



OAKLAND NATURE
PRESERVE

Osprey Observer Winter 2022

EDUCATING . CONSERVING . RESTORING

Message from the President by Jim Peterson

Happy Holidays, everyone! The staff and board of directors at the Oakland Nature Preserve are happy to announce we met our fundraising match this fall! We are very grateful to everyone who contributed and helped us raise funds that will go right back into the upkeep and programs at the preserve. Thank you to the environmental foundation that offered us this challenge again!

This will be my last newsletter as president of the board of directors at Oakland Nature Preserve. But after serving for over ten years as president I am very happy to pass the torch, not sad. That's because the preserve is running smoothly and is still performing its mission of preserving, restoring, and educating. This has been our mission statement since day one. I still describe the preserve as the little engine that could. We might not be the largest preserve or have the biggest budget, but with our talented staff, diverse board of directors, great volunteers, and supporters, we have accomplished so many wonderful things. I personally want to thank our staff, board, supporters and members, the Town of Oakland, Healthy West Orange, Orange County, and the local foundations that have believed in us and helped us along our way. I have faith that our education programs and classes will continue to instill a respect and stewardship for the environment in our students and families. The restoration committee at the preserve has done a fantastic job of restoring areas and rescuing plants that would have been bulldozed in new construction sites. We want everyone to enjoy the boardwalk and trails around the preserve as a way to escape the concrete jungle that most of us experience every day.

One of the environmental stories the founding members of the Oakland Nature Preserve wanted to tell, was the story of how Lake Apopka became polluted and how we are restoring it. The great news is that Lake Apopka is improving and that many ecotourism opportunities exist around the lake now that were only dreams a few decades ago. Unfortunately, a new environmental villain has entered the Lake Apopka story. It is the invasive plant Hydrilla. While native plants are also returning to Lake Apopka, the invasive plant Hydrilla is expanding rapidly in the improved water clarity of the lake. This invasive plant could take over Lake Apopka if it is not controlled. This new environmental challenge will need to be fought by the agencies responsible with much needed support from countless government officials, local residents, and advocacy groups. Maybe this is a great example of how we can never let our guard down completely and how we need advocates, scientists, and residents who care about the environment of our state. We need everyone to understand nature and appreciate it enough to make sure it is protected.

I read an article recently about new year's resolutions to help our planet. They listed recycling, planting trees or gardens, purchasing reusable water bottles, making informed purchases for environmentally friendly products, donating to environmental causes, and volunteering. These are all relatively easy things each of us can do that can make a big difference collectively.

The preserve has some great upcoming events and fundraisers. Please check our website for details. We are continuing with Science Saturdays, Blue Hikes, Yoga, and have the dates established for several events in 2023 that will help us raise funds during the next year, and we think you will have a great time participating.

Thanks for your support. All of us at Oakland Nature Preserve hope you enjoy nature, and you have a healthy, happy, and prosperous 2023!

Upcoming Events

Each Thursday 9:30am –
Senior Strides Walking Group

Each Saturday 9:30am –
Yoga at the Lake (registration required)

- Dec 31 – New Years Eve Hike and Yoga
- Jan 9 – Homeschool Series ages 6-8
- Jan 14 – Science Saturday with Noah's Notes
- Jan 20 – FMNP Freshwater Systems Series Begins
- Jan 21 – Blue Hike, Alexander Springs
- Jan 23 – Homeschool Series ages 9-12
- **Jan 28 – Oakland Heritage Day, Speer Park**
- Jan 30 – Homeschool Series ages 13-16
- Feb 1 - Summer Camp opportunities posted on website
- Feb 6 – Homeschool Series ages 6-8
- **Feb 11 – Pours at the Preserve, ONP**
- Feb 18 – Blue Hike, Gilbert Park
- Feb 27 - Homeschool Series ages 9-12
- March 1-Summer Camp registration opens for ONP members



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



February 11, 2023

5:30pm – 8:30pm

Additional information on page 12

Registration is now open!



