



# SEA ROCKET



Florida Native Plant Society ~ Sea Rocket Chapter ~ Serving Central & North Brevard County

**MAY 2013**

The purpose of the Florida Native Plant Society is to promote the preservation, conservation, and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

## **~ Sea Rocket ~ Board of Directors**

### **Co-Presidents**

Susan Eggler

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#### **Hospitality**

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**Wednesday, June 26, 2013 at 7:00PM**

## **Observing Central Florida's Butterflies with Chuck Tague**

Naturalist Chuck Tague will present a photo essay on the complex lives of the diverse butterflies of central Florida and discuss their multifaceted relationships to plants and other animals.

Butterflies are the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde of insects. The adults are gentle, colorful creatures that bask in the sunlight and gracefully float on gentle breezes. Not only do they add joy, beauty and whimsy to fields and gardens, they are crucial pollinators to many plants. However their voracious larvae, the caterpillars, pillage leaves and blossoms.

Naturalist Chuck Tague is a Florida Master Naturalist and a volunteer at Merritt Island NWR where he surveys butterflies on the refuge and instruct other volunteers on identifying and observing butterflies. He is also the Field Trip Co-chair for Halifax River Audubon in Daytona Beach. Previously, he was the Education Curator at the Pittsburgh Aviary and was an adjunct professor at the Rachel Carson Institute at Chatham University.

Chuck Tague writes the Nature Observer's Journal, an online natural history site that features his weekly blog;

<http://ctague.pairserver.com/Natureobserver/welcome>.

Monthly meetings and programs of the Sea Rocket Chapter are held on the fourth Wednesday of the month, and are open to the public, free of charge. Meetings are held at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary, 444 Columbia Blvd., Titusville, Florida. Phone: 321-264-5185. To learn more about Florida's native plants visit [www.fnps.org](http://www.fnps.org)



Florida Native Plant Society  
Sea Rocket Chapter



## **POLLINATOR GARDENING NATIVE PLANT SALE**

**SATURDAY, JUNE 22, 2013  
10AM TO 3PM**

**CELEBRATING POLLINATOR WEEK  
MERRITT ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE  
VISITORS CENTER**

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# JUNE PLACES To Go, THINGS To Do!

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Every Saturday</b>   | <b>Guided Nature Hike, 10:00am, Enchanted Forest Sanctuary, call 321-264-5185</b>   |
| <b>Every Wednesday</b>  | <b>FNPS Sea Rocket Nursery Workday, 10:00am, Enchanted Forest Sanctuary, call 321-454-6849</b>  |
| <b>Saturday, 06/08</b>  | <b>Open Butterfly Garden Tour, 4220 Aledo St., Port St John, 10am-3pm, Learn to garden for butterflies, children's activities, light refreshments.</b>                                  |
| <b>Saturday, 06/15</b>  | <b>Sounds of the Night, 3:00pm, Sams House at Pine Island, Learn the sounds of the night with this family-friendly Program; call 321-449-4720</b>                                       |
| <b>Thursday, 06/20</b>  | <b>Friends of the Enchanted Forest Meeting, 6:30pm, The Enchanted Forest Sanctuary, Heritage Village with Rosalie Foster, call 321-264-5185</b>   |
| <b>Saturday, 06/22</b>  | <b>FNPS Sea Rocket Native Plant Sale, 10am-3pm, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, pollinator species and wildflowers, call 321-264-4922</b>                                      |
| <b>Saturday, 06/22</b>  | <b>MINWR Pollinator Day, 10am-4pm, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge Visitor's Center, programs, activities, Workshops, call 321-861-0668</b>                                     |
| <b>Saturday, 06/22</b>  | <b>History Garden Tour, 9:30am, Sams House at Pine Island, Guides Jay Barnhart &amp; Martha Pessaro lead a walk to Identify native plants &amp; their historical uses, 321-449-4720</b> |
| <b>Wednesday, 06/26</b> | <b>FNPS Sea Rocket Chapter Meeting, 6:30pm, Enchanted Forest Sanctuary, "Observing Central Florida's Butter flies" with Chuck Tague, call 321-264-5185</b>                              |
| <b>Friday, 06/29</b>    | <b>Indian River Lagoon Residential Guide to Pollution Prevention, 10am, Sams House at Pine Island, 321-449-4720</b>   |
| <b>Friday, 07/05</b>    | <b>KBB After the Holiday Beach Clean-Up, 8am-10am at: 1st Street South, Cocoa Beach, Shepard Park, Cocoa Beach, Cocoa Beach Pier, Cocoa Beach, Call KBB: 321-432-3620</b>               |

