

February 2024



<u>Contents</u>

- 1. Welcome Page
- 2. Sea Rocket Chapter Announcements
- 3. Sea Rocket Chapter Reminders
- 4. 12th Annual Pioneer Day Check Out Our Chapter Table!
- 5. Field Trip on 02/17/24 South Lake Conservation Area Notice
- 6. Garden Happenings At Enchanted Forest Sanctuary
- 7. General Membership Meeting 02/28/24, Speaker: Skip Healey
- 8. Plant Sale Notice- First of 2024!
- 9-13. Report For 01/13/2024 Field Trip to Pine Island Conservation Area
- 14. Report for 1/24/24 Speaker: Tom Perez
- 15-18. Update: Tillandsia utriculata (Giant Air Plant) Conservation Project at EFS
- 19. Species Spotlight: Simpson Stopper,
- **20.** Chapter Information Page: Take Us Anywhere!
- 21. Sea Rocket Chapter Board of Directors Page
- 22. Sea Rocket Chapter Calendar of Events for February 2024
- 23. Enchanted Forest Sanctuary Calendar of Events for February 2024

Voting For Chapter Officers

Our Annual Membership meeting will be held Wednesday, February 28th from 6:30 – 8:00pm at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary, 444 Columbia Blvd., Titusville. In addition to having a great speaker, we'll be holding elections for Sea Rocket Chapter Board Officers.

On January 9th, the Chapter Board of Directors reviewed and approved a motion of support for the recommendations by the Nominating Committee which are included in the report below.

Sea Rocket Chapter Nominating Committee Report January 1, 2024

Nominees for Sea Rocket Chapter 2024 Officers

Sea Rocket Chapter Officers will be elected at the Annual General Membership Meeting on February 28,
2024. Nominees have been requested through the Chapter newsletter and during General Membership meetings since October 2023. Although we do have several new Board members, no nominations for Officers have been received. Officer positions for the Sea Rocket Chapter include President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

At the present time, Dr. Paul Schmalzer, our President, and Laura Covel, our Secretary, have agreed to serve one more year. The positions of Vice-President and Treasurer are currently open.

It is therefore the recommendation of this committee that Dr. Schmalzer should continue to serve as President and that Laura Covel should continue as Secretary.

It should be noted that although Dr. Schmalzer is filling in as interim Treasurer, this situation cannot remain long term due to FNPS guidelines. The need to fill the position of Treasurer is of primary importance.

If you have an interest in learning more about what you can do to serve the Sea Rocket Chapter, contact Laura Covel, srsecretary@fnps.org, or speak with any Board member.

Note:

Per Sea Rocket Bylaws, Article VI Membership, Section 3 Voting, only members in good standing shall be eligible to vote in meetings of standing committees, special committees, Board of Directors meetings, or serve in the Chapter. Each member shall be entitled to one vote on any matter requiring a vote by the membership.

Committee members: Elizabeth Bishop, Paul Schmalzer, Laura Covel

Sea Rocket Chapter Reminders:

Sea Rocket Chapter General Membership meetings are held at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary, 444 Columbia Blvd, Titusville. FL. We have a Social Time from 6:00 – 6:30pm when the business portion of the meeting begins. Meetings end at 8:00pm. The Sea Rocket Chapter appreciates the Environmentally Endangered Lands Program allowing us to meet at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary.

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

If you would like to volunteer, speak with any Board member, or send an email to <u>srsecretary@fnps.org</u> so Laura can put you in touch with the lead person for that event.

- 2/10/24 Pioneer Day, Sams House, Merritt Island
- 3/9/24 Plant Sale, Enchanted Forest
 - 3/16/24 Thousand Islands Festival, Cocoa Beach

For additional information, see the event listing on our Website's calendar.

https://searocket.fnpschapters.org/calendar/

Check out the QR code to our Chapter's NEW Facebook Page! https://www.facebook.com/searocketchapterfnps



3|February 2024



Save The Date!

The 12th Annual Pioneer Day festival will be held on February 10th from 10 am to 4 pm at Sams House on Merritt Island.

Kim Gibbs is the event leader for the FNPS Sea Rocket exhibit table, and she is seeking a couple more FNPS volunteers for 2-hour time slots (1 hour also is fine.) Please contact Kim if you are interested in serving at this fun outreach event. **email:** <u>kgibbsboulder@gmail.com</u>



Florida Living History Demonstrations • Guided Trail Hikes • Live Music • History Speakers Guided Historic Cemetery Tours • 1888 Sams House Tours • Pioneer Parade • Petting Farm Local/State Exhibitors: History, Nature, Wildlife, Anthropology & Archaeology Crafts & Farmer's Market Vendors • Children's Games & Crafts • Organ Recital in Historic Chapel Homemade Chilis and Loaded Baked Potatoes • Food Trucks • Kettle Corn

South Lake Conservation Area Field Trip Announcement Saturday February 17, 2024, 9:00 am-12:00

This site of about 140 acres was a mitigation donation to the Brevard County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program. There has been extensive restoration by cutting and burning, timber thinning, and exotic plant treatment. Vegetation is primarily oak scrub, scrubby flatwoods, and mesic flatwoods. An experimental translocation of Florida Scrub-Jays to the property began in 2009.