Support the Preserve by Donating Wine

Do you have unopened and unwanted bottles of wine leftover from your holiday festivities? We are looking for wine donations for our upcoming Pours at the Preserve event.

Donations can be left with a staff member at the ONP office. We are sometimes out and about on the property, please let us know you are planning to stop by with a quick email at outreach@oaklandnaturepreserve.org and we will make plans to meet you.





Sat. Jan. 28, 2023

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Speer Park

331 N Tubb St.

Oakland, FL 34760

Featuring:



**HEALTHY
WEST ORANGE**

HEALTHY WEST ORANGE

FRESH START ZONE

Westly's 6th Annual 5K kicks off at 9 a.m.

at the Healthy West Orange Arts &
Heritage Center

- ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS BY OAKLAND NATURE PRESERVE
- LIVE MUSIC
- BEER AND WINE GARDEN
- FOOD TRUCKS
- FINE ARTS & CRAFTS
- QUALITY VENDORS
- HISTORIC TOURS
- INTERACTIVE KIDS' ACTIVITIES

presented by: **ORLANDO
HEALTH[®]**

Restoration Update by Jackie Rolly

It will be interesting to see the effects of the recent freeze in the restored areas at ONP. We know that the Beautyberry and Firebushes will be affected, but that will just make them bloom even more in the spring. But on your hikes take a look and see that many of the flowers and grasses will be laughing at the cold.

Both the Red Trail and the front areas are really starting to look like the original Sandhill habitats that we are striving to bring back from orange groves. We did lose one big Laurel oak between the Blue and Yellow trails. We can thank Hurricane Ian for doing the majority of the work bringing it down. Now the area is really opened up. We quickly planted where before there was just shade and the rains sort of cooperated to keep things watered. The vista as you come in from the Amon Pavilion and head down the Yellow Trail is amazing, it's so open and the recently burned grasses are in full bloom.

Along the Blue Trail you can see many wildflowers – past their peak now but were in full bloom in September and October. These wildflowers are plants that were rescued from construction sites in the Clermont area. By rescuing these plants the genome (think DNA) of the plants that grew on the Lake Wales Ridge has been saved. The Lake Wales Ridge is an ancient island forming the spine of the peninsula when most of Florida was underwater. So, these plants are unique to the area, and although many species can be bought at our native plant nurseries, these rescues have very special adaptations and attributes making them special to our central Florida environment. Many thanks to all the Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS) folks from several chapters who sweated, dug, potted, and transported these plants all this past hot summer.

We are planning to burn several acres in the front area and the Red Trail this coming spring. For the Red Trail this will be the second burn and also for areas around the main building and along the Orange Trail.

All of this couldn't happen without the incredible selfless help of the various and many volunteers who labored this past year. We gratefully thank them and hope they continue to support the Preserve.

THANK YOU
volunteers





Backyard Birding



with naturalist Don Kendzior

Did you know that there are descendants of dinosaurs in your backyard? Discover the amazing world of birds with noted naturalist Don Kendzior. See how our feathered friends fly, eat, breed, and migrate thousands of miles without a GPS! Learn how to identify birds by their size, shape, call, and flight. Don will show you how to create healthy bird habitat and review bird feeders and nest boxes. Don is president of Noah's Notes, a nonprofit environmental organization, and has inspired many to make a difference for the planet and wildlife right in their own backyard!

WHEN: 11 am, Saturday, January 14th

WHERE: Oakland Nature Preserve



NOAH'S NOTES
Saving nature in your backyard

Noah's Notes, Inc. is a 501C3 nonprofit environmental organization with a mission to inspire and educate people to save nature. NoahsNotes.org



We Dig our Volunteers by Nicole O'Brien

This summer and fall, volunteers helped with plantings as well as preserve upkeep. Wiregrass and longleaf pine were planted in our Restoration areas. A variety of trees were planted near the Bird Blind courtesy of the Girl Scouts of Citrus. Nine teenage volunteers also assisted during our Environmental Summer Camps as Leaders-In-Training.

