



December 2021



Happy Holidays



Report from Your President:

by Lois Cantwell

What would bees and sheep have in common? Throw in some wildflowers and a number of acres of solar panels and it becomes a beneficial relationship. As an example, researchers are growing silflowers as a potential oil seed crop at nine solar installations in the Minneapolis area. The deep-rooted perennial, a native plant that was common in prairies before settlers developed farms and cities, also offers forage for livestock and desperately needed habitat for bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.

Called "agrivoltaics", growing crops beneath solar panels is ideal for native grasses and flowers that draw pollinators, many facing extinction. Researchers have even reported bees and other insects in areas partly or totally shaded by panels. They also may be pollinating crops in nearby fields, boosting yields.

Solar sites planted with pollinator-friendly native vegetation would provide a three-fold increase in habitat quality for pollinators, compared to farmland, a recent study concluded. Another benefit includes more carbon storage potential, nearly one-fifth less water runoff and 95% less soil erosion than traditionally cultivated land.

I wonder if this is happening in Florida, too. If FPL is getting into the solar power aspect of green energy, perhaps they should adopt a project like this--a great way to preserve our native plants and pollinators, too!

Please Welcome New Members! From Englewood: Laura David, Diane Drewry; from Port Charlotte: Gretchen Nelson, Katherine Stanwood; from Venice: Susan Juranek, Alison Mack; From Sarasota: Gerald Thompson. Thanks for joining us!

[Click here to Visit our Website](#)

Sunset strolls

Mangrove Chapter is introducing a new type of walk this season called Sunset Strolls. These walks are designed to be shorter, slower, and easier than our usual field trips. The parks we choose will be small and urban, with paved paths for easy walking. The walks will be led by Dave and Linda Manley. Compared to the experience and expertise of most of the Mangrove walk leaders, we are relative newcomers and we don't pretend to have the extensive plant knowledge held by so many of our colleagues. Our purpose is to provide an alternative for our members who have enjoyed our walks but for one reason or another, no longer choose to participate in the two-hour morning field trips, as well as for those who simply want a different experience. The tentative schedule is to hold walks on the third Wednesday of each month. Our first walk will take place **December 15 from 4:30 to 5:30 at the Garden of the Five Senses in North Port**. The address is 4299 Pan American Blvd. No registration is required. Restrooms are on site. If you have questions, please email Linda at 88lingo@gmail.com.

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

Adventures of the Natives Episode 5

by Linda Manley

Episode 5: Adventures of the Natives (Dec)

Cast:

Red Cedar, Nutty Thistle, Rusty Lyonia, Joe Pye, Elliot Aster

Laurel Oak, Starry Rosinweed, Summer Mimosa, Goldie Chapman, Penny Royal



Red Cedar



Rusty Lyonia



Starry Rosinweed



Pennyroyal



Joe Pye Weed

For the past few months, native friends have gathered for socializing at their favorite local spots. At the Native Roots Bar, Red Cedar, Nutty Thistle, Rusty Lyonia, Joe Pye, and Elliot Aster are discussing volunteer positions in the Mangrove Chapter, while Laurel Oak, Starry Rosinweed, Summer Mimosa, Goldie Chapman, and Penny Royal think about their own volunteer possibilities at the Pampered Petals Spa.

If you have been following the Adventures of the Natives, you know that each of our native friends has found a way to help Mangrove Chapter by volunteering some time on projects they enjoy. Mangrove has many needs and we know there is a place where you can help us. Several people volunteered to help by filling out “I Can Help” slips at our meeting on November 9; we are grateful to them but we need your help, too. Please email me with an area where you can help for a couple hours a month: 88lingo@gmail.com

Secretary

The secretary needs to take notes at monthly general membership meetings (Tuesday afternoons) as well as monthly Board of Directors meetings (Friday afternoons).

Qualifications include the ability to attend the meetings, as well as the ability to take accurate notes and to write clearly.

