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.

Rebecca Bolt will be our guest speaker at our January 24th General Meeting. Becky has a Masters in Biological Sciences from the University of Central Florida, and 31 years of experience working with wildlife on the Kennedy Space Center.

Rebecca will be Speaking on Gopher Tortoises.

The underground story of the Scrublands landlord
January Places to Go, Things To Do!

(Note: All future planning can change presently. If in doubt, verify the date and times are accurate.)

Every Saturday: GUIDED NATURE HIKES - 10:00am - For information call 321-264-5185.

Every Tuesday: FNPS Sea Rocket Chapter Nursery Workday—9am-12noon, email Lois at lois6459@att.net for further info and schedule.

January 6 Butterfly Garden Workday - from 9 AM till 12 PM. Volunteers are working in the various butterfly gardens around the kiosk at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary. Weeding, trimming, planting, and whatever else needs to be done to enhance the natural beauty and functionality of these native gardens will be in work. It is a great time to learn from experts about native plants. Bring water, hat, gloves, and stable shoes.

January 7 Build a Bat-house, at Sams House, Presented by Shari Blissett-Clark of Florida Bat Conservancy 1:00pm-4:00 pm. Bring the family and work together to build your own bat house. Learn how to properly install your new house in your yard. Cost for this workshop is $40.00 for materials. Registration is required. Please bring a battery powered drill. Please call 321-449-4720 to reserve your spot!

January 10 FTA—Tosohatchee Loop Trail - meet at Lone Cabbage Fish Camp on Hwy 50 and the St. Johns River at 8:30 am. $3.00 per car entry fee applies.

January 17 FTA—Doris Leeper Trail. Meet at the west entrance of Lowe’s parking lot at I-95 and Hwy 50 in Titusville at 8:30 am.


January 20 Butterfly Garden Workday - from 9 AM till 12 PM. Volunteers are working in the various butterfly gardens around the kiosk at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary. Bring water, hat, gloves, and stable shoes.

January 24 FTA—Tosohatchee South. Meet at Lone Cabbage Fish Camp on Hwy 50 and the St. Johns River at 8:30

January 24 Sea Rocket General Meeting at the Enchanted Forest. Refreshments at 6:30 pm. We are happy to have Rebecca Bolt speaking to us on Gopher Tortoises.

January 24-29 21st Annual Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival. Eastern Florida State College in Titusville. Discover why Florida’s Space Coast is your launch pad to incredible nature-based experiences. See why it is one of the largest birding & wildlife festivals in the United States.

January 27 Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area, 75th Anniversary Event. Sea Rocket will participate in an Outreach Only.

January 31 FTA—De Leon Springs Trail, meet at the west entrance of Lowe’s parking lot at I-95 and Hwy 50 in Titusville at 8:30 am.

Please send calendar items to David Humphrey at brevcracker@gmail.com
For a comprehensive view of Sea Rocket activities go to www.FNPS.org; events, “searocket”.

January 2018
A Summary of the Christmas Banquet at Dixie Crossroads
By Armand DiFilippo

Here's a list of attendees in no particular order at the holiday dinner last night, a baker's dozen (2 more attending than last year):

- David Humphrey
- Armand De Filippo
- Joannie Faulls
- Lois & Richard Harris
- Janina & Hal Shoemaker
- Marlys Breckle
- Bill Klein
- Jim & Carol Sloan
- Don Garretson (Friends of the EF)
- Mary Thatcher (Friends of the EF)

Two thank-yous might be mentioned

- The staff of Dixie Crossroads, who was so good in serving us with unlimited corn fritters as well as providing free-of-charge plates of crabby bites for appetizers. (Note that I wasn't able to get hold of coupons for us, and they kindly went ahead and provided the bites anyway.) The food was delicious. I heard no complaints.

I thought the party was a success with lively discussions among attendees in a cozy private room on a cold night in central Florida.~

The Board wants to take this opportunity to thank Armand who spearheaded this banquet at Dixie Crossroads for the second year running. You did an excellent job, Armand, we enjoyed ourselves and those around us.~
Sea Rocket Active Members

Remember our General Chapter meeting on February the 28th is when you have a chance to make changes in the direction and leadership of YOUR chapter.