Please send calendar items to Linda at [lindakrupp@cfl.rr.com](mailto:lindakrupp@cfl.rr.com)

**REMINDER!**  
**NO SEA ROCKET MEETINGS IN JULY OR AUGUST!**



## **SJRWMD Update: Brown Tide in Mosquito Lagoon**

### **from Troy Rice, Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program Director**

The brown tide pelagophyte species (*Aureoumbra lagunensis*) has made an early return to the northern IRL. This is the same microalgae species that made its first recorded Florida bloom in the Mosquito Lagoon last summer and moved west into the northern IRL but did not go further south than Titusville. The current 2013 bloom was first detected in the northern tip of the IRL on April 8 with densities of ~ 47,250,000 cells/L. By April 22, densities there had increased to over 650,000,000 cells/L. Within two weeks (May 8), brown tide densities in northern IRL were over 900,000,000 cells/L at Big Flounder Creek, and 360,000,000 cell/L near Titusville. Samples collected on May 8 in southern Mosquito Lagoon also revealed the presence of brown tide (at 151,360,000 cells/L). Water clarity has taken a hit as a result of these blooms: Secchi depths measured 0.3 m (at Titusville), 0.25 m (at Big Flounder Creek), and 0.7 m (at southern Mosquito L.) on May 8. The bloom currently (May 16th) has spread south of Titusville and dissipates north of the NASA Causeway (SR405).

Other smaller, short-lived diatom blooms and microalgae blooms are also occurring throughout the central and northern portions of the estuary. The frequency of the Brevard County manatee, dolphin and pelican mortalities appears to be declining with no new deaths reported recently. From January 1 through May 10, 2013, 182 manatees died in Brevard – 46 from undetermined causes. The large silver mullet fish kill in the southern IRL and St. Lucie River-Estuary at the beginning of May is still under investigation by FWC.

For more information on the 2011 & 2012 blooms and seagrass die-off, please visit [www.itsyourlagoon.com](http://www.itsyourlagoon.com). The Spring edition of the IRL Update Newsletter will be coming out shortly that also addresses the blooms and their on-going impacts to the estuary. If you'd like a copy mailed to you please send me your name and postal mailing address.



In order to keep the public informed about current lagoon issues, the St. Johns River Water Management District and the Indian River Lagoon Program have updated the lagoon's web pages – highlighting the 2011 super-bloom, explaining how many lagoon stakeholder agencies, NGOs and universities are working together to better understand the shift in the IRL's health and to identify potential solutions. This also includes information on the SJRWMD's /NEP Indian River Lagoon Protection Initiative, and ways residents can help to make positive changes in the lagoon.

## **The Florida Wild Petunia (*Ruellia caroliniensis*)**

**By David Humphrey**

The *Ruellia caroliniensis* or commonly, the **Wild Petunia**, is a Florida native and not considered invasive. As shown by the distribution map, *Ruellia caroliniensis* has a good size range from Ohio to Florida, and over to Texas. *Ruellia caroliniensis*' Mexican counterpart, commonly called Mexican petunia, is a totally different plant and **is not native to Florida**; however, it has found a home in the Florida sunshine and is sold in most nurseries. **Do not be deceived!** The Mexican petunia is not native to Florida and is considered an invasive plant species.



Propagation of the Wild Petunia is by seed. The ripe pods burst open spreading seed several feet from the mother plant. In fact the gardener will notice over time that the seedlings will appear across some distance and if a formal look is desired, the Wild petunia may not be the plant of choice. *Ruellia* is a mounding perennial. It tends to die back over the winter, re-emerging in spring. The bloom season is from late spring till early winter.

