

<http://mangrove.fnpschapters.org/>

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## President's Message

Greetings from the North country. So far, Ma Nature has been dragging her heels in this neck of the woods, not bringing us any decent spring weather. The silver lining in the clouds is the effect of all the rain on my northern garden, despite the chilly temperatures. Daffodils, Primroses, Forget-Me-Nots, Candy Tuft and Dwarf Iris are contributing a bright pallet of colors to the landscape in my front yard.

This issue of our newsletter will reach a lot of our members and friends who have migrated to their "home" states for the summer months. In the articles that follow, you will be updated on happenings from the recent FNPS State Conference. Several of our members have been attending this annual conference for many years and it has become a sort of tradition to publish their "reports" so that we get a snapshot of what took place. You could probably find more details on the FNPS website, once they get their official summary compiled. I keep waiting for them to hold at least one future conference in the month of April so that more of us snowbirds have an opportunity to attend.

I hope everyone is enjoying the spring/summer season wherever you may be. We will continue to keep you posted on our activities over the next few months. For those of you still at home in Florida, watch for our summer field trip announcements.

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## NOTES FROM THE 2017 FNPS CONFERENCE

[What is the Everglades all about](#) by Dr. Thomas Lodge

Dr. Lodge wrote his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Miami on the ecology of Everglades' freshwater fishes and has written a book titled The Everglades Handbook.

The Everglades formed about 5500 years ago and water flowed freely from Lake Okeechobee down to Florida Bay. The area originally consisted of Wet Prairie on Marl, Sawgrass Marsh, Wet Prairie on Peat, Sloughs and Tree Islands with varying water depth for each area. In 1917 canals were completed draining the area and subsequently Lake Okeechobee was drained through the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers. The varying ecosystems were mostly replaced by Sawgrass. The government originally gave away land for free if you agreed to drain it and make it suitable for agriculture.

Scattered through the Everglades are small tree islands, some are fixed, elliptical in shape with hardwood trees, Gumbo Limbo at their northern end then as they taper south changing to ferns, shrubs and sawgrass. Some have a rocky outcropping the origin of which is in doubt. Possibly human activity contributed to part of this protrusion. Miccosukee Indians have inhabited this area since the early 1800's and had names for many of these tree islands.

Although work is underway to restore the water flow this will not of itself restore the Everglades. Sloughs of deeper water will need to be made through the area. Lake Okeechobee will remain heavily polluted for a long time due to the accumulated sulphates in several feet of mud from agricultural waste. This has resulted in the conversion of harmless mercury into methylmercury, which is toxic. Accepted levels for human ingestion of fish is 0.3 ppm but bass in the Everglades have 1-2.7 ppm and are therefore unsafe to

eat. Strangely pythons have 430 ppm and appear to tolerate these levels without ill effects.

North of Lake Okeechobee efforts are underway to reverse the adverse effects of the canal and restore the normal course of the Kissimmee River. This will eventually reduce the amount of pollutants entering Lake Okeechobee. Fresh water flow south of the lake must be restored also to maintain the mangroves, peat and sawgrass prairie around Ten Thousand Islands and Florida Bay because rising tides and storm surges threaten to engulf these areas.

The efforts to undo the ill effects of canals and agricultural pollution will be long and complex but the work has begun and some improvement has occurred already from restoring wetlands around a reformed Kissimmee River.

Submitted by John Holyland

## Connections Above and Below

Submitted by Christine Holyland

I attended some lectures on current issues about the restoration of the Kissimmee River and the Everglades Restoration Project. - Connections above ground. Tanya Clayton, Keynote speaker, talked about "Sea Level Rise in Florida" illustrated by many examples. Keynote Speaker Roger Hammer illustrated his amusing lecture "Wildflowers of the Kissimmee Valley" with photographs and historical Greek, Roman and other myths and stories related to the scientific names of the plants.

Break out sessions such "Effects of Kissimmee River Restoration on Native Plants" "The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project", and "The Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, which is working well, gave me a good overview of the River and Everglades projects. A later panel discussion by six speakers on "Conservation Connections in Florida" consolidated the previous lectures.

The take home message for me was that a lot has been done and is being done to restore the everglades, plants and animals are returning, but it now seems clear that it is unlikely to be the same as before.

On Friday I attended lectures on "Mycorrhizal Fungi are Fascinating" and "Fungi in Florida" and discovered the underground below is just full of Mycorrhizal fungi going everywhere from plant to plant. What a jungle it is down there! The fungi contribute nitrogen to most plants and trees. The trees give back carbon in the form of sugar (symbiosis).

The food was very good this year, with lots of healthy food buffet dishes for meat eaters, fish eaters, vegetarians, vegans and gluten frees. I think Denny might have mostly approved.



## FNPS FIELD TRIP TO THE DISNEY WILDERNESS PRESERVE

Submitted by Christine Holyland  
Photos by John Holyland

I went on a field trip to The Disney Wilderness Preserve owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy for 24 years. They still have an easement from the Disney Properties. The land was saved because of endangered species and its water flow into the Kissimmee River. It is surrounded by conservation lands. We took a 2 hour walk to Lake Russell. A very large Prickly pear cactus was near the building and a Red shouldered hawk soared overhead.