Sea Rocket has several positions open on the board and as Committee Chairs.

As a Board Member or Committee Chair, you will have the opportunity to move Sea Rocket into new areas of community involvement and outreach activities.

No prior experience needed to apply. All you need to serve is a desire;

- To see Native Plants become more prevalent in our community.
- If You are interested in “the Preservation, Conservation, and Restoration of the Native Plants and Native Plant Communities of Florida.” (FNPS Goal).
- If You love plants and gardening
- If You have an Email address

If you can answer yes to one or more of the above, you have all the qualifications needed to serve on the Board.

Sea Rocket Needs YOU. Sea Rocket runs on Volunteerism.

Without volunteers stepping up to bring in new ideas, by “thinking outside the box” the chapter will suffer for lack of energy, ideas, excitement, and innovation. We have several openings for new officers and leadership in Sea Rocket that we need volunteers to fill.
The “father of grass ID of the U.S.”, A.S. Hitchcock refers to \textit{Tripsacum floridanum} as Florida Gamagrass. This native species grows in the pine rocklands of south Florida and Cuba. It is typically less than 1-meter tall having leaf blades involute or folded 1 - 4 mm wide. This plant likes it on the dry side and full sun. It serves well in unwatered border plantings.

\textbf{Eastern Gamagrass or Fakahatchee grass} (\textit{Tripsacum dactyloides}) can be distinguished from Florida Gamagrass by its size grows in large clumps 2 - 3 meters tall and by the fact, the leaves are not folded but lay flat. Greg Hendricks, Master Naturalist, with leaf blades flat 1 - 2 cm wide. Both kinds of grass are native to Florida. However, \textit{T. dactyloides} can be found from Massachusetts to South Florida, and throughout the tallgrass prairie region of the central U.S. Both species are favored for native landscape planting, are highly palatable to livestock and have been known to hybridize.

For the homeowner concerned about getting an arm or digit ripped open by a saw-toothed grass (like Pampas Grass, a species native to South America), the tripsacum (spp) have smooth edges and can be rubbed up against without blood loss.— Dave

\section*{Honey Bees to the rescue}

At \textit{Washington University School of Medicine} in St. Louis, very small nanobot "nanobee" devices are being developed to carefully deliver melittin (which is known to disrupt cell membranes, and thus, destroy cells) to tumor cells in animals. Melittin is the active ingredient in bee venom. Even though melittin is lethal to good healthy cells as well as cancer cells scientists are developing methods to “program” lethal nanobees to seek out and destroy only target cells. In February 2013, it was reported that nanoparticles carrying melittin were effective in destroying HIV by eroding the double-layer viral envelope surrounding the virus.

Editors note: If stung by a bee, \textbf{DO NOT} grab and pull the stinger out. Use a knife or other keen-edged tool to scrape the stinger out gently. Pulling the stinger will force the venom, in the visible venom sac, out into you, thus causing the problems associated with a bee sting. Better yet—avoid being stung.

\section*{Sea Rocket Chapter continues to uphold our commitment to EF, and that above and beyond.}

Before the FNPS Chapter Reps meeting Sea Rocket volunteers cleaned up the gardens and added 77 new plants to the landscape. Volunteers trimmed dead plants, removed spent flower stalks and removed the “brown” stuff leaving the green in place. Cutting back and removing spent annuals gave enough open ground to plant 77 new plants from our nursery. Spring will be awesome.— Dave
COASTAL DUNES TOUR
FNPS fund-raising tour of the Coastal Dunes of Florida
March 9 – 12, 2018

There are only a few places on our planet Earth with Coastal Dune Lakes and Florida is one. If you have yet to discover them, join us March 9 – 12, 2018 when we journey to the panhandle to see them for ourselves. Known as the Emerald Coast, Walton County Florida has 15 coastal dune lakes, functioning as nature intended, interlaced along the coast just feet from the Gulf of Mexico, yet they remain fresh water for most of the time.

During periods of high rain, storms or hurricanes, they become brackish, sometimes breaching their outfalls and pouring into the Gulf with their tannic waters staining the turquoise ocean. But the lakes eventually flush out the salt and return to freshwater.

