



February 2021

Report from Your President:

by Lois Cantwell

We had 38 responses to the membership survey that was sent out in late December. Out of 118 members, it isn't ideal, but a 31% return is what it is. And the Survey Says:

Question: Have you attended in-person meetings in the past? Yes, I hardly ever miss one: 53%; Sometimes, depending on the presentation: 18%; Sometimes, depending on my schedule: 26%; Meeting location/time not convenient: 3%; I have not attended, but support the work of the chapter: 10%.

Question: How do you feel about Zoom meetings as a safe alternative to in-person meetings?

Have used Zoom, in favor of having online meetings for now: 63%; Have used Zoom, not in favor of having meetings online: 16%; Would try Zoom, but not sure about it: 18%; Have not used Zoom, prefer to wait until safe for in-person meetings: 3%

Question: When returning to in-person meetings, would a more central location be more convenient? Like the Lemon Bay Park location/prefer to remain there: 55%; More likely to attend if more convenient to my location: 18%; Doubt that changing meeting location would increase my attendance: 26%

Feedback on which of our events and services members find helpful or enjoyable: Mangrove Chapter Website: 71%; Mangrove Messenger Newsletter: 97%; Mangrove Chapter Field Trips: 87%; Mangrove Chapter Facebook: 29%; FNPS Website: 68%; Mangrove Chapter Meetings and Events: 90%

The next BOD meeting is scheduled for February 5th, at which time we will be discussing these findings, as well as the 18 comments that were shared with us at the end of the survey. Thank you to the members who took the time to respond to this survey.

Election of Officers for Mangrove Chapter, 2021: Thanks to the 22 members who voted for your Officers for this fiscal/calendar year your President (Lois Cantwell), Treasurer (Linda Wilson), and Secretary (Marianne Owen) are now officially in place—this vote represents 20% of our members, which is twice that required by our Bylaws.

Field Trip Dates for February: After visiting Curry Creek Preserve East in the latter part of January, we will walk at the Rohlwing Preserve within Sleeping

Turtles North at the opposite end of the Curry Creek/Blackburn Canal system on February 10th. Details will be shared with our membership during the first week of February.

Plans are also in the works for a Members Only field trip to the newly restored Lemon Creek Wildflower Preserve on February 24th. This preserve is privately owned, managed and maintained by Lemon Bay Conservancy (LBC). Our members will receive more information as we get closer to that date.

Looking ahead to March, there is also a plan to have a Yard Visit with one of our members, who describes his yard as a “wildlife sanctuary” so mark your calendars for March 13th.

Welcome Gerald Thompson, Manager for Cedar Point

Hello Cedar Point Volunteers,

I'd like to introduce myself, my name is Gerald Thompson and I am the newly hired Manager for Cedar Point! We are still waiting on some finishing touches to be completed for the Education Building, so I'll be working at Alligator Creek with the rest of the CHEC staff for the next few weeks in the meantime. I will, however, be joining in on the Wading Trip tomorrow!

A little bit about me: I'm a born-and-raised Floridian, and grew up in Sarasota County. I graduated from Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale with my Bachelor's Degree in Marine Biology and a minor in Writing, and was also able to become certified as a Florida Master Naturalist as part of my coursework at NSU. I've worked all over Florida for various jobs, including as a Reptile Keeper and Educator at Sarasota Jungle Gardens, a Marine Science Educator with Mote Marine Laboratory, working both at the aquarium in Sarasota and running their camp programs at their coral restoration laboratory in the Lower Keys, and an internship with White Oak Conservation helping breed and re-introduce the critically endangered Florida Grasshopper Sparrow to the wild.

I'm so incredibly excited to be joining the CHEC team, and cannot wait to be able to meet and work with all of you once I move over to Cedar Point. There's so much opportunity for growth and with such a passionate and dedicated group of volunteers, we will be able to accomplish so much together. If you have any questions at all or would like to get in touch with me, please feel free to reach me at gerald@checflorida.org, or my cell number of (941) 914-3427.