*Ruellia* likes full sun and can become leggy if growing in shade. They like a decent, well drained soil, but have been observed growing in wet boggy conditions as well as in the dryness of the scrub. They are salt tolerant and can live and grow in the salt intruded ground water found in East Central Florida. *Ruellia* will grow 12 to 16 inches tall by May when the blooms begin. It is not recommended for large groupings as it dies out in winter, leaving bare patches. *Ruellia* will mix well with smaller perennials that keep their leaves or with grasses to help break up the empty space. *Ruellia* is a good butterfly and bee nectar source.



## Community Corner

### Sea Rocket offers support to Greater Titusville Renaissance

**By Ron Chicone**

***“Are you happy with your community? Do you like the way North Brevard looks?***

***Can you convince someone to move here?***

***Maybe it's time you decided to join the Greater Titusville Renaissance!”***

These comments from the Greater Titusville Renaissance (GTR) website summarizes the inspiration and mission behind this movement.

GTR was co-founded by District 1 County Commissioner Robin Fisher and Titusville's Mayor Jim Tulley with a vision to bring the community together, work together, and take pride and ownership in the appearance and prosperity of the greater Titusville area. A large part of this mission involves planting and improving landscapes.

Back in March, GTR and Keep Brevard Beautiful cleared overgrowth, removed Brazilian Pepper trees and picked up trash to improve the scenic riverfront view on county properties near Paul's Smokehouse and McDonalds. Chris Hilderbrand, Chairman of the Corridors and Beautification Committee of GTR, coordinated this effort. He is a small business owner and native of Titusville who has a vision of making Titusville a beautiful and welcoming place for economic growth.



Chris was gracious enough to speak to the Sea Rocket Board of Directors at the May meeting and welcomed our involvement with designing, planting and maintaining Florida Friendly landscapes, and helping with riverfront cleanup. Two projects on the horizon for GTR are landscaping and fixing up of the city-owned Titusville Sailing Club building at Sand Point Park, as well as further clean up of the Indian River shoreline.

Of particular interest to me is Kirk Point Park on the waterfront across from El Leoncito Mexican Restaurant. I have been visiting this small city park since it was first developed in 2011 and have seen how the shoreline wetlands have become severely overgrown with invasive plant species, both native and non-native. But the shoreline also has some wonderfully appropriate native plants like sea oxeye, leather fern, Spartina, false indigo and others that need to be preserved and restored.

Although the property belongs to the City of Titusville, the shoreline is not part of the recently developed park and there is no management or maintenance plan to deal with this ecologically critical area; in essence, it is a no-mans land. During the next GTR workday, we need volunteers that can recognize invasive plants to help restore this area and make it an example for other shoreline vegetation maintenance efforts. Bill Klein and I have surveyed the park and come up with a plan of attack, and we have a commitment from the City to contribute a few workers with chainsaws and herbicide. The scenic view of the river is a priority here and we need to make sure that native plants are preserved to reach that goal while at the same time improving the habitat and ecological functions of the shoreline.

Sea Rocket will send a notification as soon as we have a date for the next workday. Meanwhile please contact me for more information at [rchicone@yahoo.com](mailto:rchicone@yahoo.com) or 803-603-8912. You can find GTR on the web at <http://www.greatertitusville.com/committees/corridors-beautification/>



## Looking for Stars at Noon

(Earth Stars, that is!)

Submitted by Jay Barnhart

We're all familiar with the celestial stars that shine brightly on clear nights and are best seen by looking upward. But there are other stars that the observant nature lover can find while looking at the ground.

They are called Earth Stars and they are small to medium sized terrestrial fungi that are closely related to the common Puffballs. Their scientific names are *Geastrum* and *Astreus*. Think of the words "Geology" and "Astrology" and you will see the connection.



In the next few weeks they should be quite common followings some much-needed rainfall, and should be looked for in the most unlikely of places - dry sparsely vegetated sandy areas; they are particularly abundant on the xeric region of

the Enchanted Forest.