Inspired by the documentary, COASTAL DUNE LAKES – JEWELS OF FLORIDA’S EMERALD COAST, by Elam Stoltzfus, this tour traverses iconic Hwy 30A, crossing Fuller, Morris, Campbell, Stallworth, Allen, Oyster, Draper, Big Redfish, Little Redfish, Alligator, Western, Eastern, Deer, Camp Creek and Powell Lake, so you will see for yourself why these ecosystems are so precious.

We travel by luxury motor coach with professional driver departing from Plant City at 7 AM on Friday March 9th and stop first in Apalachicola to visit the home, gardens and cemetery of eminent Botanist, Dr Alvan Wentworth Chapman who spent most of his adult life exploring the flora of this area and died in this historic coastal community. Some of the plants named after him include Chapman’s Rhododendron, custard apple, wild Florida azalea, large-flowered skullcap, spreading yellow foxglove, Georgia holly and many others. Two of his neighbors, John Gorrie, the early inventor of mechanical refrigeration and Thomas Orman, local cotton merchant, were friends, as was Asa Gray, another noted Botanist of this era.

Our accommodations for this 4day/3night tour are in cabins and bungalows at Topsail Hill Preserve State Park. Friday night is our pizza get-together in the Clubhouse. Saturday morning we join the rangers for breakfast and explore Topsail Hill’s dunes trail and recently burned sections along with two park naturalists, then head to Grayton Beach State Park for a tour of their natural areas. Both parks support populations of the endangered Choctawhatchee beach mouse. We will learn how they are monitored and what the outlook is for their future.

Sunday we head to Blackwater River State Forest for a canoe/kayak trip or hike along the river so we can understand where all the coastal white sand comes from and search for the wild Azalea in bloom. In the afternoon, we tour Seaside Village, the first New Urbanism walkable community built in Walton County with all native front yards, varied architecture, and no-mow lawns.

We finish the evening with dinner and shopping in Seaside Village at their numerous restaurants and trendy food trucks.

Monday morning is open to explore the trails of Topsail Hill, then board our coach to head back to central Florida, arriving in time for dinner.

Make 2018 the year of discovery, starting with our tour of the Coastal Dunes of Florida, March 9 – 12th. For more information, call Devon at 813-478-1183, email indigotravelcompany@gmail.com or visit our website at www.indigotravelcompany.com.
Dear Ms. Losi,

Exciting news: you just saved a piece of land that could help Florida panthers fight back against extinction!

Thanks to your generous support and donations from fellow members like you, we were able to raise enough funds to secure a permanent conservation easement on a 460-acre property with an active citrus grove, just north of the Caloosahatchee River.

This is a huge win for the critically endangered Florida panther—one that wouldn't be possible without you, Lora.

What these elusive cats need most right now is room to roam. Urban sprawl and development threats continue to push the remaining panthers into a tiny fraction of their historic range. They're boxed in and isolated. Without a protected corridor of lands, they can't move northward to expand their range and establish new populations.

That's why this newly protected property is so important to their survival. Thank you for your help in saving it!

When they can reach new areas like this land we just saved, they're able to expand their territories, find new mates, and raise healthy kittens.

Every acre of open space we protect could be a turning point in their fight.

The Nature Conservancy has been leading the way to save Florida panther habitat for years. A few months ago, scientists in Florida confirmed that their population climbed from 160 to 180—a great sign that conservation efforts like this are paying off.

This new property is a reason to celebrate, but it's just one piece of their tattered landscape that's been stitched back together.

If we're going to give them a real chance at survival—and other endangered species like them—we need to keep pushing forward with more urgent on-the-ground protection efforts like this right now.

This victory for Florida panthers is one you should feel proud of. It's the kind of real, lasting conservation work you're supporting when you donate to The Nature Conservancy. Every acre we save and every species brought back from the brink begins with support from caring people like you.

Thanks again for your help in saving this place and so many others.

