Florida Native Plant Society

MANGROVE CHAPTER

Report from Your President:

by Lois Cantwell

In these uncertain times the pathway to making plans for our upcoming season may seem a bit murky at this point. Nevertheless, having some framework in place is better than being unprepared, so we will press on regardless and hope for the best. Who knows what the face of the pandemic will look like three months from now.

With that being said, your board members have been working on various facets of our administrative duties over the last couple of months and will move forward throughout the summer. Work has begun on lining up speakers for our programs; recruiting organizers and leaders for field trips, redesigning our website; reviewing and restructuring our Bylaws; maintaining membership retention; looking at pros and cons of various video conferencing alternatives; and updating our Facebook page.

We are also developing a "social distancing" plan for in-person meetings, including various procedural changes, with the safety and wellbeing of our members and guest in mind. Other options have been suggested, such as meeting at an outdoor venue in the day-time hours; possibly skip a meeting and replace with an outing; promote educational opportunities that can be easily accessed via the internet, just as examples. In the meantime, please stay as safe as you can, and I hope we can all come together in the fall, one way of another.

New Mangrove Chapter Member: Please welcome Vickie Lowe, from Rotonda West.

Announcement from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission:

To those who frequently visit the Webb Wildlife Management Area in Punta Gorda, if you see any off-road vehicles using the area, there has been an increase in damage due to the unauthorized use of these ORV's. As you are probably aware, destruction of the native plant life in the area has negative impacts on all of the ecosystem. Since the FWC has limited resources and cannot be everywhere all the time, your assistance in keeping a watchful eye would be greatly appreciated. If you happen to see violations, please report them to their Dispatch Office at 1-888-404-3922.

Click here to **Visit our Website**

We are on Facebook!!!
Look for: Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

Springtime in my Northern Garden

Lois Cantwell

Standing at the open front door on the first day of summer (according to the calendar), and surveying the colorful array of spring flowers, I think back to that day in mid-April when we arrived in Michigan. We had left Florida nearly a month early. Area temperatures were going to be in the 40's (30's at night) for quite some time after we got here. The first thing that greeted us was a small patch of daffodils with bright yellow blooms, the only harbinger of spring showing above layers of dead leaves and pine needles that blanketed the yard. This beacon of hope was almost symbolic, given the angst and uncertainty over the coronavirus pandemic.

Iris and Paperwhites

Daffodils

White Iris

We got settled in and began our 2 to 3 weeks of self quarantine. This was a perfect opportunity to get outdoors and get after spring clean-up chores. In the meantime, more and more of the daffodils and paper-whites came into bloom, adding a cheerful aspect to the drab landscape. As layers of dead leaves were removed, leaving the pine needles for mulch, more signs of life were discovered. How delightful and uplifting to see green shoots and new growth emerge. This is the aspect of the arrival of spring that I look forward to every year, which I don't see to that extent in the south. Lately, it just gets too darned hot too early and springtime in Florida seems almost non-existent in comparison to the northern experience

Primulas are early bloomers and did not disappoint. Pale yellow, bright yellow, or burgundy , they were gorgeous! Followed by yellow and purple dwarf iris, white candy tuft, purple and pink varieties of lupine over a period of 4 to 5 weeks, things were really starting to pop in spite of the continued cool and rainy weather. There was even a "snow event" on the 9th of May. Forget-me-nots, wild field daisies, and fleabane (which I allow to self seed) add an ephemeral touch by filling in the spaces between the cultivated perennials. Blue flag and tall irises, plus coral bells add to the mix.

:Yellow Primulas

Border of Iris and Primulas

I thought that my white bleeding heart had died out over the winter, having seen no signs of life, until some time in mid-May I spotted bright green shoots among the pine needle mulch. It made rapid progress as the weather continued to warm. Most varieties are shades of pink, but I prize this white one. Like many additions to by gardens, it came from a local garden club plant sale.

Fleabane

Hosta (foreground);
Carnations White Astilbe

English Plantain, Field
Daisies near the fence

AI trial to help track damaging invasive plant species

From **https://www.breakingnews.ie/world/ai-trial-to-help-track-damaging-invasive-plant-species-1005454.html**

Artificial intelligence is being enlisted in the fight against invasive plants, as experts try to design a system that makes problem species easier to track.

Scientists from the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH) and Birmingham based company Keen AI are developing a new AI system to quickly survey areas such as roadsides for invasive species of plant.

Plants such as Japanese knotweed can cause damage in the UK, but finding and tracking their spread can be expensive and time-consuming, the experts said.

The new scheme will use a high speed camera on top of a vehicle to survey up to 120 miles of roadside vegetation a day.

Himalayan balsam (Ray Woods/PA)

The images will be tagged with their GPS location and uploaded onto an online platform, where UKCEH ecologists will identify the plants in the photographs.

Then the team aims to teach the AI how to correctly identify invasive species such as Japanese knotweed, rhododendrons, Himalayan balsam and cherry laurel.

They will also teach the system to spot ash trees, which are native to the UK but at risk of a devastating disease, ash dieback.

It is hoped that once it has learned to identify certain species, the AI – which can rapidly analyse large numbers of images – will make surveying for invasive and potentially-damaging plants quicker and cost-effective.

A 10-month pilot project, funded by Government innovation agency Innovate UK, will survey roads in north Wales and Birmingham, the team said.

Dr Tom August, from UKCEH, said: “There’s a huge opportunity for AI to help us learn more about the natural world; we’re interested to see if we can develop a cost-effective, rapid way to identify invasive plant species in the UK.

“Invasive plant species tend to grow in corridors, which is why we’re focused on roadside surveys.

“If the pilot is successful, this could be scaled up in other countries, or for other species of plants, trees or even insects and animals.”

