



Report from Your President:

by Lois Cantwell

I can describe what your Board of Directors has been doing these past few months in three words: Planning, Preparation, and Reconstruction. Given the current climate and looking at October and beyond without a crystal ball, nothing is for certain. Here is a snapshot of where we are as of August.

Our first membership meeting will be on October 27th. A set of Covid19-related guidelines will be implemented to provide a safe environment. A speaker is lined up for November, and there are possibilities for a program in December with no pot-luck supper or silent auction.

A newly revised set of Bylaws are in the final draft, subject to approval by the BOD. Two major changes include having 3 elected officers and one appointed, all with one-year terms, and holding our Annual Meeting/Election of these officers in January instead of May.

Our first Field Trip of the season is slated for November 21st at Tippicanoe 1. This will be an "experimental" walk with an eye toward how well we can manage this within rules of "social distancing". Field trip coordinators and trail guides are being recruited to provide a diverse range of interpretive experiences.

In the reconstruction department, take a look at the new make-over on our Mangrove Chapter website. Although still under reconstruction, you will see photos, new headers (Welcome-Join Us-Who We Are-Calendar-Newsletters-Outreach). A user-friendly side bar gives you easy access to plant lists by location, grant applications, Bylaws, our Members' Facebook page, and more. Check it out! Also, visit the FNPS Home Page as there are a lot of interesting topics to explore. By the way, is everyone tuning in to the "Lunch and Learn" series that FNPS is offering. Great educational opportunities on a variety of subjects.

We will continue our planning, which could be month to month or even by the minute, depending on circumstances. As one of our members summed up the current situation: "...I'm trying to learn not to make plans. Live in the moment."

Please welcome new members Thomas and Carolyn Hinton from Venice.

This makes a total of 76 memberships representing 103 people. Welcome to our chapter!

[Click here to Visit our Website](#)

We are on Facebook!!!

Look for: Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

CHEC Summer Walks

Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center and the Charlotte County Natural Resource Department Will be conducting the following free programs this summer of 2020. All programs can be found at www.ChecFlorida.org

Thursday August 13 Join CHEC on a free guided walk through the old growth pine flatwoods and mangrove fringe of 125-acre Oyster Creek/Ann Dever Regional Park in Englewood. Walk begins at 8:00 a.m. Be prepared with drinking water, insect repellent and appropriate footwear (trails may be flooded). You must register to participate. For more information/directions and to register, please call 941-475-0769.

Wednesday August 19 Join Mike Weisensee on a free guided bird walk through the scrub and pine flatwoods of 217-acre Amberjack Environmental Park at Rotunda. Walk begins at 8:00 a.m. Be prepared with drinking water, insect repellent and appropriate footwear (trails may be flooded). You must register to participate. For more information/directions and to register, please call 941-475-0769.

Wednesday August 26 Join CHEC on a free guided walk through 308-acre Tippecanoe Environmental Park. This Charlotte County park includes habitats such as scrub, pine flatwoods, marsh, and wetlands. Walk begins at 8:00 a.m. Be prepared with drinking water, insect repellent and appropriate footwear (trails may be flooded). You must register to participate. For more information/directions and to register, please call 941-475-0769.

Thursday September 3 Join CHEC on a free guided walk through 308-acre Tippecanoe Environmental Park. This Charlotte County park includes habitats such as scrub, pine flatwoods, marsh, and wetlands. Walk begins at 8:00 a.m. Be prepared with drinking water, insect repellent and appropriate footwear (trails may be flooded). You must register to participate. For more information/directions and to register, please call 941-475-0769.

Tuesday, September 8 Join CHEC on a free guided walk through Charlotte Flatwoods Environmental Park of mature pines, dry prairie, marsh wetlands and freshwater ponds. Its location adjoining state lands make it an important wildlife corridor. One-hour walk begins at 8:00 a.m. Be prepared with drinking water, insect repellent and appropriate footwear (trails may be flooded). You must register to participate. For more information/directions and to register, please call 941-475-0769.