Every hour volunteers invest here helps the Preserve provide more opportunities for our community to explore, learn about, and develop an appreciation for the environment. We are extremely grateful for all the hard work! To learn more, please visit <https://oaklandnaturepreserve.wildapricot.org/Volunteer>.



Donor Highlight

ONP is very thankful to have very generous supporters and would like to highlight some very special ones!

- Duke Energy plans to sponsor ONP's Blue Hike Paddle Tours for 2022, and is funded upland restoration projects
- We are excited that FWC are once again assisting us with our ongoing uplands restoration, specifically, improving the habitat for our ever-increasing Gopher Tortoise populations. We plan to clear non-native vegetation, plant native forage food, and run 2 prescribed burns in 2023.
- The West Orange Foundation has generously sponsored the updated Pioneer Hill.
- The Bloom and Grow Garden Society funding will assist with ONP restoration efforts and educational opportunities.
- West Orange Junior Service League funding will allow ONP to update and print new brochures.

Registration Now Open ~ Limited Space

Florida Master Naturalist Programs

Freshwater Systems
January 20 ~ February 25

Join us for this exciting class!

The Florida Master Naturalist Program (FMNP) is an adult education UF/IFAS Extension program developed by the University of Florida. FMNP training will benefit persons interested in learning more about Florida's environment or wishing to increase their knowledge for the use in education programs, volunteers, employees, ecotourism, and others.

The FMNP consists of 3 core modules, each module is 40 contact hours, and 5 special topics course with 24 contact hours each. Activities include fieldtrips, hands-on activities, practical experience, and classroom learning.

For more information on class schedule, instructors, field trip locations, and to register please go to www.masternaturalist.ifas.ufl.edu. Select "Current Course Offerings", go to Uplands or Environmental Interpretation, and then Orange County.



Oakland Nature Preserve, Oakland, FL
www.oaklandnaturepreserve.org
407-905-0054



OAKLAND NATURE
PRESERVE

What's In Bloom

by Denise Byrne

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

It's that time of year when grasses are beginning to turn brown, trees are shedding some leaves, and oaks are dropping their acorns. Most of ONP's Fall bloom is heading toward dormancy, but despite the shorter days and less sunlight, there is still lots to see at the Preserve!

- Most of the flowers on our Firebush, *Hamelia patens*, in our Bird and Butterfly gardens have been replaced with berries that change color as they ripen. Fruit-eating birds such as Mockingbirds, Catbirds, and Blue-headed Vireos feed throughout the Winter on delicious, ripe black berries.
- Similarly, throughout the Preserve, many of our Beautyberry bushes, *Callicarpa americana*, are still laden down with purple colored berries. These berries hang on throughout the Winter to keep on feeding the birds when other fruits are gone.
- ONP's Wild Coffee plants, *Psychotria nervosa*, provide food and cover for wildlife. It is a nectar source for numerous butterflies, including *Atala Eumaeus atala*, and the Great Southern White, *Ascia monuste*. The fruit feeds many species of birds including the Northern Mockingbird.
- Blue Porterweed, *Stacytarpheta jamaicensis*, and Scorpion Tail, *Heliotropium angiospermum* are also still in bloom, providing a valuable source of nectar to pollinators at this time of year.

We also have several year-round bloomers to keep an eye out for on your next visit:

Spanish Needles, *Bidens alba*

Coral Honeysuckle, *Lonicera sepervirens*

Beach Dune Sunflower, *Helianthus debilis*

Firebush, *Hamelia patens*



Beautyberry, *Callicarpa americana*



Wild Coffee, *Psychotria nervosa*



Blue Porterweed, *Stacytarpheta jamaicensis*



Scorpion Tail, *Heliotropium angiospermum*



Holiday Trail Cams

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 visiting Winter migrants! Our favorite capture was a beautiful Rose-breasted Grosbeak last month! Check out ONP's website or Facebook pages for the most recent photos.



Turn Your Used Vehicle Into Support for Our Nonprofit

Donate your car, truck, RV or boat to a cause you care about. It's easy, the pick-up is free, and we use the proceeds from the sale of your vehicle to support our mission.



Donating your car is easy, and your gift is tax-deductible.

Vehicle donations are tax-deductible! Most vehicles are sold through local used-car markets. Our vehicle donation program works to get the highest return per vehicle and handles all the paperwork, too! Whether your vehicle sells for \$500 or less, more than \$500, or more than \$5000, you will be provided with the proper donation tax receipt(s).



Call us or visit us online



Schedule your free pick-up



Receive a donation receipt. That's it!



Call: 855-500-7433 or visit our page to get started!

Setting Intentions for the New Year by Christina Hunt, the Barefoot Gnome

As the New Year approaches, many of us find ourselves setting goals and intentions for the year ahead. What is an intention? It's a guiding principle to bring your thoughts and actions into alignment with the way you wish to live your life. In turn, setting intentions can help us make decisions that better help us reach our goals. We all have things we'd like to accomplish and this can be the perfect time to hit the reset button and start fresh.

That's one reason I love the tradition of a New Year's Hike and Yoga Session. It gives me the opportunity to slow down and reconnect with nature. It lets me think about all I accomplished in the past year, to choose what to bring with me into the next one, and what to leave behind. And most importantly, it helps me focus on how I truly want to align my life over the year ahead.

This year, I invite you to take your own New Year's hike. Bring a journal and maybe your yoga mat, and let the peace of nature help you set your intentions for the year ahead.



Blue Hike Paddle Tours

ONP is delighted to announce upcoming Spring dates of our Blue Hike Paddle Tours. This special program is 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. They have since diversified to include several other locations, highlighting features and importance of many other Central Florida waterways. Upcoming Blue Hikes include:

- Jan 21 – Alexander Springs
- Feb 18 – Gilbert Park
- March 25 – Buggy Spring
- April 15 – Palatlakaha River (details TBD)
- May 20 – Crooked River



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



POURS
AT THE PRESERVE

February 11, 2023
5:30pm - 8:30pm

\$40 / person



Pours at the Preserve

Oakland Nature Preserve invites you to walk its upland trails in the evening, sipping wine or tasting beer, enjoying the sunset through the trees or enjoy the stars in the night sky, listening to the owls, the frogs, maybe the whippoorwill. The half-mile trail will be lighted for you with luminaries. Enjoy refreshments at the five tables stationed along the paths while tasting a variety of wines and beers.

Share a love-note, a remembrance, or honor someone on one of the luminaries, to be arranged when you register for this special event.

Limited to 200 guests.

Register at www.OaklandNaturePreserve.org/pours

This is an adult only event, ages 21 and over please.



ONP HOMESCHOOL SERIES

Join us in the wild for small group hands-on science at ONP!

Explore the environment while gaining an understanding of plants, animals, and the ecosystems in which they exist. ONP Homeschool Series classes are state standard guided, hands-on small group classes allowing for age-appropriate inquiry and exploration.

Homeschool Series (2 hours)

Monthly class ages 6-16 \$10 members (family membership required)
\$12 non-members / per student

Ages 6-8

Jan 9 - Animal Senses
Feb 6 - Adaptations
March 6 - Fire and Water
April 10 - Food Web
May 8 - Lake Apopka Restoration

Ages 9-12

Jan 23 - Animal Senses
Feb 27 - Adaptations
March 20 - Fire and Water
April 24 - Food Web
May 22 - Lake Apopka Restoration

Ages 13-16

Jan 30 - Ecology of Florida
March 27 - Upland Habitats
May 1 - Freshwater Systems

Class limit - 16 students, 8 minimum

Visit oaklandnaturepreserve.org/Learn/ for additional information and registration