Publicity

The responsibilities of the publicity chair include publicizing programs, field trips, events, and other Mangrove Chapter activities via local media, mostly print media such as Sun publications as well as local weekly or semi-weekly papers. This person also coordinates with website and social media volunteers to ensure uniform notices. This job can be done from your home, even as a snowbird.

Membership

The membership chair is often the first contact a new member has with our organization, so if you enjoy meeting and greeting new friends, this is the perfect place for you. You will be at each membership meeting to distribute member name tags and collect them at the end of the meeting. You also check the FNPS website for new members and send welcome packets, with a personalized welcome letter.

Social Media

Are you a social media addict? Do you enjoy posting and interacting with people there? We would like to expand our presence online to attract new followers and, eventually of course, new members. This also can be done from your home, even as a snowbird.

Garden Helper

Garden helpers join Monday morning crews to water, weed, transplant, and do various other gardening chores in our demonstration garden at Cedar Point. Our current all-snowbird team has about six members and they do a great job, but we can always use more hands to keep up with things and to launch new projects. We especially need helpers who can be here during the summer to maintain a minimal state of appearance.

Plant Survey Helper

The first week of each month, Mangrove conducts citizen scientist plant surveys at Cedar

Point, recording every plant that is in flower or in seed. This plant survey has been conducted every month for ten years now, and more volunteers would enable us to survey more trails in the park. Surprisingly, you don't need knowledge of native plants to participate. You will be paired with an expert who is able to identify the plant if you just point out a flower.

Student Liaison

We are trying to get more young people interested in our Chapter. We have at least two colleges nearby and the State College of Florida has quite an extensive tropical garden; they must have an active botany or environmental sciences department. We have no program in place to attract these young people and we are looking for someone to establish this effort and get it off the ground. Contacting faculty members would be a place to start. If you enjoy working with young people, you could be the right person to launch this program.

Event Committee Member

Mangrove Chapter holds a few special events each year, such as Plant Native Day, Earth Day Festival, and others as needs arise. We need help in planning for these events, such as making phone calls, contacting speakers, arranging cooperative displays with other organizations, and so on. If you like working with others to organize events and then seeing your events turn out successful, you will be ideal in this position.

Wherever you can help us, whatever it is that you like to do, we can find a place for you. Please email me and volunteer a few hours a month to help our chapter survive. Linda Manley at 88lingo@gmail.com

Plant Surveys

In January of 2012, **Barb Seibel, a Florida Master Naturalist and volunteer at Cedar Point Environmental Park in Englewood**, thought that recording the blooming and seeding times of native plants in the park would be a valuable undertaking, with the goal of tracking emergence over time. The park manager at that time, Bobbi Rodgers, agreed and the plan was hatched. Supported and assisted by members of the Mangrove Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, Bobbi, Al Squires, Lois Cantwell, and Linda Wilson, the surveys began that month. Since then, plant surveys have been conducted every month, never missing a month in the ten years of observations. Over the years, many other chapter members have assisted, and in July 2020, responsibility for the surveys was officially transferred to the Mangrove Chapter.



The 130 acres of Cedar Point Environmental Park have eight named trails, each about 1 to 1½ miles long. Four trails are currently surveyed each month. A bald eagle's nest located in the park makes two additional trails off-limits during nesting season, but those two trails are included in the surveys during the remaining months.