Sincerely,

Dave Strauss
Director of Membership
The Nature Conservancy

Lora Losi is just one of many members of FNPS and Sea Rocket Chapter that help fight for wildlife habitat. As civilization consumes wooded lands for houses and pavement animals are forced out and into areas of human activity. This NEVER has a good outcome for animals.—Editor Dave
If you have a chance to take a stroll along Coquina Trail at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary (Titusville, Florida) you'll notice two Conservation Cages (Figure 1) recently placed along the trail. These cages are managed by Save Florida’s Bromeliads Conservation Project (SFBCP) as part of a long-term plan to protect Tillandsia utriculata, the giant airplant (Figure 2), from an invasive bromeliad-eating weevil, the Mexican bromeliad weevil (Metamasius callizona). The population at Enchanted Forest Sanctuary, like T. utriculata populations throughout central and southern Florida, are in danger of extirpation. Giant airplant seeds have a short germination time and cannot be preserved for conservation. To maintain seed production, it is necessary to grow airplants to produce more seeds. Due to the length of time it takes to reach maturity (a decade or more), a great amount of time and space is required to grow T. utriculata. The SFBCP is composed of a network of natural areas throughout central and southern Florida where giant airplants (tended by volunteers) have time and space to grow. Figure 3 is a schematic of the overall conservation method being used in these natural areas. Keep in mind, these plants are on Florida’s Endangered Plants List and protected by law. Please do not touch or move them unless you have a permit to do so. For more information and for ways to support this project, please visit: www.SaveBromeliads.com

Figure 1: Two Conservation Cages located along Coquina Trail at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary (photograph by Tiffany Gray).
Figure 2: Tillandsia utriculata, the giant air-plant (photograph by Jimmy Yawn).

Figure 3: The overall method for conserving Tillandsia utriculata: a) Recruit, tiny, and small size plants are grown in Forest Gardens. b) Once they have reached a medium size, plants become Trail Plants; at this stage, the weevil attacks the bromeliad. As they grow to larger sizes, there will be too many Trail Plants to go into Cages, and most will remain on the trail until they seed. c) The very largest, healthiest Trail Plants will be moved to Conservation Cages, to assure survival to seed production. d) Seeds from Conservation Cages and Trail Plants will mostly be used to repopulate the Forests; a small portion of seeds will be used to keep the Gardens populated. e) Offsite Gardens and Protected Sites are managed by volunteers holding a permit. All plants and/or seeds eventually return to the forest from where they originated.
The Governor's budget recommendations also included $50 million for State Parks.

Whew! We dodged that bullet!

A proposal for an exploratory oil well in the Everglades of western Broward County was rejected again Monday by state regulators, although this is unlikely to be the final act in a Miami family's persistent attempts to extract oil from its land.

Noah Valenstein, secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, signed a final order turning down the application of Kanter Real Estate LLC to drill in marshy wilderness about six miles west of Miramar.

In issuing this decision, the department rejected the recommendation for approval by a state administrative law judge.
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.

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**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/www.fnps.org
Sea Rocket Chapter mailing address: 444 Columbia Blvd, Titusville, FL 32780

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**Sea Rocket General Meeting**
With Lauriiee Thompson
Presenting “Titusville Rocks”
On February 28 at 6:30 pm
www.fnps.org

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**Did you know**

**Sandspurs are edible.**

Sandspurs are summer annuals. They create their “fruit” (burs) over the summer. In fact, sandspurs are an edible grain that can be processed into porridge and flour. They are in the grass family.

A case study in Shell Key (in Pinellas County) where there was a time with far fewer sandspurs. The current population boom is most likely due to the ten-year eradication effort to remove the ‘exotic’ Australian pine forest in the South Public Use area. For decades, these trees dropped nutrient-rich leaves and twigs onto the soil. When they were cut, the richer soil was exposed to sunlight, and the sandspurs had a field day. Sandspurs are one of those ‘pioneer’ species that will move into an immature, bare or newly disturbed environment – the first step in the eventual progression to a forested area. Once the trees that are planted to replace the pines have matured in a few decades, the sandspurs will eventually die back in numbers. Having fulfilled their time and now being out-competed by a balanced and mature ecosystem.

Editors Note: As my feet remind me, sandspurs thrive along the dunes, and are clearly salt tolerant. They like dry, sandy, low nutrient soils with full sun. It is one tough plant, and tough on bare feet, bicycle tires, and hands, and...well sometimes even language.~

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Cenchrus spinifex

Cenchrus incertus

Cenchrus echinatus

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January 2018