Apparently the underground filamentous fungal elements help to decompose the small bits of dead plant material found in these areas. They actually start out as 1-1½ inch in diameter spherical Puffballs that have an outer skin that soon splits into 5 or more star-like rays, exposing the inner spherical spore sac. The slightest touch of the spore sac will result in the release of a cloud of brown spores, which is how this organism propagates.

If you find some, they can be dried and kept in their star-like shape for a long time. I hope that you find some. They won't be more than 2 inches in diameter so think small when you are looking.



## Mystery Plant



**Do you know this plant?**

**Send your guess to Linda at**

[lindakrupp@cfl.rr.com](mailto:lindakrupp@cfl.rr.com)

**Winners will receive a nursery grown Florida native plant for their yard! \***

**The May Mystery Plant was Blackroot, *Pterocaulon pycnostachyum***

\* Must be present at the June 2013 meeting to claim prize.

## A BIG THANK-YOU

**TO THE MEMBERS THAT VOLUNTEERED AT THE POND TOUR PLANT SALE!**

**Martha Pessaro**

**Jill Whitson**

**Whitson Boys**

**Duane Gaddy**

**Ron Chicone**

**Armand De Filippo**

**Louanne Marletta**

**Shari Blissett-Clark**

**Suzanne Meyer**

**Jeff Whitson**

**Karen Gaddy**

**Marlys Breckle**

**Madeline Klinko**

**Mrs. De Filippo**

**David Humphrey**

**Special Thanks to  
Xavier de Seguin des Hons,  
EEL Program Land Manager**

## FNPS 33 Annual Conference Highlights

By Susan Eggler

This year's FNPS annual conference, "*La Florida: The Land of Flowers*" was held in Jacksonville, FL, May 16-19, on the lovely wooded grounds of North Florida University. Sea Rocket members attending were Shari Clark, Susan Eggler, Martha Pessaro, Paul Schmalzer, Laura Clark, Theresa Clark, and Madeline Klinko.

Sea Rocket members participated in several workshops and educational sessions, evening socials, and the plant ID contest. We were enthralled by the 2 keynote speakers, a plenary speaker, and concurrent sessions addressing all things native plants during 2 days packed with activities, programs, and vendors! The native plant sale packed with beautiful native landscape plants offered by some of the State's most talented nurserymen.

Jim Draper, keynote speaker, spoke on the 'Feasting on Florida'. Florida was named after the Christian feast day celebrated in conjunction with Easter that occurred on the day Ponce de Leon set foot on Florida's shores. This fact provided the framework for his topic: the treatment of natural Florida as a consumable and vulnerable resource.

Roger Hammer, keynote speaker, is considered one of Florida's foremost authorities on native plants. He is a past recipient of the Green Palmetto Award in Education from FNPS and is also one of Sea Rocket's favorite guest speakers. He spoke of his Florida travels using his signature humor and included stories about forays into the Everglades to document wild orchids and other native plants.

Tom Hctor spoke about the Florida Wildlife Corridor, the ongoing efforts to connect existing conservation lands and close the gaps between tracts of wildlands and form protected corridors for wildlife.

Craig Huegel, author of several wildlife and native plant books and another favorite Sea Rocket guest, presented "*The Ecological Significance of Native Plants in Development Landscapes*". Since urbanization continues to alter Florida landscapes, his program focused on maximizing the ecological value of small developed sites with the use of native plants.

And Sea Rocket attendees were particularly proud to support member Paul Schmalzer, PhD, who coauthored an important presentation entitled "Climate – Growth Relationships for Slash Pine and Two Dominant Oaks in Florida Scrub."

Start making plans now to attend next year's conference in Ft Myers, May 15-18, 2014!



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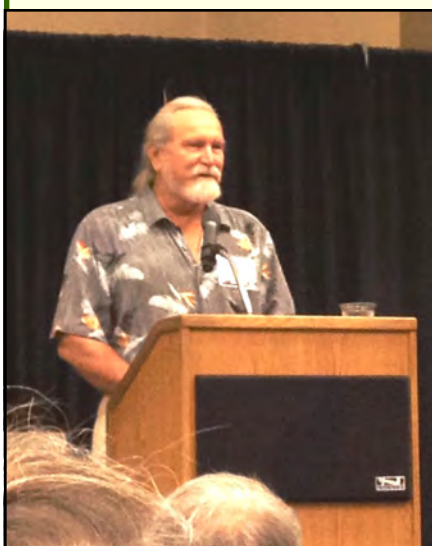


Elizabeth Smith teaching Nature Journaling Workshop

Left to right: Theresa Clark, Susan Eggler, Laura Clark, Shari Blissett-Clark, Paul Schmalzer, & Martha Pessaro



Paul Schmalzer and Rachel King



Roger Hammer's Keynote address.