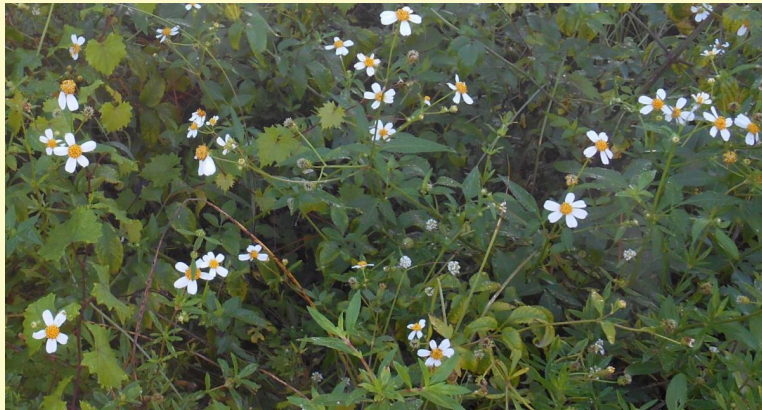


Barb's goal is to have enough volunteers to survey the entire park and recruitment efforts are ongoing. Currently, each survey requires about 16 volunteer hours. People walk the trails in groups of two, both keeping sharp eyes out, with one recording the sightings on an established plant list. Additional helpers would increase the number of volunteer hours donated to the park.

With the exception of occasional outliers when a flower blooms far out of season, no gradual changes have been shown in blooming times or seeding times, a surprising outcome. The plants most commonly recorded are *Bidens alba* (Spanish needle), *Oenothera similans*, formerly *Gaura angustifolia* (southern bee blossom), and *Desmodium* (tick trefoil). Unusual plant sightings include *Acalypha gracilens* (slender three-seeded mercury). After a brush fire in 2014, many *Eustoma exultatum* (seaside gentian) popped up, but gradually disappeared as the landscape recovered.

Barb and her crew also track land animals, marine animals, and birds. Cedar Point has been tracking birds since 1994, and Barb reports that bird sightings decline every year. Unusual birds recorded include the occasional yellow-billed cuckoo, two mangrove cuckoos in 1994, a black scoter in 2014, and sporadic magnificent frigate birds that are blown off-course in storms. The surveyors recorded otters once, as well as giant red crabs.

In addition to recording sightings, Mangrove Chapter has adopted the onsite pond through the Adopt-A-Pond program. Each month they pick up trash as they identify the plants on the trail surrounding the pond. Barb noted a recent serious problem with poaching of crabs along the Jeep Trail. Such illegal actions can permanently damage the stability of the environment. (Above: *Bidens Alba*)



The 63-page database, consisting of 322 entries over the 120 surveys conducted, is available electronically upon request to environmental organizations interested in the data. Contact Mangrove Chapter via its website to request further information.

Mangrove Chapter in the News

Mangrove Chapter will be highlighted in the Nonprofit Spotlight feature that appears in the Sun newspapers every Wednesday. They told us it would appear in mid-December but didn't offer an exact date. Keep your eyes peeled!

Highlights of November 9 Meeting

Highlights of November 9 Meeting

On November 9, 32 Mangrove Chapter members and guests gathered at Cedar Point Environmental Park for our first membership meeting in 20 months. Seeing new faces and old friends was wonderful and the new afternoon meeting time seemed to work well.



The FNPS Outstanding Chapter Award received by Mangrove Chapter was on display and Board members were recognized and thanked for their persistence and dedication during the COVID crisis. A volunteer signup list distributed with the agenda produced a few appreciated volunteers and we plan to make use of their offers throughout the year. We thank those who responded and encourage everyone to find a place where they can help our Chapter grow.



Gerald Thompson, Environmental Program Manager at Cedar Point, presented an interesting program about the history of Cedar Point, including the background of the Cookie House, which was relocated to Cedar Point in 2006. It was originally Bass Biological Laboratory, the first land-based marine biology laboratory in the Southeastern United States. Over several changes and generations, the lab eventually became Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium. Gerald described the

recent Nature Center remodeling and introduced the artifacts currently on display as well as plans for ongoing growth. He closed with photos of beautiful native flowers now blooming at Cedar Point.

Following the program, a raffle was held for native plants donated by members, including three large gumbo limbo trees, as well as other nature-related items. Our next meeting will be Tuesday afternoon, December 14, at 1:00 at Cedar Point. Please plan to join us!



**43rd Annual Virtual Gopher Tortoise Council
Conference 10/29/21**

The conference started at 8:45 with the largest number of attendees ever. Maybe the virtual experience isn't such a bad thing.

