower trips.

SNPS Board Update

- Grant approved for $500 to EG Simmons Park for plants and equipment. We will request signage recognizing SNPS’ contribution and ask them to give a short presentation on the project.
- The board approved the payment of $500 to FNPS for the conference and $1000 for the conservation grant program.
- July 19 will be the joint meeting with Audubon and Sierra Club, at our normal meeting location - Seffner Extension Office.
- As of the end of January, we have 147 memberships

NORTH ALABAMA SPRING NATIVE PLANT
INAUGURAL FNPS TOUR
April 17 – 22nd, 2017

The Florida Native Plant Society is heading north – north Alabama to be exact – for 6 days and 5 nights of discovery. Join us as we explore the rock outcroppings, caverns and canyons of the southern terminus of the Appalachian Mountains. Discover the endemic plants their geology supports, while enjoying southern hospitality, and savoring local restaurants and cafes. We will be joined by members of the Alabama Wildflower Society, the local native plant enthusiasts of Sweet Home Alabama.

For more information, call Devon Higginbotham at 813-478-1183 or indigotravelcompany@gmail.com

Mark Your Calendar

- **February 9-20** FNPS booth at the Florida State Fair, volunteers are needed to man the table
- **March 4** Plant City HCC garden workday - weeding, raking, trimming. Bring tools, gloves, water.
- **April 8-9** USF Spring Plant Sale - we need lots of help - talk to Gar Reed if you can help
- **April 8** Kissimme Prairie Preserve State Park Spring Wildflower Walk
- **April 22** Earth Day Event - Hillsborough County 100 - Lettuce Lake
- **April 23** Plant City HCC Garden Earth Day event
- **April 26-30** Camping at St Joe’s Peninsula State Park, reserve your camping site now.
- **May 18-21** FNPS Annual Conference at Westgate River Ranch Resort near Lake Wales
  
  http://www.fnps.org/conference/2017

Page 4  The Suncoast Grapevine - February 2017
February 18 Fieldtrip  
Perico Preserve in Manatee County

Where: 11700 Manatee Ave W, Bradenton, FL 34209
When: 9:00 AM

SNPS will be treated to a guided walk in one of Manatee County's newest preserves. Perico Preserve’s 176 acres offers a high diversity of wildlife and plant species. Nearly 1.5 miles of winding trails take visitors through forested hammock, uplands scrub, and both fresh and saltwater marshes. Along the way, visitors will find benches, overlooks, bridges, and even swings to allow for relaxing opportunities to connect with nature.

The County’s first site to offer a bird blind, the preserve provides a unique opportunity for visitors to get close to wildlife without a negative impact on the animal’s behavior. SNPS members will be taken on a guided walk of the preserve to see results of the restoration first hand, and learn about the on-going projects to protect the animals and plants of this critical habitat.

Note, there are no bathrooms at the Preserve. The nearest public bathrooms are located on the Palma Sola Bay Causeway, east of the preserve. GPS points of restroom: 27.496460,-82.656394.

Easy to moderate, not paved, may be sandy in spots. You can adjust the length of the hike to be shorter or longer. As always, come prepared with water, sunscreen, insect repellent, comfortable shoes, and a hat.

Damon Moore is the trip leader - damon.moore@mymanatee.org
If needed, you may call Donna Bollenbach on the day of the trip 813-679-5597

Earth Day 2017 - Hillsborough County 100 Projects

SNPS is making plans to hold a big event at Lettuce Lake Park on Earth Day, April 22 and we’d love to have your help.

Earth Day is a great opportunity to spread our message and make a difference where we live. We will be having a native plant walk as usual, some educational activities and a special outreach effort. Hillsborough County is sponsoring a week-long celebration of 100 projects and we have committed to doing our part.

Contact a Board Member or look for more details at the next meeting.

2017 Field Trip schedule

March 18    Wagon Trip at Lower Green Swamp - 3536 E. Knights Griffin Road, Plant City, 33565, (trip may be full, $5 per person)
April 15    Wagon trip at Balm Boyette Scrub Preserve in Riverview, $5 to the county, trip is filling fast
April 26-30 Camping at St Joe’s Peninsula State Park, reserve your camping site now.
May 18 and 21 - FNPS conference fieldtrips near River Ranch

Treasurer Needed for 2018: Gar Reed has served as the SNPS Treasurer for 5 years. He has done a great job, but he has let us know that he will be moving to his house in Bradenton this year, and will not be able to serve as Treasurer of SNPS in 2018.