Directions:

1) I-95 to exit 220 Garden Street (St. Rt. 406). West 0.6 miles on Garden Street to North Carpenter Road. North 1.5 miles on N. Carpenter to Dairy Road. West 1.1 mile on Dairy Road. Turn North (right) on Lancaster Lane (not paved) and park by gate.

OR 2) US 1 to Dairy Road. West on Dairy Road. Cross North Carpenter Road. West 1.1 mile on Dairy Road. Turn North (right) on Lancaster Lane (not paved) and park by gate.

Bring a hat, sunscreen, water, and insect repellant.

Garden Happenings At Enchanted Forest Sanctuary

Written and Photographed by Laura Covel

Our January 4th Garden Workday was postponed due to bad weather, but we'd love to see you next time on Saturday, February 24th, from 9:00 – 11:00AM. Working in the gardens is a great way to learn about Florida native plants while spending time in nature, enjoy meeting new people, and even get some exercise! Please bring water and garden tools, if you have them, and dress for outdoor activities. Don't forget the sunblock!

Even though it's almost winter, many of the plants in the gardens are green and some are even in bloom. See if vou can find the plants in these pictures the next time vou visit!



Image 1: The blackberries (Rubus) are showing up again this year. They'll be flowering this spring.



Image 2: These varnish leaf (Dodonaea viscosa) fruits will turn brown when ripe. The very shiny leaves give this plant its name.



Image 3: Did you know that a large clump of saw palmettos (Serenoa repens) could be hundreds of years old?



Image 4: The resurrection ferns (Pleopeltis polypodioides var. michauxiana) are certainly happy with the recent rains. Although resurrection ferns can usually be found on branches of oaks and other trees, these are growing on one of the large coquina rocks, along with a cool looking orange lichen.



Image 5: We recently planted some sunshine mimosa (Mimosa strigillosa) near the boardwalk. It's doing well and has already started to spread. Stay on the look-out for the pink, power puff looking blooms.



Image 6 : Coonties (Zamia pumila) are very slow growing. This conifer's fruits are bright orange. They might look like candy, but don't eat one, and keep your pets away. The fruits are toxic

Next General Membership Meeting February 28th, 2024 SPEAKER: Skip Healey, Change of Greenery TOPIC: Landscaping Alter-Natives

Skip is a Brevard County native and grew up in West Melbourne. He graduated from MCC and earned a Bachelors in Agribusiness with a Horticulture minor from Mississippi State University. After college, he interned at The Land Pavilion in Walt Disney World's EPCOT, and since has managed greenhouse and nursery operations in Sarasota, Indian River, and Brevard Counties.

Skip established Change of Greenery in 2018 to implement Florida native and edible landscapes that provide habitat to native pollinators and wildlife. He takes pride in using sustainable approaches, without the use of harmful chemicals, and in order to preserve Brevard's natural beauty.

Change of Greenery are members of the Florida Native Plant Society and Florida Association of Native Nurseries (FANN). Their Design Studio & Shop is located at 1494 North Harbor City Boulevard, in Melbourne. If you've attended a previous meeting where Skip was our speaker, you already know this will be a great presentation!

Sea Rocket Chapter General Membership meetings are held at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary, 444 Columbia Blvd, Titusville. FL. We have a Social Time from 6:00 – 6:30pm when the business portion of the meeting begins. Meetings end at 8:00pm



Florida Native Plant Society

SEA ROCKET CHAPTER **Plant Sale** Saturday, March 9, 2024

For additional information, check the Sea Rocket Chapter Website Calendar.

https://searocket.fnpschapters.org/calendar/

Our first plant sale of 2024 will be held March 9th at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary from 9:00am - 1:00pm! Would you like to know more about some of Florida's native plants and have the opportunity to learn about a variety of our natives at a single location? If so, join us as a volunteer at our March 9th plant sale! Volunteer shifts include 8:30am to 11:30am and 10:30am to 1:30pm. Opportunities include working in the sales booth (adding up tickets, collecting payments, sharing brochures and other information), sales help, assisting with set up and breakdown, and more! You can sign up for a single shift, or for the entire day. Remember, Sea Rocket Chapter members are eligible for discounts! If interested in volunteering, please contact any Board member, or email srsecretary@fnps.org.

Six people attended the January 13, 2024, field trip to the Pine Island Conservation Area (PICA) (photo 1) in Merritt Island, Florida, just south of Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge.