The main focus was on Translocation of the species. The first speaker was on Cognition for Conservation. How do GT's process info? Old tests were performed in cold rooms so not much activity was observed. They are highly motivated by food. They perform better than dogs in mazes and visual cues are important. They can learn to use touch screens for testing! They have good long-term memory. 18 months later they still remembered.

Next was a speaker on monitoring burrows at Boyd Hill in St. Petersburg. This has been done with a lot of animals but never with GT's. Two cameras were placed at 12 burrows, one overhead and one in front of the burrow. Any activity of any sort was captured. The interactions between GT's and anything else that wandered by. Data is still being processed for this study.

Next was a program on Reproductive Integrity of Translocated GT's. Approximately 10,000 GT's per year are being moved. Nokuse Plantation is one such recipient site. 55,000 acres with about 5,000 tortoises. There were no resident GT's on site when this non-profit was started. The State permits 4 per acre but Nokuse believes they do better with 2 per acre. There seems to be high mate fidelity and prior resident mates dominate. After a few years the fencing is taken down and the GT's are allowed to disperse. In a clutch of eggs, you may see multiple paternity. A few males seem to do most of the mating. They maintain social groups during translocation.

The next program was on Growth Rates of Juvenile GT's. This study was done at Archbold Biological Station. Many translocation sites are ranchland (Bahia grass). The young animals are vulnerable to predators until they reach a fairly large size. The trade off may be faster growth with the nonnative grass as a food source during the dry season when native plants are at a premium.

The next speaker was another Archbold scientist on Seasonal Space Use and Site Fidelity of female GT's. They generally stick to the same home range.

Then, there was a program on Seed consumption. GT's are an important seed disperser. They use approximately 400-500 different species. The most commonly consumed plants when available are Cocoplum, Ground Cherry, Saw Palmetto and Prickly Pear. They also consume a lot of Grasses, Asters, Spurges, Madders, and Peas. Gut passage is about 13 days. The question is how does the digestion affect the seeds? It was noted that Gopher Apples seeds were not seen in the study?!?

Next there was an excellent panel discussion on Challenges for GT Relocation. There were panelists from FWC, Nokuse Plantation, Lykes Brothers and a local GT trapper. There are a shortage of sites and a lot of discussion on how the program can be improved. The Lykes spokeswoman reported 12 temporary enclosures, problems getting supplies for the enclosures, receiving 60 tortoises at a time and multiple levels of things they have to do to stay in compliance. It used to be that the GT's had to be translocated within 100 miles of their capture but that is no longer true. The issue of the many large solar fields that are being built everywhere is creating a huge need for GT relocation. It was asked since they are trying to leave pollinator areas around those fields why not leave the tortoises. This was brought up several times that there needs to be a commitment from governments and agencies to try and leave as many GT's in place as they can. Less than

5% of permits are for on site relocation.

New sites are now charging \$10,000 per animal. A month ago Mr. Longino in Sarasota County was charging \$1600 and today it's \$4000. It is cheaper to bury the GT's than to pay the fees as one developer recently did just that. We need to rethink relocation! It was also noted that we should not underestimate the undocumented deaths after relocation.

The afternoon session had awards, posters, auction and more discussion mostly on South Florida issues. GTC has had a huge increase in website visits and as noted earlier the best attended Conference ever. Solar farms are a huge problem in GA, AL and FL. In S Carolina Tegus must now be pit tagged as they are becoming numerous in natural areas. There was a program on *Cryptosporidium serpentis* in Eastern Indigo Snakes. This is devastating in captive populations but it's unknown what happening to natural populations. It has been detected in Hendry County (1 snake) and 1 GT in the wild.

Another speaker is studying relationships of GT's and other invertebrates. SE Florida is not included for GT's in species maps even though there are several sites that seem to have had them for a long time. Another speaker is studying all the other species that use the burrows of GT's. They were also using cameras and noted a Cardinal and Shrike both entering burrows probably for insects. A raccoon was seen that had killed a Green Iguana. FWC has a GT Friendly Yard sign which I will have to look in to. Biodiversity is the key!! This is always being discussed at Native Plant and GT conferences. I challenge anyone reading this to look at your own property and count the different species (hopefully NATIVE) and aim for more! I have approximately 200 plant species on my 1 acre site. For GT's, birds, insects, etc this is so important.

