



Osprey Observer Fall 2019

EDUCATING . CONSERVING . RESTORING

Message from the President

by Jim Peterson

I hope that everyone had a great summer. If you participated in our Summer Camps, then thank you for supporting Oakland Nature Preserve, and a big hank you goes out to Duke Energy for sponsoring our camps this year. I am so impressed and proud of our Environmental Education staff and the additional part-time teachers that provided the planning and instruction. The camps allowed the students to learn and appreciate nature, and they had lots of fun in the process. Our goal at Oakland Nature Preserve is to never have young students afraid of nature and the outdoors. Getting students outside helps them to understand and appreciate nature. Hopefully, with a clearer understanding, they will help protect and nurture the environment when they become adults.

The book *Last Child in the Woods*, written in 2008, warned of a Nature-Deficit Disorder in children who never spent time outdoors. I wrote in previous newsletters about the health benefits for getting outside and spending time in nature. Several people have recently shown me new articles about doctors actually writing prescriptions for spending time outdoors in nature. As strange as that sounds, it really drives home the importance of being outdoors both for the physical exercise and the mental benefits.

I want to thank everyone who contributed to our Education Match Grant. We met our match! The donations and match money are restricted and only used for Environmental Education at Oakland Nature Preserve throughout the next fiscal year. Thank you everyone who contributed, and thank you to the private foundation that supports us!

I want to also thank all the volunteers and staff at the Preserve who helped us prepare for Hurricane Dorian. We not only have the safety of people to worry about at the Preserve, but we must protect our structures, keep the trails open and safe, and we must provide care to our animals. Several staff took our animal ambassadors home with them to make sure they were safe and cared for if the hurricane had struck us more directly. We were fortunate with this storm. The Bahama Islands were not so fortunate. I hope that Floridians will help the people of the Bahamas as they start rebuilding their communities and lives in the wake of what was a terribly destructive storm.

Please remember to join us October 26 for our Heritage and Wildlife Festival. There will be entertainment, presentations, games, and numerous family activities, including hay ride history tours and boat tours of Lake Apopka. Hope to see you there!

Thanks for your support!

Upcoming Events

- Oct 5 – Insect Safari
- Oct 8 – Homeschool Class Series
- Oct 19 – Blue Hike Kayak Tour – Lake Apopka
- Oct 19 – Trunk or Treat
- **Oct 26 – Oakland Heritage & Wildlife Festival 10-4**



- Nov 2 – Insect Safari
- Nov 2 – Blue Hike Kayak Tour – Crooked River
- Nov 12 – Homeschool Class Series
- Nov 13 – Story Time
- Dec 7 – Insect Safari
- Dec 7 – Blue Hike Kayak Tour – McDonald Canal



Be sure to follow us on Facebook for Preserve news and events!



**22nd Annual
Oakland Heritage & Wildlife Festival**



Save the date

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26TH
10AM-4PM
SPEER PARK, OAKLAND

<p>Heritage Presentations Silent Auction Food Trucks Live Entertainment Lake Apopka Boat Tours</p>		<p>Wildlife Up-close Hay Rides Kid's Activities Children's Art Show Merchants & Vendors</p>
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All proceeds support the Oakland Nature Preserve
www.OaklandNaturePreserve.org



Match Challenge Met!



Oakland Nature Preserve is delighted to announce that we have met the Match Challenge that was extended to us in April, offering matching funds of \$15,000 if we were able to raise \$15,000 by August 31st.

This is extremely valuable to our environmental education programs which serve people of all ages in the central Florida area. We are very proud of our educational accomplishments in recent years. With this opportunity, we can continue to develop and expand them to serve more individuals of all ages.

A big thank you to everyone who donated and helped to spread the word on this exciting project.

Restoration Update

by Craig Duxbury

When you visit the Oakland Nature Preserve (ONP), you can see a unique ecosystem. This ecosystem is called a longleaf pine or sandhill pine savanna. It is a grassland, once part of a large grassland area throughout the southeastern U.S. It is characterized by sparse longleaf pines, and a unique and highly diverse understory plant community. This savanna possibly holds the world record for small-scale biodiversity U.S. Many animals also live in this ecosystem, including the gopher tortoise. The sandhill ecosystem used to cover much of the Southern U.S., but now less than 10% remains.

The loss of this rich ecosystem means that protection and restoration is super important. One of ONP's main missions is to restore the sandhill ecosystem. We have begun restoring almost 30 acres at ONP, transforming an area that was once in citrus to a sandhill community. You can see the results of our restoration efforts throughout the Preserve. For example, the area near the Visitor Center has been undergoing restoration the longest and is a great example of a healthy sandhill ecosystem. If you hike out to the Red Trail area, you can see what it looks like early in the restoration process.