The treasurer requires a knowledge of spreadsheets, taxes and general money handling practices. If you have those skills and experience, we need you. We would like to identify someone now, so they can work with Gar as he turns over the books. If you are interested in this critical board position, please speak to Gar at a future meeting, so he can tell you more about it.
AN INTERVIEW WITH OUR FEARLESS LEADERS
(SUNCOAST BOARD OF DIRECTORS)

Beginning with numero uno, our President, Donna Bollenbach

Question: Where did you grow up and who inspired your interest in plants?

Answer: “My dad was in the service so we lived EVERYWHERE……..Rhode Island, North Carolina, Virginia, Massachusetts, California, Guam, Japan, Florida, the Philippines and a bit in Ohio. I guess my dad used to take us walking in the woods, fishing and crabbing. My grandfather lived in Massachusetts and was a photographer and outdoors person.”

Question: What developed your interest in native plants?

Answer: “When I lived in Wimauma, we had a lot of native plants in our yard. But I didn’t appreciate them until we moved (to Brandon) and didn’t have them anymore. Our new home had (exotic) tropicaals and I missed the native plants.”

Question: What are your goals and what do you hope to accomplish in 2017 on the Suncoast board?

Answer: “More outreach! I want to increase community presence and bring more people to join. The county is taking an interest in (native plants) and I want to expand on that. I want to reach more people that are not aware or involved in native plants to educate and inspire them to plant natives.”

Question: What is your favorite Florida native plant?

Answer: “Firebush! They are easy to grow, attract butterflies and hummingbirds and don’t die. I know that if I can get someone to buy one, they will be hooked.”

~ Devon Higginbotham

Plant City HCC Native Plant Garden News

The red bud (Cercis canadensis) tree is blooming! It’s worth a drive to Plant City to see it. Please consider coming March 4 also to help at the next Work Day. We will be weeding, trimming, raking and perhaps planting. The red buckeye (Aesculus pavia) should be blooming by then and is also lovely.

SNPS has 2 beds of natives and we are working to get an inventory of all the natives in other areas. There are quite a few native trees, grasses, coreopsis and some mimosa on the way from the garden gate to our beds.

The garden will be hosting an Earth Day event on April 23, look for more information to come.

~ Janet
Monarchs, Milkweeds & a Mission to Save Them

2017 started off with a bang at our January meeting! Science, pictures and enthusiasm held the large crowd for over an hour while Ranger Scott Davis shared information about the Federal Monarch-Milkweed initiative and some of what he is involved in. Scott works at the St Marks National Wildlife Refuge south of Tallahassee but travels the state in search of milkweeds. He talked about ‘NASCAR’ botanizing- recognizing a milkweed on the roadside while driving at a highway speed. Scott is like a ninja superhero, I’m not sure that he has time to sleep with all the commitments to various projects and groups that he has taken on. One of his main focus points has been mapping the location of any native milkweeds, especially on public lands or roadsides. He has been able to influence the DOT (Department of Transportation) to schedule their mowing at the best time for the milkweed survival or even make the roadside margin smaller to allow the plants to grow undisturbed. Scott is an active member of FNPS and serves on the Council of Chapters at the state level. He has a nursery in the Naples area as well as being instrumental in growing local ecotypes of milkweeds for restoration purposes. A large replanting was done at Wakulla Springs State Park.

In addition to working with many government agencies to make a difference in the future of Monarchs and Milkweeds, Scott has led student volunteers to propagate Milkweeds and monitor Monarchs.

Monarchs

Monarchs can’t overwinter in most of the US like other butterflies do. Due to their complex life cycle they are under pressure from several areas.
- GMO crops and loss of milkweed on farms
- Loss of their traditional winter habitat in Mexico
- Reduction of milkweed habitat along the route due to reduced fire and mowing

Monarch tagging is done to learn more about where the butterflies migrate. Last year a monarch from Canada was seen at St Mark’s Refuge. Every October St Marks does collections of monarchs to gather more data about what is happening.

Milkweeds

Scott has been doing propagation research on various species of milkweed and shared a few tips with us. Most milkweeds prefer a 2-3 year burning schedule and require bare dirt to germinate. The seedlings don’t like to have vegetative competition. Some species take 4-5 years to bloom. Asclepias verticillata, whorled milkweed, will form a colony.