Theresa working on her nature journal.



## FNPS Annual Conference

Photos by Susan Eggler & Vince Lamb

### Conference Notes by Martha Pessaro

The 2013 Florida Native Plant Society Conference will be remembered fondly by all of Sea Rocket's attendees. The North Florida University campus was a perfect venue for the diverse keynotes, breakout sessions, exhibitors, field trips, and Native Plant sale, and for meeting old friends and making new friends!

The Saturday evening Riverboat Dinner Cruise was an epic adventure for the ladies from the Sea Rocket Chapter as we navigated the traffic of downtown Jacksonville; the adventure continued with a city skyline sunset cruise aboard "The Lady of St. John's". After "tipping back a few", our designated driver endured our musings as we successfully worked our navigational skills in reverse!

Roger Hammer delivered an inspirational keynote as he reminded us that the Spanish arrived in the New World to meet the peoples and plants that had lived there for thousands of years, *The Natives!* Today, our work in preserving and restoring the native plants of *La Florida* reminds us that we play a vital role in Florida's history and that our native plants connect us to the past, present, and future. Viva La Florida and her inspiring Native Plants!



Walter Kingsley Taylor signing his new book for Paul & Laura.



### The Enchanted Forest Sanctuary Education Center

444 Columbia Blvd, Titusville, FL 32780 321-264-5185

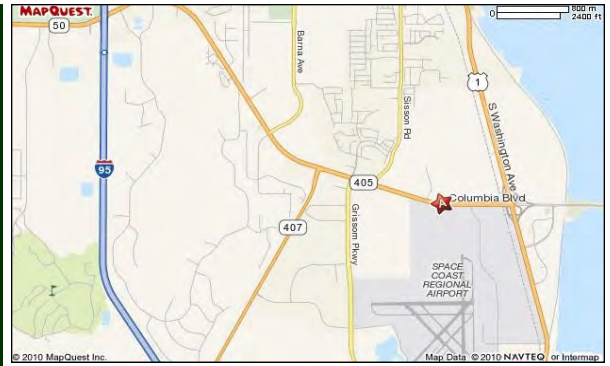


Driving Directions to the Sanctuary:

**From I-95 Northbound:** take SR-407 Exit 212 east 2.7 miles to SR-405 intersection. Turn right onto SR-405 and go east 1.9 miles (the Sanctuary entrance is on the left 0.4 miles past Sisson Road)

**From I-95 Southbound:** take SR-50 Exit 215 east. Turn left onto SR 50 and turn right onto SR-405 (2nd light) Travel 3.6 miles (the Sanctuary entrance is on the left 0.4 miles past Sisson Road)

**From U.S. HWY 1:** go west 0.5 miles on SR-405 in south Titusville. Sanctuary entrance is on the right.



### Florida Native Plant Society

For membership information, address change: P. O. Box 278, Melbourne, FL 32902-0278

Phone: 321-271-6702; Fax: 321-951-1941; Email: [Info@fnps.org](mailto:Info@fnps.org)/[www.fnps.org](http://www.fnps.org)

Sea Rocket Chapter mailing address: P. O. Box 236341, Cocoa, FL 32923-6341



***NEXT PROGRAM: FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!***

**Wednesday, June 26, 2013 at 7:00PM**

**Observing Central Florida's Butterflies  
with Chuck Tague**

[www.fnps.org](http://www.fnps.org)



### Sea Rocket Chapter

PO Box 236341

Cocoa, FL 32923-6341

**GO GREEN! RECEIVE YOUR NEWSLETTER VIA EMAIL AND SAVE SOME GREEN! GO GREEN!**