We walked through a sawgrass prairie, a meadow lark was singing on a stump, and then into a grassland with a few young Saw palmettos growing. This area was burned about 6 months ago. Then through an area burned 3 years ago mostly of young Saw Palmettos, some Blueberry, Gallberry, young Paw paw, wiregrass, and hypericum species.



Three months after burning



Three Years after burning

We then came to a shrub area with Dog fennel, Bahia grass, Blackberry and finally into a Pine flatwoods with Slash and Longleaf pine, both native here.

The latter is farmed with fire to help the young survive. We saw a Red bellied woodpecker, Oak trees with Mistletoe and Greenbrier. In a depression, going down to the lake, was a wet





long leaf pine with candles



Yellow batchelor's button

area with many Hatpins growing in the center surrounded by a large ring of Cinnamon fern and some Bracken fern, Yellow Batchelor's button, and Elliott's milkpea.



Elliott's milkpea



Depression Area.

Lake Russell was once a Bald cypress swamp logged extensively in the 1940's and part of the headwaters of the Kissimmee river. Young Vireo's were numerous in the trees here. Bald cypress roots were dramatically exposed on the shoreline due to the drought. Several soft shell turtle nests were exposed in the sand, something having eaten the eggs during the night.



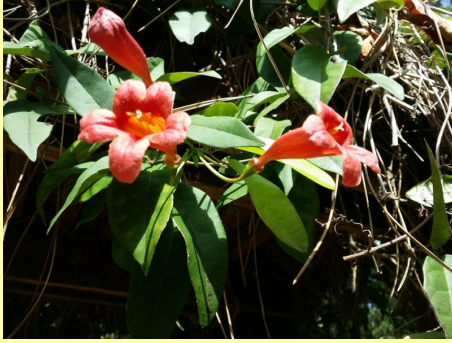
We returned by an upland trail where Ceasar weed and Cogan grass grew and were constantly managed by the preserve. There were flycatchers, Red headed and Red bellied woodpeckers and Witches broom in the trees here. An interesting hike illustrating the restorative effects of prescribed burning.

## What's Blooming in the Garden

Crossvine, *Bignoniacapreolata*

Crossvine is a fast-growing long-lived perennial that can reach up to 50 feet. It climbs fences, trellises and trees. The Crossvine has large showy orange red trumpet shaped flowers that hang in clusters of 2- 5 flowers. They are sometimes found high in trees using the tendrils to climb.

They also can cling to brick walls, stone, and fences using claws at the end of the tendrils. Training can help to control crowding. Cutting back branches in the spring will encourage blooming.



Crossvine

Crossvine is an evergreen plant that likes low to medium water and is comfortable in full sun to partial shade, some references saying to full shade. There is better blooming in full sun. It is happy in clay, loam and sand soil. It is not salt tolerant but does tolerate brief flooding. Butterflies use it as an early nectar source, Hummingbirds are attracted to it.

You can see it now in a visit to the Cedar Point Environmental Center Demonstration Garden.

## FNPS Summer 2017 Field Trips

The Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant has announced its Summer 2017 field trip schedule. Field trips are the last Saturday of the month.

On **June 24th** you will have the opportunity to explore the healthy expanse of wildlife-rich habitats in the Babcock-Web Wildlife Management Area in Punta Gorda with a knowledgeable trail guide. The area provides wide open vistas of pine flatwoods, freshwater marshes and dry prairies. To reach the Management Area from Englewood, take I-75 South to Tucker's Grade. At the end of the road go into the wildlife management area. Walkers will meet at the weigh station just past the payment area. There is no entrance fee for those 65 and over.

Our trail guide will lead us through Cedar Point Environmental Park on **July 29**. The park is located at 2300 Placida Rd in Englewood. Walkers will meet at the Center and walk the Big Pine Trail.

We will take a leisurely walk on a shaded trail through Lemon Bay Park on August 26. The park is located at 570 Bay Park Boulevard in Englewood and is home to many wildflowers that will be in bloom from the summer rains.

On **September 30** we will take our annual summer walk along the water at Hathaway Park, 35461 Washington Loop Road in Punta Gorda. This is the last walk of the summer season, shady and somewhat cool and, once again, we will be in search of the Pond Apple. For more information you may contact Al Squires at 941-769-3633 or email him at [ahsquires1@comcast.net](mailto:ahsquires1@comcast.net)

The Mangrove Chapter is one of 37 FNPS Chapters throughout Florida and meets the second Tuesday of each month from October through April. At each meeting a program on natural history, landscaping with native plants, or other similar topic is presented. Field trips are the last Saturday of each month except for December. Field trips, meetings and other FNPS activities are free and open to everyone. FNPS is a non-profit organization whose mission is the preservation, conservation and restoration of the native plant communities of Florida. More information about the Mangrove Chapter of FNPS can be located on their website: <http://www.mangrove.fnpschapters.org>.