Thank You,
Gerald Thompson

[Click here to Visit our Website](#)

What's Up in Our Demonstration Garden

Our Garden Keepers continue to work on the site of the old “woodland garden” on the other side of our Rain Garden. This is a section of the park just opposite of the staircase/landing in front of the environmental building. We had planted some half-dozen native shrubs along the walking path



quite a few years ago, which became engulfed in creeping wild grape vine, smilax, sedge grasses, weeds and exotic invasive plants over time. Gallberry, Pencilflower, White Indigoberry, St John's Wort and Florida Privet now have breathing room, thanks to the relentless trio of Laura, Muffy and Melissa.

Left to Right are: Melissa Urder, Laura Soule, Muffy McDowell and Lois Cantwell.

The most recent "reveal" was finding an old pathway paralleling the rain garden that leads to the other side and opens out onto another walking path. (right) The stone bench that had been placed near that hidden path was a bit overrun with vegetation. It had been dedicated in honor of a long time Cedar Point Volunteer, Dot Phillips, back in 2010. The surface was blackened with exposure to the elements, so Bob "restored it" by scrubbing it with bleach. We have also encountered a rather garish-looking exotic, known as Glory Bower, entrenched in the midst of the remaining vegetation slated for removal.



David Smith, the Charlotte County Land Management Specialist who is managing the property and doing exotic removal throughout the park, has volunteered to take care of these exotic plants so that we don't have to include that in our work plans. He was quite pleased to see the progress we have made, saying it looks the best he has seen since he has been working there. He also volunteered to cut back some of the palmettos that are too close to the path that we just opened up and will trim up the oak tree just a bit more.

The other help we have received is the guys from the Thursday work party who have been hauling away all those piles of debris we keep generating. Thanks to Dave, Tony and Steve we don't have the dilemma of "what to do with all this stuff".



Glory Bower



Work party removing debris



Garden path view from the garden



In the “overview” photo, (left) the area is shown after the first round of clearing took place, with the oak tree in the center, shrubs along the right border, and the Rain Garden (to the left of the sign in the foreground) is not seen. That’s a whole other project!

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

Mangrove Chapter Field Trip Report **January 13, 2021**

On January 13th, we sponsored a field trip to Deer Prairie Creek Preserve along the east bank of the Myakka River in the Venice-North Port area off of U.S. 41. Bill had written an article about this nature walk, which had appeared in the WaterLine magazine. We had 13 members in attendance however, since the word was out, we were joined by 17 other people who had learned about this walk. We quickly organized everyone into 3 separate groups. Kate Borduas took the initiative to take names rather than having 30 people use the same pen and take up valuable time passing around a clip-board, so that went well. All present wore their masks and stayed in the social distancing mode. Off we went into the woods, staggering our groups a few minutes apart for added distancing.

The theme of this walk was “a tale of two types of wetlands”. In his description of these wetlands, Bill contrasts them as “those that are “riparian” along the river and creek, and those that are distributed inland among the hydric pine flatwoods”. As we traversed the sandy trails, we learned how these two diverse wetland areas were affected by human behavior going back to the times of cattle ranching and agriculture. We progressed from areas heavily canopied by large live oaks, draped in multitudes of epiphytes, to open pine flatwoods containing different upland species that differed in whether their locations were either moderately dry (mesic) or periodically wet (hydric).

We tried to keep up a pace compatible with a planned 2-hour trek, but it was more like the “3-hour tour”, as we stopped to talk about various plants that represented the biodiversity, taking turns taking photos, watched at one point by a group of black vultures hanging out in a nearby snag.(right) I joked that they were waiting for one of us to drop dead so they could have brunch--shades of Alfred Hitchcock. Even though we were there in a dry month, we could see that the trail would be quite wet as the rainy season arrived.



We were “wowed” by one Shiny Lyonia in particular that was abundantly loaded with blossoms (Left). The sundews are always a marvel, innocent-looking carnivorous plants, using their sticky droplets to catch insects. Many wildflowers, either in bloom, or recently done blooming were identified. One of our newest members, Gayle Plaia from Punta Gorda, impressed me with her new-found plant knowledge, considering that her background is in marine biology. She was using an underwater camera that took fabulous close-ups of various plants. Perhaps we can persuade her to share some of those on our member Facebook page?