Restoring an area that was disturbed due to agriculture is challenging, but we are using the most advanced techniques including the use of controlled burns, herbiciding invasive plants, weeding, and hand planting --- a continuous task! We have recently begun to evaluate the restoration efforts by conducting vegetation surveys. In these surveys, we measure the change in the types and amounts of plants and compare this to reference sandhill pine communities.

We encourage you to visit ONP and see ecological restoration firsthand. There are even many ways you can help us with restoration. Of course, your generous donations helps us fund restoration resources. In addition, you can also volunteer. We are always in need of help, from weeding and planting to participating in citizen science projects.

CEMEX Volunteers at ONP

About CEMEX

CEMEX is a global building materials company that provides high quality products and reliable service to customers and communities throughout the Americas, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

At CEMEX, we seek to ensure that we are a good neighbor and an active and positive part of every community in which we operate. To meet this objective, and to move closer to our vision to build a smart world together with our stakeholders, we seek to minimize our local impacts, mitigate potential risks, and develop strong long-term relationships with our stakeholders and local community members while providing communities with opportunities to improve their quality of life and well-being.

During their afternoon last week at ONP the CEMEX team completed several projects including the build out of ONP's new Nature Play area for children, a new Bird Feeder Garden, refurbishment of the ambassador turtles' enclosure, as well as additional maintenance task.

Thank you CEMEX for sharing your time and talents with the Preserve!



Say hi to Sarah, ONP's newest educator!



Sarah is a multi-generation Florida native. She was born in Jacksonville, but moved to Central Florida at an early age and has always lived in Florida. She attended Florida State University and graduated with a degree in Humanities.

Sarah has found her ambition in conservation education working as a Zoo Teacher at the Central Florida Zoo where she writes and develops curriculum, as well as teaches classes to all different ages. Sarah is also a Florida Master Naturalist Land Steward and FMNP Assistant Instructor. In the past she has volunteered at wildlife refuges and worked in the

veterinary field for six years. She has also worked training dogs and looks after people's pets in her spare time.

Sarah recently went to Namibia, Africa through Earth Expeditions and Miami University studying cheetahs and their conservation efforts. She wants to continue visiting other places and take her knowledge to help Florida's wildlife and natural places.

We Dig our Volunteers by Nicole O'Brien



Volunteer Spotlight: Gloria Green

Gloria joined us earlier this summer as a Museum Docent. She is bringing wonderful energy to our Docent program. She has been cleaning and fixing the interpretive signs around the Preserve, has taken time to catalog plants and animals, is helping to catalog our library and our artifacts in the museum, loves interacting with Preserve visitors, and so much more. Thank you, Gloria!



Volunteer Spotlight: Tim Montgomery

Tim also joined us earlier this summer and has become a dedicated Red Trail volunteer. He typically comes twice a week to work in our Red Trail restoration area. You can find him cutting trees, trimming plants along the trails, weeding and planting. Thank you for your hard work, Tim!

What's In Bloom

by Denise Byrne

There is a lot in bloom right now in the uplands at the Preserve:

Many plants are in bloom right now at the Preserve! On your next visit keep an eye out for:

- **Beautyberry**, *Callicarpa americana*, is a native of Florida's hammocks and rich woodlands. The small lavender flowers, a favorite with bees, have been blooming since spring and are now giving way to shiny purple berries. These vivid purple berries are extremely popular with birds and also have insecticidal properties. The crushed leaves can be rubbed on the skin to repel mosquitoes! In addition, *Callicarpa* leaves contain terpenoids that repel fire ants. Visitors can see Beautyberry near our Pollinator Garden, around the Fish Cabin, and along the Red and Orange Trails.



Beautyberry, *Callicarpa americana*

- **Bee Balm**, *Monarda punctate*, also known as **Horsemint**, attracts a huge array of pollinating insects. Bee balm blooms are regularly covered in a diversity of native bees, wasps, and butterflies. They also attract hummingbirds, and birds eat the seeds in winter. Visitors can see Bee Balm along our Yellow and Orange Trails and near the Pollinator Garden.



Bee Balm, *Monarda punctate*

- **Firebush**, *Hamilia patens*, always seems to have butterflies around the flowers when it's in bloom. Hummingbirds, bees, and wasps frequent the flowers as well. As a bonus, fruit-eating birds such as Northern Mockingbirds, Catbirds and Blue-headed Vireos savor the small purple fruits. The leaves serve as larval food for the Pluto Sphinx and Nessus Sphinx moths. Visitors can see Firebush in the Honor Garden and in the Pollinator Garden.