Pine Island Conservation Area is a property of about 900 acres that is managed by the Brevard County Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program. It was acquired jointly by the EEL Program and the St. Johns River Water Management District. PICA protects more than one mile of shoreline along the Indian River Lagoon.

For a substantial portion of this shoreline, pine flatwoods vegetation occurs close to the lagoon shoreline rather than marshes or mangroves. Pine flatwoods, hammocks, freshwater marshes, and brackish marshes all occur.



Image 1: Group Photo, by Beverly Lewis



Image 2: Strangler fig (Ficus aureus) growing on cabbage palm (Sabal palmetto). By Beverly Lewis

The site has a rich history that includes fossils of Pleistocene

megafauna, Native American archeological sites, and the historic Sams House, which serves as the Management and Education Center for the Central Region of the EEL Program.

We visited the northern section of the conservation area accessed from Pine Island Road, walking from the parking lot to the edge of the lagoon (photo 1). Along this transect we saw many diverse native plants associated with hammocks, freshwater and brackish marshes, and pine flatwoods.

Strangler fig (*Ficus aureus*) typically germinates on a host tree and then grows roots down to the ground (photo 2). Strangler fig fruits



Image 3: Strangler fig with fruits. By Laura Covel



Image 4: Sweet acacia (Vachellia farnesiana) in flower and fruit. By Laura Covel

Sweet acacia (Vachellia farnesiana) is a native species of acacia that is not often encountered locally. A robust plant (photos 4 and 5) occurs along the canal bank that had flowers and fruits (as well as long thorns).

Resurrection fern (Pleopeptis polypoioides var.

michauxiana) (photo 6) occurs frequently as an epiphyte on live oak (Quercus virginiana) and sometimes other trees or even rocks. During dry periods it will desiccate and then rehydrate when it rains. A very different fern is the giant leather fern (Acostichum danaeifolium) (photo 7) that occurs in freshwater and saline wetlands.



Image 5: Sweet acacia with flower buds and flowers. By Jesse Baker



Image 6: Resurrection fern (Pleopeptis polypoioides var. michauxiana) growing on live oak (Quercus virginiana). By Beverly Lewis.

There are three species of Baccharis in central Florida, one with narrow, linear leaves (B. angustifolia) and two with ovate to elliptic leaves (B. glomeruliflora and B. halimifolia).

Both broad-leaved species occur at PICA; these differ in that B. glomeruliflora (silverling) has flower heads that are sessile, coming directly off the stem, (photo 8), while the flower heads of B. halimifolia (groundsel) are pedunculate, that is sit up on a small stalk or peduncle.



Image 7: Giant leather fern (Acostichum danaeifolium) in reproductive condition– the undersides of the fronds are covered with brown sporangia. By Laura Covel



Image 8: Silverling (Baccharis glomeruliflora) with sessile flowers. By Laura Covel.

Three species of mangroves occur at PICA, black mangrove (Avicennia germians), white mangrove (Laguncularia racemosa), and red mangrove (Rhizophora mangle). These salt tolerant trees often grow together (photo 9). Although we were there in the middle of January, some typically spring-flowering plants such as oakleaf fleabane (Erigeron quercifolius) were already starting to flower (photo 10).



Image 9: Red mangrove (Rhizophora mangle), with prop roots and dark green leaves, and white mangrove (Laguncularia racemosa), with lighter green leaves, growing together. By Beverly Lewis.

Image 10: Oakleaf fleabane (Erigeron quercifolius) flowering early. Laura Covel.

Report for General Membership Meeting January 24, 2024 SPEAKER: Thomas H. Perez, MPH, MASS, R.Ph. TOPIC: Florida's Right to Clean Water Initiative

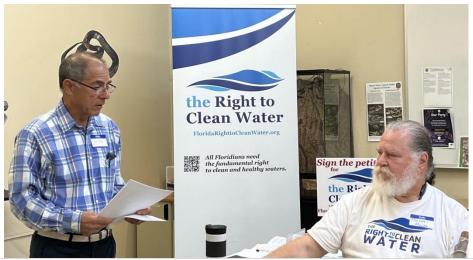
Tom Perez, Right to Clean Water Ambassador, Captain, and Michael Myjak, Speak Up Titusville, President, shared information on the Florida Right to Clear Water initiative. The Right to Clean Water initiative strives to amend the Florida State Constitution to create a fundamental right to clean and healthy waters. The original efforts did not gather sufficient signatures for the item to be placed on the State ballot.

RIGHT TO CLEAN WATER

The Florida Right to Clean Water initiative is transitioning to its 2026 campaign.

Their website is currently being updated, and new information is expected to be announced soon. Learn more about the amendment and the initiative

on https://www.floridarighttocleanwater.org/.