In the SE region of the state GT's are NOT found in protected areas but in a few scattered remnant populations such as local parks or college campuses. The next speaker is studying the interactions between GT's, Iguanas and Burrowing Owls. Interestingly, they appear to trade burrows and don't seem to impact each other much.

There was a review of the State Listing process. Of note, the American Chipmunk and American Flamingo were denied listing since they only have about 1% of their range in the state. FWC will be working on the guidelines for translocation in the next few months so our input will be important.

I always enjoy these conferences. I have been going to the Native Plant Conference each year since the 1990's. I also attended the GT conference for many years as well. It is refreshing to listen to students, educators, scientists and professionals who are trying to conserve these species that are so important to a healthy planet for us and our fellow creatures.

December's Chapter Happenings

(Check our website/blog/calendar for details)

December

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|----|--------|--|
| 3 | 3:00PM | Board of Directors Meeting |
| 4 | 9:00AM | Field Trip to Sleeping Turtles North, Ligon section |
| 7 | 9:00AM | Field Trip to Blind Pass/Middle Beach |
| 14 | 1:00PM | Membership Meeting at Cedar Point Environmental Park |

15 4:30PM Sunset Stroll at Garden of the Five
Senses, North Port
21 9:00AM Field Trip destination TBA

January

4 9:00AM Field Trip destination TBA
7 3:00PM Board of Directors Meeting
8 9:00AM Field Trip to Lemon Bay Environmental
Park
11 1:00PM Membership Meeting at Cedar Point
Environmental Park
15 9:00AM Field Trip to Deer Prairie Creek Preserve
South
18 9:00AM Field Trip destination TBA



Guided Walks sponsored by Lemon Creek Wildflower Preserve
(www.LemonBayConservancy.org)

12/1 (Wed), Early (8 AM) Morning Birding, leisurely walk, bring binoculars
12/11 (Sat), Plants of the Preserve, led by Charlie Woodruff
12/15 (Wed), Successional Changes, led by Bill Dunson
12/23 (Thurs, held at Stump Pass State Park), led by Charlie Woodruff (Registration
required, 914-799-0664)
12/29 (Wed), Explore an Estuary, led by Bill Dunson

UF/IFAS Eco-Walks

12/1 (Wed), Scrub Stroll, South Venice Lemon Bay Preserve
12/21 (Tues), Mangroves, Lemon Bay Park

CHEC Walks: Refer to a separate listing in this newsletter, or our website.

Mangrove Native Plant Society COVID-19 Safety Guidelines for Meetings and Field Trips



For All Events:

If you are not feeling well, please don't attend this gathering.
Properly worn masks or face coverings are always required for participation.
Participants must maintain appropriate 6' social distancing at any event.
Please do not gather in groups.
Use provided hand sanitizers as needed.
Nearby restrooms are available for hand washing.

Additional Guidance for Indoor or Outdoor Meetings:

Participants must maintain appropriate 6' social distancing inside and outside the meeting room, following the markings
on the floor.

Entrance/exit signs and arrows may be posted for directional traffic flow.

Chairs are placed at least six feet apart.

Surfaces of tables and chairs in use are sanitized before and after use.

No food or beverages are served. Attendees may bring a personal beverage.

Attendance may be limited, depending on state/county/city mandates.

Additional Guidance for Outdoor Walks and Activities:

Properly worn masks or face coverings are always required for participation.

Social distancing of 6' is emphasized for sitting, standing, and walking activities.

Surfaces of tables, chairs, and benches in use are sanitized before and after use.

Attendees are encouraged to bring their own chairs, beverages, packaged snacks, and hand sanitizer.

[Visit our website](#)