If we are successful, we’ll be able to survey the entire UK very cost-effectively

Amjad Karim, founder of Keen-AI, said: “Using AI to rapidly analyse vast amounts of images will mean safety and cost benefits to highways agencies, landowners and decision-makers.

“Currently this work requires temporary closure of roads to ensure the safety of surveyors.”

He said he believed the system would “significantly reduce” the cost of ecological surveys, and allow them to take place at a scale that is currently not possible.

“If we are successful, we’ll be able to survey the entire UK very cost-effectively, giving a much better understanding of the extent of invasive species,” he said.

Late Spring in the Blue Ridge

by Bill Dunson

Once the famous early spring ephemeral flowers have finished blooming, there are still some spectacular flowers yet to come in late May and early June. One of the most beautiful is the flame azalea (genus Rhododendron) which seem to be "burning" in the misty Appalachian hill forests. They have long arching male stamens and even longer female styles to rub against the large pollinating butterflies, bumblebees and hummingbirds.

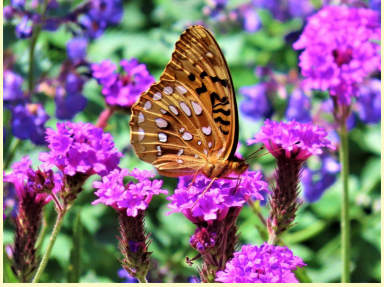
In contrast down on the forest floor there is a very inconspicuous plant in bud that is highly sought after for its reputed but controversial therapeutic value, the ginseng or "sang." The root may somewhat resemble a human form and has thus become valued as a cure-all for various medical conditions. Fortunately for the plant it is difficult to find until the red berries are formed and these are avidly eaten by birds such as thrushes (both residents and migrants) that feed on the forest floor.

A highly visible plant growing low to the ground is the brilliant fire pink. It is a classic specialized hummingbird flower with bright red colors and a long tubular structure.

A true bug/Hemipteran I saw is the famous periodical cicada with red eyes. These generally appear every 13 or 17 years in plague numbers in certain locations and the noise can be overwhelming. The purpose of this unusual life cycle would seem to be to minimize predation or perhaps a disease. The reasoning is that it would be impossible for a predator to specialize on a prey that only appears at such long intervals and in such numbers that it overwhelms the appetite.

Early summer signals the appearance of significant numbers of butterflies which is very exciting after a cold wet spring. The large great spangled fritillary is impressive (here shown on the flowers of vervain/verbena in our yard). A very similar sibling species the Aphrodite occurs at higher elevations. Both feed on violets as caterpillars.

Swallowtail, Y:ellow Tiger on female rhododendron



Great Spangled Fritillary Butterfly

Black Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly on rhododendron

Another large showy butterfly which appears early is the pipevine swallowtail. This is the famous toxic mimicry model for several other species which are predominantly black with metallic blue highlights and orange spots. This butterfly feeds on the poisonous pipevine as a larva and retains toxins which protect it as an adult and advertises this fact by its striking coloration. One of the tasty mimics is the dark morph female of the tiger swallowtail shown here nectaring on rhododendron flowers. Strangely enough only some female tiger swallowtails are mimics whereas all males and many females are instead yellow and black (as the female shown here on rhododendron). The story is even more complex since the appearance of the peculiar pipevine caterpillar is thought to be the evolutionary result of mimicry of a strange tropical invertebrate, the velvet worm.

By the end of May, avian breeding is in full swing or even over for some species. But early summer is a very exciting time as the weather warms up and many more butterflies and insects of all kinds make their appearances. If you follow the changing "phenology" or sequences of flowering of plants you will constantly be challenged to identify the new plants that coming into bloom.

Bill Dunson
Boone, NC and Englewood, FL
https://lemonbayconservancy.org/news/nature-notes-by-bill-dunson/

Visit our website

FLORIDA WILDFLOWER FOUNDATION

Creating Pollinator Pathway's in the Built Environment

You're invited to join the Florida Wildflower Foundation for its next webinar, “Creating Pollinator Pathways in the Built Environment,” featuring guest speaker Dr. Jaret Daniels.
When: Tuesday, July 7, 2020, at 2 p.m. Eastern Time
Description: Recent insect declines have gained substantial media attention due to the potential serious repercussions for people, agriculture, and ecological systems. Insects provide many essential services, including pollination and nutrient cycling, and are a major food source for wildlife. Conserving biodiversity today is about more than just large, wild systems. Every landscape, large and small, is now critical. The important role

that our growing human-dominated spaces can play in sustaining native wildlife populations has become increasingly recognized. These include urban parks and neighborhoods, utility and transportation corridors, and home gardens and yards. Such landscapes in the increasingly built environment can contain rich flora that contribute significantly to biodiversity.

About our speaker: Dr. Daniels is a University of Florida associate professor of entomology and director of the McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity at the Florida Museum of Natural History. His research focuses on insect ecology, population biology and conservation, with particular emphasis on butterflies and other native pollinators. Jaret also serves as Florida Wildflower Foundation board member.

What you'll learn:

- How minor changes in built landscapes help support wildlife.
- Where changes are needed most.
- What you can do to help.

Who should attend:

- Members of conservation organizations
- Individuals interested in conservation
- Landscape architects
- Landscaping professionals*
- Planners
- Developers
- Master Gardeners
- Local and state government representatives
- Water management district personnel

Click to register now. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with information about joining the webinar.

*Continuing Education Unit (CEU) available: CEUs for industry professionals are managed by our industry partner, the Florida Association of Native Nurseries (FANN). 1 CEU for FNGLA Certified Professionals, who must register through FANN by **clicking here**.

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