Thursday, September 10 Join CHEC on a free guided walk through Tippecanoe II Mitigation Park in Port Charlotte. This 150-acre preserve is home to several families of the threatened Florida scrub jay. Walk begins at 8:00 a.m. Be prepared with drinking water, insect repellent and appropriate footwear (trails may be flooded). You must register to participate. For more information/directions and to register, please call 941-475-0769.

Wednesday September 16 Join Mike Weisensee on a free guided bird walk through the scrub and pine flatwoods of 217-acre Amberjack Environmental Park at Rotunda. Walk begins at 8:00 a.m. Be prepared with drinking water, insect repellent and appropriate

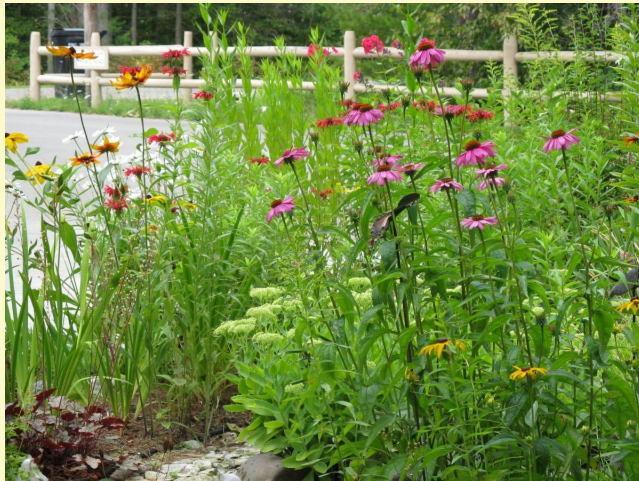
footwear (trails may be flooded). You must register to participate. For more information/directions and to register, please call 941-475-0769.

Tuesday, September 22 Join CHEC on a free guided walk through Charlotte Flatwoods Environmental Park, of mature pines, dry prairie, marsh wetlands and freshwater ponds. Its location adjoining state lands make it an important wildlife corridor. One-hour walk begins at 8:00 a.m. Be prepared with drinking water, insect repellent and appropriate footwear (trails may be flooded). You must register to participate. For more information/directions and to register, please call 941-475-0769.

Thursday, September 24 Join CHEC on a free guided walk through Tippecanoe II Mitigation Park in Port Charlotte. This 150-acre preserve is home to several families of the threatened Florida scrub jay. Walk begins at 8:00 a.m. Be prepared with drinking water, insect repellent and appropriate footwear (trails may be flooded). You must register to participate. For more information/directions and to register, please call 941-475-0769.

Summer in my Northern Garden

Lois Cantwell



The transition from spring to summer creates a whole new population of blooming things in the northern cottage garden. The combination of Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) and Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) make these two natives good companions. They must have been watching the calendar, as they both opened their first blooms on August 1st. In another garden bed, the taller Gray-headed Coneflowers

(*Ratibida pinnata*) began to show their drooping, soft yellow rays below cone-like gray-green centers. Another native that contributes height, and partners with this plant is the Thimbleweed (*Anemone cylindrica*). It has long erect stalks topped by interesting greenish-white flowers that turn into cottony seed heads in the fall.

The red Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*) also grows tall enough to add colorful contrast to the others. It is most likely a cultivar, as there are no native stands of this species remaining in our state. A similar situation has also occurred with the Purple Coneflower here, which is considered extirpated now. Both have adapted well to cultivation, becoming popular hardy perennials to Zone 3. I am currently looking for *M. fistulosa* or Wild Bergamot, a native found in dry, open, sandy woodlands, barrens, prairies and savannas throughout most of Michigan. The Swamp Buttercups



(*Ranunculus hispidus*), adapting to drier conditions, lend their more delicate, buttery yellow, 5-petaled flowers which attract pollen-eaters. There are also non-native residents of European origin in the garden. Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*) likes dry sunny fields, roadsides and disturbed soils, has flat 3-5-inch clusters of tiny white flowers with a minute central purple floret. It is a host plant for Black Swallowtail butterflies. A large clump of wild Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*), with stalkless sky-blue flowers, occupies the front corner of the driveway next to the rustic wooden fence that edges the garden. Similarly to Spiderworts, the square-tipped, fringed flowers close by early afternoon.



Other plants in the mix, which are mostly commercial: white Shasta Daisies, lavender Phlox, magenta Rose Campion, yellow/orange Black-eyed Susan, pink Yarrow, English Lavender, Lady's Mantle, pink Coralbell, and others. The biggest disappointment is that there are so many fewer pollinators around to partake of this nectarous smorgusborg. Only a handful of bumblebees

appeared this spring, and maybe 4 Monarchs laid eggs on the native milkweed. A few hummingbirds have frequented the Monarda as well as the 2 feeders hanging nearby. Very disheartening indeed. But, another season arrives in a month or so and many of these plants will give way to a new crop of "bloomers". Bring on those bees, as lots of Goldenrods await.



White Astilbe



Siberian Iris



Pink Lilies

Medicinal and Other Uses of Introduced Plants

by Lois Cantwell

Having mentioned a few non-native plants in my northern gardens, it interested me in finding out what uses the early settlers made of them. For example, Queen Anne's Lace, also called Wild Carrot, was once a European garden plant. It is considered a weed because of its aggressive growth. Its long tap-root can be dug, roasted and ground as a coffee substitute. The Chicory was also cultivated for its long tap-root, roasted and ground as a coffee substitute or additive.

Other non-natives that pop up in my yard include Ox-eye Daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*), also a European import. It contains pyrethrum, a chemical that repels insects and is used in organic pesticides. It actually makes a nice garden plant, so it is tolerated with a certain amount of "weeding". So too is the Common Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*). It is of Eurasian origin, as well as North America, and it is uncertain which of the various species are introduced or native. Mine is a pink variety, which travels via horizontal underground stems, therefore is also controlled in my garden to some extent. The genus name *Achillea* comes from the legend that Achilles used the plant to treat bleeding wounds during the Trojan War. Many cultures have used it as a medicinal herb.

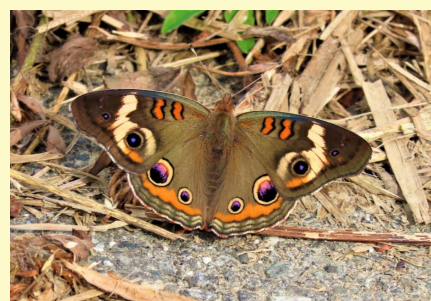
Black Medick (*Medicago lupulina*) is a weedy plant of lawns and roadsides. Of Eurasian origin, it has spread throughout many states. The Medick seeds are actually very important food for migrant sparrows in the fall. Another resident of roadsides and fields, introduced from Europe, is the Common St. Johnswort (*Hypericum perforatum*). It has also taken up residence in my garden and asserting itself to the point where it gets a haircut before going to seed. The flowers bloom around June 24th, St. John's Day ("wort" means "common"). It is often used in folk medicine to treat eye problems and respiratory illnesses. Dried leaves, which have oil filled glands, were used as a talisman against witches and thunder, and as a tea to relieve depression. Given the current state of affairs, some of that tea might come in handy.

Mid-Summer Flower Power Attracts Pollinators in the Blue Ridge Mountains

by Bill Dunson

Although there are always some flowers present during the warmer seasons, late-middle summer (late July/early August) seems to provide a wealth of flowers for the insects and birds that depend on nectar and or pollen for their nutrition. Since we specifically plant perennials and shrubs to attract butterflies and birds, this is an exciting time of year to admire both the beautiful flowers and the pollinators they attract. We have about 130 species of plants in our 2 acre yard, some planted and some natural. The colors and shapes of flowers are a direct result of co-evolution between the plants and animals they seek to attract to carry out reproduction.

Due to the cool mornings in the Blue Ridge,

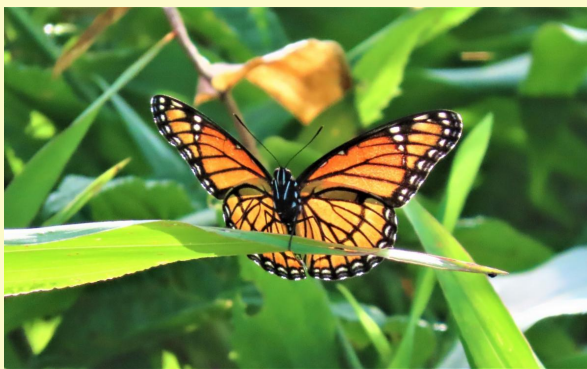


Common buckeye

butterflies usually become active after 10 am but can raise their body temperatures by basking. The common buckeye is famous for sitting in a sunny spot with out-stretched wings to warm up. This would seem to make it a target for hungry birds; the large eye spots seem designed to deflect the attack of such predators away from the most vulnerable body parts.



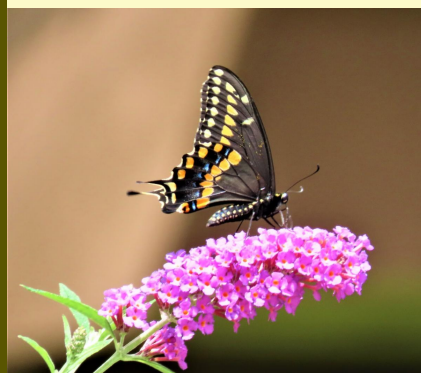
Swallowtail back side view on butterfly bush



Monarchs are everyone's favorite butterfly and we eagerly watch for their arrival. This monarch is finding nectar on a blazing star or *Liatrus* in our hillside garden. The males engage in aggressive behavior and the females lay eggs on the milkweeds. This late stage caterpillar is feasting on a common milkweed which planted itself in our yard from seeds blown from a neighboring field. The bright colors of monarchs advertise their toxicity gained from eating milkweeds as larvae. An unrelated viceroy butterfly is a close Muellierian mimic (toxic model and toxic mimic) of the monarch (but note the curved line in the hindwings); it is poisonous due to its larval diet of willows. A much larger mimicry group is found among the "black and blue" swallowtails. The toxic model is the pipevine swallowtail; the male has a striking iridescent blue color on the dorsal surface of its hindwings and a pattern of large orange spots on the ventral or outer surfaces. A group of swallowtails and brushfoot butterflies have a Batesian mimicry complex (toxic model and tasty mimics) based on this pattern.

One mimic that is commonly seen is the black

swallowtail; this male is not a close match on the dorsal surface (the female has more blue) but has a very similar ventral hindwing pattern with orange spots (but in a slightly different arrangement than the pipevine). Other mimics are the female black morph of the tiger swallowtail, the spicebush and palamedes swallowtails, the red spotted purple, and the female Diana fritillary. Learning to tell these species apart is a challenge and it is easy to see how the birds must also be confused!



Black Swallowtail side view
on butterfly bush

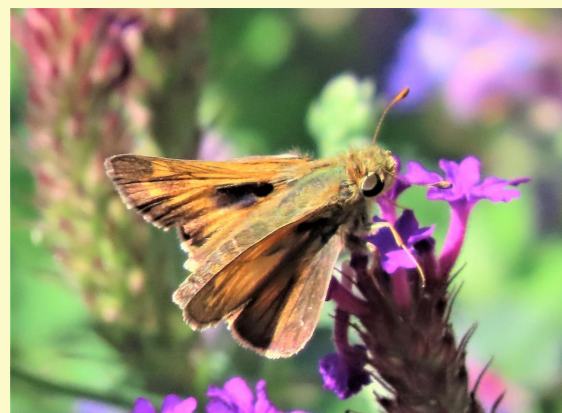


Pipevine Swallowtail side
view



Swallowtail Pipevine on
Coral Honeysuckle

You will often see a number of tiny butterflies flying rapidly from flower to flower. These "skippers" can be very common but are quite difficult to identify. The species shown here, the sachem, which favors the flowers of verbena/vervain is clearly distinguished by a large dark rectangle on the hindwing.



Watching the hummingbirds is great fun and they are attracted especially to red tubular flowers. Their favorites include the native coral honeysuckle and bee balms or Monarda. But they will avidly drink from flowers of the exotic butterfly bushes of any color and rose of Sharon (which is unusual among mallows since it provides a nectar reward rather than just pollen to insect flower visitors).

So let us savor the flowers of summer and their remarkable animal pollinators. They are one of the great joys of the natural world which can be easily cultivated in our gardens.

all photos by Bill Dunson

Visit our website