- **Goldenrod**, *Solidago sp.*, is an excellent nectar source for pollinating insects. Visitors can see Goldenrod around the Education Center, and in the Pollinator Garden.

- **Partridge Pea**, *Chamaecrista fasciculata*, is pollinated by bees and butterflies. Ants sometimes take advantage of this nectar too. The seeds of Partridge Pea are a source of fall and winter food for the Northern Bobwhite and other quail, Mallards, grassland birds, and field mice. Partridge pea often grows in thick clusters providing shelter for numerous species of small birds, amphibians, and reptiles. It also serves as a larval host to several butterfly species including Cloudless Sulphur, Gray Hairstreak and Cernaus Blue butterflies. Visitors can see Partridge Pea on the Yellow and Blue Trails.



Partridge Pea, *Chamaecrista fasciculata*

- **Groundnut**, *Apios americana*, is the larval food of the Silver-spotted Skipper, and is currently blooming along the boardwalk.

- **Dogtongue Buckwheat**, *Eriogonum tomentosum*, has flowers that attract a variety of pollinators, and is currently in bloom behind the Fish Cabin.

Critter Cam Update

The Critter Cameras are staying very active photographing resident bobcats, coyotes, raccoons, armadillos, opossums, and rabbits in the uplands. The bird feeder camera regularly photographs adult and juvenile songbirds, along with other small birds. Check out ONP's website or Facebook pages for the most recent photos.



Summer fun at ONP!

Most people associate summer camp with games, friends, and crafts...but here at Oakland Nature Preserve our summer camps also include history, dissections, skunks and bats! This year we added an extra week for a total of five weeks of summer camps, including two great new themes. With the generous support from Duke Energy we were able to add even more guest speakers and experiences than ever before!

The heat index was high, but our campers still had plenty of outdoors time, from going on a GPS adventure to rescue wounded animals to learning how to excavate and survey a sea turtle nest from a NOAA biologist. Of course, all weeks of summer camp included crafts and games, hikes and presentations. At ONP we strive to make our camps not just fun, but educational. There were many highlights from the summer, but here are a few from each week: during the Week 1, "Habitat 101" the campers observed animals and habitats high in the trees to low under logs, from creatures scooped out of the lake to ones found in the sand. They constructed a "nest" and dropped it off the railing to see if the egg inside would survive the fall from a tree. In Week 2, "Creatures of the Night", campers met live bats and skunks! They learned about dial migration and had a bioluminescent dance party. For Week 3, "Backbone Not Required", campers learned about the invertebrate world, from squids to tarantulas to crickets...including which flavor of cricket was their favorite! In Week 4, "Florida Time Warp", the campers went on a journey staring with prehistoric Florida, then

Native Peoples, Settlers, Today's Challenges, and Solutions for the Future. They held millions of years old fossils, built a palm frond shelter, and learned how to evaluate rescued wildlife. For Week 5, "The Lorax, and more...", campers explored the worlds created by Dr. Seuss and how we can relate them to our own world. Campers even viewed tardigrades through microscopes!

Campers attended with siblings, cousins, and neighbors. New friendships were made and old friendships were revived. All of the weeks were so fun, and wonderful memories were made! We are already planning and looking forward to next year!



Blue Hike Paddle Tours



We are delighted to announce the re-launch of our Blue Hike Paddle Tours for the Fall and Winter seasons. This was made possible by generous support from Duke Energy. ONP's Blue Hikes show paddlers the natural beauty, history, plants and animals of Lake Apopka, along with an interpretative telling of the restoration progress of the lake. The hikes have since diversified to include several other locations, highlighting features and importance of many other Central Florida waterways. Upcoming Blue Hikes include:

- Oct 19 – South Shore of Lake Apopka
- Nov 2 – Crooked River
- Dec 7 – McDonald Canal

For more information and registration visit www.OaklandNaturePreserve.org/blue-hike

Animal Ambassador Update

If you have been in our classroom this summer, you may have noticed some new animal friends. We will soon be spotlighting exotic invasive versus native animals. We now have an invasive Cane Toad and a native Southern Toad, an invasive Cuban Tree Frog to compare with a native Green Tree Frog, as well as an invasive Apple Snail and native Apple Snails in our aquariums on the porch. We will be developing new exhibits in the museum in the coming months to showcase why some of these exotic animals are considered invasive and illustrate the differences to help with identification.



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Hay Rides
Kid's Activities
Children's Art Show
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