The seed pods of a milkweed are distinctive

There are 21 native milkweeds in Florida. (more information on the next page)
Monarchs (cont. from page 7)

Priority Pillars of St. Marks’ Milkweed Mission:

CONSERVATION:
- Locate ➔ Map ➔ Manage Milkweed Habitat

RESTORATION:
- Monitor ➔ Research Species Biology and Ecology ➔ Cultivate & Propagate ➔ Re-plant on Public and Private Lands

EDUCATION:
- Build Partnerships with Agencies and Non-Profits ➔ Involve the public, volunteers, and citizen scientists through every step of the process

Milkweeds in Every Parking Lot, Schoolyard, Church, …

The Trouble with Tropical milkweed

*Asclepias curassavica* or tropical milkweed is commonly found at the big box stores and readily reseeds. Some of the plants from these stores have been sprayed with Neonicotinoids that will kill the caterpillars. It can cause a problem because it does not naturally die back in the Florida winter and can support OE (*Ophryocystis elektroscirrha*) protozoan infestation that kills and weakens monarchs.

Monarchs Infected With OE:
- Possess a much higher (pre-breeding) mortality rate
- Typically emerge drastically underweight and/or sick.
- Highly-reduced likelihood of surviving migration

How you can help
- Share any info on local milkweeds via the contacts below
- Cut back any tropical milkweeds you have at Thanksgiving and reduce the amount of non-natives in your yard
- Don’t spray insecticides
- Plant NATIVE MILKWEED
  - They are available at Native Nurseries
- Plant nectar plants like ironweed, saltbush, liatris and leave some Bidens for them

Contact information that Scott shared-
- FACEBOOK: Monarch-Milkweed Initiative @ St. Marks NWR
- EMAIL: Monarchmilkweedinitiative@gmail.com
- Scott Davis’ Email: Scott_Davis@fws.gov

Websites for more info-
- Monarchwatch.org
- Plantatlas.usf.edu
- Plantmilkweed.org
- PFAF.org
- monarchinitiative.org

~ Janet Bowers
Membership in the Florida Native Plant Society enables you to receive their wonderful quarterly magazine *The Palmetto*. Joining the SNPS also entitles you to membership privileges in the Suncoast Native Plant Society and a subscription to their monthly newsletter *The Suncoast Grapevine*. Contact the SNPS membership chair, Devon Higginbotham, at 478-1183.

Check pertinent category:
- Individual $35
- Full time student $15
- Family or household $50
- Supporting $100
- Patron $250
- Gold $500
- Sustaining - $10 a month w/credit card
- Visa
- MC
- Expiration __________
- Card # ________________________  Code ____

Make check payable to **FNPS**.

**Join FNPS on-line** - [http://fnps.org/participate/membershipinfo](http://fnps.org/participate/membershipinfo)

---

**Florida Native Plant Society Membership Application**

Membership in the Florida Native Plant Society enables you to receive their wonderful quarterly magazine *The Palmetto*. Joining the SNPS also entitles you to membership privileges in the Suncoast Native Plant Society and a subscription to their monthly newsletter *The Suncoast Grapevine*. Contact the SNPS membership chair, Devon Higginbotham, at 478-1183.

Check pertinent category:
- Individual $35
- Business or non-profit $150
- Full time student $15
- Family or household $50
- Supporting $100
- Patron $250
- Gold $500
- Sustaining - $10 a month w/credit card
- Visa
- MC
- Expiration __________
- Card # ________________________  Code ____

Make check payable to **FNPS**.

**Detach and mail to:**

**FNPS**

P.O. Box 278

Melbourne, FL 32902-0278
Newsletter Submissions
Deadline for the next issue: March 1, 2017
Please send articles and original artwork for The Suncoast Grapevine to Janet Bowers, by the deadline above- jbowers27@yahoo.com

SNPS Web Address
http://www.SuncoastNPS.org

We're on Meet Up & Facebook

Regular meetings are in Seffner

Meetings are normally the third Wednesday of the month at 7 PM. (no December meeting)

DIRECTIONS TO:
Hillsborough County Extension
5339 County Road 579
Seffner

Take I-4 to Exit 10 (just east of I-75). Go south on 579 for two blocks. Turn left on Old Hillsborough Ave and park on the North side of the office.

Suncoast Chapter of Florida Native Plant Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 1158
Seffner, FL 33583-1158

Please deliver to: