

# Magnolia Chapter Happenings

## October and November 2013

Pardon this late newsletter. October and November are combined.

Bruce Means' program "North Florida's Bogs: Ancient Biodiversity Going, Going..." started out with an overview of carnivorous plant bogs across the globe - in tepuis of Venezuela, the Cape York Peninsula of Australia, in Asia and Madagascar where *Nepenthes* grow. The Coastal Plain of the southeast United States once had many, many more carnivorous plant bogs but over 97 percent have been lost to land conversion or development. Bogs are very important for amphibians. The Florida panhandle, with more reptile and amphibian species than any place in North America, has been a source of frog and salamander distribution to the eastern United States for the last 18,000 years, roughly since the end of the last ice age. Bruce discussed the diverse types of bogs. Wet flats are rare but large. They are thought to be ancient salt marshes. Rain sheet flows off. (There is no final arbiter of natural community names. Magnolia Chapter knows these as savannas). Hillside seepage bogs are the most numerous bogs of the panhandle but are small and suffer the most degradation. The Apalachicola National Forest has some seepage bogs but is mostly wet flats that are some of the richest habitats on the planet, with 40 to 50 species of plants per square meter. Hillside seepage bogs in Blackwater River State Forest recently disclosed a new salamander living amongst the thick grasses. The larva were found in the pool left behind when lifting a booted foot from the squishy ground. The pine barrens tree frog is a bog animal with a disjunct distribution from Florida to the Carolinas and up to the pine barrens of New Jersey. The frog only breeds in seep pockets in bogs down slope from uplands where titi is not present. Removing titi is beneficial to the frogs because it results in less evapotranspiration and the water table of the bog rises. Some seepage communities have little or no peat. Sphagnum bogs without titi are habitat of one of the dwarf salamanders. New species are still being discovered such as an undescribed one that occurs in sphagnum. The Eglin area has steephead streams with bogs on the sides. These are important habitats for the bog frog. A siren new to science has been found in bog frog bogs. Sand hill lakes have two zones of carnivorous plants above the water: *Drosera filiformis* in the upper zone and *Utricularia* sp. in the lower zone. There are even floating bogs on four feet of peat on Live Oak Creek in Eglin AFB. Bogs are poorly studied and inventoried, and sadly almost gone.

Congratulations to Diana Picklesimer, lucky owner of a new parsley haw, our plant-of-the-month for October, and to Annie Schmidt, winner of November's Georgia aster (*Symphotrichum georgianum*).

The October field trip with Bruce Means was an intimate and remarkable experience. After a walk through the Godfrey Bog (known to Magnolians as the Hosford Bog) and seepage slope, Bruce led us to several sites in the Apalachicola National Forest to see seepage bogs and wet flats. We waded in a cypress swamp down slope from a pitcher plant bog and saw a tree frog. Not much was blooming but we did see leaves of the grass of parnassus and silky seeds of unknown milkweeds emerging from many pods, also the rare Florida beargrass. We lunched at Family Coastal Restaurant in Sumatra. The trip culminated with a visit to a couple of out-parcels Bruce manages within the forest owned by the Coastal Plains Institute and his family. We piled onto a trailer fitted with wooden benches and Bruce drove us around the property, showing us how repeated prescribed fire and planting of longleaf pine had gradually transformed this once highly disturbed land into a recovering healthy forest. He was most proud of a pitcher plant bog his burning back of titi had recently uncovered. We waded across a quickly flowing stream to reach a wet flat and saw crayfish in the stream. The remarkable full-day trip ended just before sunset. We are enormously grateful to Dr. Means for giving us this special day.

Dr. Jean Huffman presented November's program on Plants and Fire in Florida, what old pines and other native plants tell us about the history of fire in Florida. Jean has compiled fire histories by carefully aging the rings of old pine trees from leftover stumps. Knowing the frequency of this past ecological process informs today's land managers of prescribed fire frequency needed to mimic natural conditions that perpetuate or restore quality habitat. She asks that we Save Our Stumps, or SOS, as we lose evidence of fire history with every stump that is burned inadvertently during prescribed fires. Please contact Jean if you have old stumps before you burn at [JHuffman@gtcom.net](mailto:JHuffman@gtcom.net) or (850) 227-9871. We appreciate Jean leading the field trip to Greenwood Plantation.

At the November meeting, people were informed of FNPS's stance on collecting. The slide said:

- FNPS policy and ethics statement: Transplanting Native Plants from the Wild
- No transplanting of native plants from natural areas for any purpose - conflicts with goal of preservation and conservation of native plants in their natural habitats.

- Inquire about the origins of plant material - don't buy plants that have been transplanted from the wild.
- Specify only nursery-grown native plants or (govt.) those from on-site or nearby salvage operations.
- Magnolia Chapter field trip waiver: “This trip is for the enjoyment of nature. Collecting of plants is not permitted on FNPS field trips.”
- No collecting of any materials on public lands without a permit. Take photos, make memories.

At the October Board of Director's meeting, Nia Wellendorf was appointed Treasurer, taking the place of Scott Copeland who had resigned. Kudos to Nia for stepping up to fill this important void.

The October exotics education workday at Elinor Klapp-Phipps Park had 23 diverse attendees aged 8 to 92. Karen Berkley is working hard to recruit and educate Tallahasseeans about perils and pitfalls of non-native plants in the neighborhood landscape and training them on what to do about it.

Beth Grant has continued exotics workdays at Wolf Creek Trout Lily Preserve in Grady County, Georgia each month. Her mid-week workdays have a regular following of FNPS active retirees. In October there were 8 volunteers. Bill Stinson and Jan Blue sawed and painted big privet across the stream with herbicide that Bill donated. Scott Copeland and Yvonne Stinson tackled honeysuckle and privet to the northwest of the side trail with hands, backs and Weed Wrenches. Tim Roop and Jimmy Gunderson from Native Nurseries attacked privet along the creek. Don Kelley and Beth Grant checked on upland Nandina and climbing fern digs from the prior month, removing stragglers, then joined everyone downhill using the two Weed Wrenches Don purchased to pull small and medium-sized privet on the west side of the floodplain. There are now many areas formerly choked with privet that have none.

Six Magnolians volunteered at the US Army Corps of Engineers property by Lake Seminole in Jackson County on November 23. The site is a slope forest where the rare fringed campion (*Silene polypetala*) grows and other spring ephemerals. Guy Anglin, Jan Blue, Wilson Baker, Robin Kennedy, Pat Stampe, and Leigh Brooks worked with Corps staffer Angela Griffin pulling exotic Nandina (*Nandina domestica*), silverthorn (*Elaeagnus pungens*), Japanese climbing fern

(*Lygodium japonicum*), and coral ardisia (*Ardisia crenata*). Guy brought out his cane knife and herbicide to chop down and treat privet (*Ligustrum* sp.) and mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*).

The Chapter had a popular booth at the Monarch Festival at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge on October 26. Fritz Wettstein brought a fabulous display of native seeds to give away including coontie, needle palm, wood grass, wood oats, coral bean and more. Scott Davis brought pitchers of tea for sampling made from pine needles and yaupon holly leaves. Plants from Trillium Gardens were for sale. Many volunteers helped and it was a fun day.

FNPS members and Trillium Gardens proprietors Dan Miller and Vanessa Crisler have done an assessment of GreenCo Park native garden at FAMU and submitted recommendations to FAMU's Green Coalition for sprucing it up. Most of the foundation shrubs and trees are in good shape. They made suggestions on a site plan for plants to replace perennials including numbers of each species, offered wholesale prices, recommended adding organic mulch, and advised on watering and care during establishment.

Russel Pfof made a presentation to TCC biology students on native plants and distributed Real Florida Gardener's guides to students and faculty in anticipation of the native garden grant project on campus.

### Communications Coordinator needed

Do you enjoy keeping up with news and writing? Maybe you have ideas on how Chapter communications could be improved? The Chapter has need of a someone to serve as Communications Coordinator to compose email communication to our members and possibly use other social media tools. Mike Jenkins will be retiring as Ms. Magnolia after many years of fine service. He will gladly train his replacement. If interested, please contact President Leigh Brooks, [lbrooks2wd@nettally.com](mailto:lbrooks2wd@nettally.com) or 850-663-4631.

Submitted by Leigh Brooks

Dec. 16, 2013