Yellow Milkwort, *Polygala rugelii*



Gall on Lyonia, caused by *Exobasidium* fungus



Sandweed, *Hypericum* spp.

Mangrove Chapter Field Trip Report January 27, 2021

On January 27th, we sponsored a field trip to Curry Creek Preserve East in the area of Pinebrook Road, just north of Venice Avenue. We explored a Longleaf Pine Flatwoods and a channelized creek, also known as Blackburn Canal, which runs from Roberts Bay east 5.3 miles to the Myakka River. We had about 20 people in attendance on this kind of humid, overcast day. The group was organized into 2 groups, one of which was accompanied by Jeffrey Weber, (right) a popular Sarasota County trail guide and land manager.



Similar to our previous field trip, this area was affected by human behavior going back to the times of cattle ranching and agriculture. We progressed from canopied areas draped with Spanish Moss, to longleaf pine flatwoods containing various upland species, such as abundant Saw Palmetto, that differed in whether their locations were either moderately dry (mesic) or periodically wet (hydric).
Left: Moss-draped Oaks overhang canal

There were a couple wet areas sporting plants like Swamp, Cinnamon and Giant Leather Ferns, Camphor Weed and Virginia Willow, in contrast with the Bracken Ferns, Bluestems and Wiregrasses, Silkgrass, Goldenrod and Pawpaw seen in the drier conditions. At one point, we came upon a rather large patch of Yellow Jessamine, demonstrating that it can easily be used as a ground cover, as opposed to a climbing vine. A few sparse blossoms were seen. Deerberry in bloom was spotted here and there, as well.



Bill Dunson contrasts leaf structure



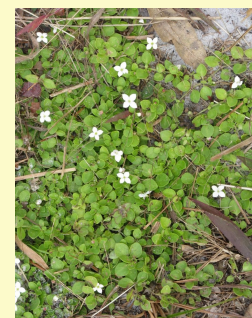
Lone blossom on Virginia Willow



Bill Dunson talks about trees

Growing along edges of the trail, where mowing and tramping of feet keep plants low, we saw Innocence, Hatpins, Blackroot, dried tops of Yellow-eyed Grass, with Nightshade, and a fair number of False Rein Orchids on higher ground. Just at the end of the walk, the sun appeared adding to the warm and humid condition, which brought a collective sigh of relief that we were headed for the parking lot.

Right: Innocence at trail's edge



What's Up In My Garden

by Lois Cantwell

During the winter months, there isn't a whole lot of blooming going on in my yard. Quite a bit of "berry-ing", as with the Wild Coffees, Marlberry, Myrsine, Fire Bush, Beautyberry, White Indigoberry and even the Corky-stemmed Passion Vine had those little dark blue berries hidden under their leaves.

However, I did discover that my tall Florida Privet, *Forestiera segregata* had a whole host of those tiny yellowish-green clusters of flowers along the branches. It had lost most of its leaves, of course, but the little bees hovering about were what called my attention to the blossoms. A clump of Wild Coffees had surrounded the privet and were getting way too tall, kind of impeding the branches. So, with selective pruning, the privet got some much needed breathing room.



Florida Privet usually occupies coastal woodlands, likes moist, sandy loam, adapts to a variety of soil and moisture situations in the garden landscape and prefers light shade to sun. It becomes a large shrub or small tree reaching a height of 4 to 15 feet. It is drought and salt tolerant and its edible fruit is a great source of food for songbirds. Its companion plants might include Beautyberry, Fiddlewood, Stoppers, Coontie, White Indigoberry, and Wild Lime, among others. Interestingly, I happen to have these same species of trees and shrubs in the immediate vicinity of my lone privet. What a coincidence!



In the photo, L to R is Florida Privet (sans leaves) with its tiny blossoms, White Indigoberry, Fiddlewood, with White Stopper and Coontie below, followed by Wild Lime tree. All of the "naked" trunks are revealed following removal of a dense over-growth of Wild Coffee. An ongoing purge continues...

Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center Schedule of events

Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center and the Charlotte County Natural Resource Department will be conducting the following free programs to the public in **February 2021**. All programs can be found at www.ChecFlorida.org

Nature Walks

All walks begin at **9:00 AM**. On these casual walks with CHEC volunteers, you

will search and learn about plants, animals, fungi, and more that live in Charlotte County preserves.

Prepare for each walk with plenty of water, insect repellent, sunscreen, and clothing that will protect you from insects and plants.

Advance registration is required for all walks and all participants are required to wear face masks. For more information or to register, call at **941-575-5435**.

Friday, February 5th

Join **CHEC** on a guided walk through 308- acre **Tippecanoe Environmental Park**. This Charlotte County park includes habitats such as scrub, pine flatwoods, marsh, and wetlands. Meet behind the Charlotte County Sports Park. Please call 941-575-5435 to register or for more information. **All participants are required to wear face masks during the program.**

Saturday, February 6th

Join CHEC on a guided walk through the old-growth pine flatwoods and mangrove fringe of 125-acre **Ann Dever Regional Park** in Englewood. Meet at the San Casa entrance. Please call 941-575-5435 to register or for more information. **All participants are required to wear face masks during the program.**

Tuesday, February 9th Join CHEC on a guided walk through **Charlotte Flatwoods Environmental Park**, a 487-acre Charlotte County property of mature pines, dry prairie, marsh wetlands, and freshwater ponds. Its location adjoining state lands make it an important wildlife corridor. Meet at the parking lot on US 41. Please call 941-575-5435 to register or for more information. **All participants are required to wear face masks during the program.**

Thursday, February 11th

Join CHEC on a guided walk through the scrub and pine flatwoods of 217-acre **Amberjack Environmental Park** in Rotonda. Meet at the end of Gasparilla Pines Blvd. Please call 941-575-5435 to register or for more information. **All participants are required to wear face masks during the program.**

Tuesday, February 16th

Join CHEC on a guided walkthrough the 81-acre **Bill Coy/Buck Creek Preserve** in Englewood. The scrubby flatwoods and mangrove swamp border Buck Creek, which flows into Lemon Bay. Meet in the parking lot. Phone 941-575-5435 to register or for information. **All participants are required to wear face masks during the program.**

Thursday, February 18th

Join **CHEC** on a guided walk through **Tippecanoe II Mitigation Preserve** in Port Charlotte. This 150-acre preserve is home to several families of the threatened Florida scrub jay. Meet in the parking lot. Please call 941-575-5435 to register or for more information. **All participants are required to wear face masks during the program.**

Friday, February 19th

Join **CHEC** on a guided walk through 308- acre **Tippecanoe**

Environmental Park. This Charlotte County park includes habitats such as scrub, pine flatwoods, marsh, and wetlands. Meet behind the Charlotte County Sports Park. Please call 941-575-5435 to register or for more information. **All participants are required to wear face masks during the program.**

Saturday, February 20th

Join CHEC on a guided walk through **Cedar Point Environmental Park.** This 115-acre preserve consists mostly of pine flatwoods as well as some areas of scrub, salt marshes, mangrove swamps, and wetlands. Meet in the parking lot nearest to the restrooms. **All participants are required to wear a face mask and to register.** Call 941-575-5435 to register or for more information.

Tuesday, February 23rd

Join CHEC on a walk at **Bayshore Live Oak Park** along the shoreline of Charlotte Harbor to explore the various mangrove species found there. We will cover mangrove identification, general ecology including special adaptations that allow mangroves to thrive in salty environments, and why mangroves are important and protected in Florida. **Call 941-575-5435 to register or for more information. All participants are required to wear face masks during the program.**

Friday, February 26th

Join CHEC on a guided walk through the old-growth pine flatwoods and mangrove fringe of 125-acre **Ann Dever Regional Park** in Englewood. Meet at the San Casa entrance. Please call 941-575-5435 to register or for more information. **All participants are required to wear face masks during the program.**

Go to www.CHECflorida.org for a complete program calendar.

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](#)