14 | February 2024

Text and photos by: Martha Pessaro, Kathy Mocko, Lora Losi

Since 2008 the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary in Titusville has been in a conservation effort to help Giant Air Plants (*Tillandsia utriculata*) in their struggle to survive. Beginning with the scientific guidance of Dr. Teresa Cooper-Yawn, volunteers, college interns, and Enchanted Forest staff continue in the endeavor.

The sanctuary at one time had treetops full of these giant bromeliads until a Mexican weevil, the Metamasius callizona, began its invasion. Statewide 97% of the population of the Giant Air plants was decimated by the weevil, in the first decade of the introduction of this invasive species. Unlike other bromeliads, the Giant Air plant dies after producing one spike with thousands of seeds, which can take 15 to 20 years through the life cycle of the plant.



Image 1: Newly Constructed Cage, freshly stocked with Tillandsia utriculata pups.

Text and photos by: Martha Pessaro, Kathy Mocko, Lora Losi

Scientists across the state of Florida began studies on how to conserve the plants in nature as they became listed as Endangered and became protected from commercial collection and sale.

Dr. Cooper-Yawn of University of Florida and colleagues began research at Enchanted Forest and other sites in Florida covering the range of *T. utriculata*. Volunteers and college interns under her tutelage began several scientific studies to find ways to deter the weevil. The *Lixadmontia franki* fly that parasitizes bromeliad-eating weevils proved to be unsuccessful as was a larvicidal fungus. Efforts to conserve plants and seeds began in earnest. Five garden sites were installed in the

Enchanted Forest to monitor growth patterns and what efforts would work to save the plants. The gardens have changed over the years and now the focus is on keeping the plants in cages where they go to seed after several seasons. The gardens were relocated to the Sea Rocket Native Plant nursery after several years of having plants in gardens deep in the forest. The distance, access, heat and storms and insects were challenging for the volunteers.



Image 2: Seed collection. Note a collected desiccated specimen in lower right corner.

Text and photos by: Martha Pessaro, Kathy Mocko, Lora Losi

We have learned several valuable lessons about conservation practices. Our volunteers have attended workshops and conferences to learn from noted specialists and have presented their findings to others. We have combined the research knowledge that was gained from collaborations with Florida conservation efforts to disperse the seeds and protect the plants using conservation cages. Our hands-on experiences were shared at the Florida Native Plant Society's annual convention in 2020. We have presented at the Selby Gardens in Sarasota

and at the Central Florida Bromeliad Society in Sanford.

The conservation cages are now located in three areas and have worked very well, allowing seeding to happen without weevil infestation. The cages are checked often for any tears or problems. There have been some instances of critter invasion ripping screens which require repairs as needed. We are ever so grateful for the new cage made possible through the financial support of the Sea Rocket



Image 3: Seed dispersal. Once selected, these sites will be monitored for seedlings.

Text and photos by: Martha Pessaro, Kathy Mocko, Lora Losi

Florida Native Plant Society chapter to continue our conservation efforts at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary. Our current volunteers walk the trails at Enchanted Forest weekly and find any Giant Air Plants that have blown or fallen out of the trees. Depending on the size of the plants, they are either placed in a tree nearby and kept there or they are brought back to our current garden station where they are sprayed with an insecticide called Safari before being placed into a conservation cage. The plants are watered and monitored throughout the year by volunteers. As the plants go to seed, we watch carefully and as seeds are produced, they are gathered carefully and are blown into natural sites using a leaf blower or hand spreading onto bark. Volunteers to assist in watering the plants in their cages during times of drought, monitoring growth, and repair of cages would be helpful, and we would love to have people

visit while we spread the seeds. These plants will hopefully grow to produce their own seeds within the next 10-20 years, and young volunteers are needed to see this conservation attempt to fruition.



Image 4: Cage construction.

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT: <u>Myrcianthes Fragrans</u>, Simpson Stopper

Written and Photographed by Brittany BayLiss

SIMPSON STOPPER, ALSO KNOWN AS TWINBERRY, IS AN EVERGREEN, LONG LIVED PERENNIAL. DESCRIBED AS A WOODY SHRUB, THIS PLANT CAN REACH HEIGHTS OF 20FT, OF BE PRUNED INTO A HEDGE THAT REACHES A MINIMUM OF 5FT. THIS PLANT DISPLAYS TINY CHARMING WHITE FLOWERS INTERMITTENTLY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR BUT IS IN FULL BLOOM DURING SPRING-EARLY SUMMER. FERTILIZED FLOWERS WILL DEVELOP BRIGHT RED-ORANGE FRUIT THAT ARE FEASTED ON BY BIRDS. THE SIMPSON STOPPER IS EASILY GROWN FROM SEED DROPPED IN FECAL SACS AND CAN BE FOUND GROWING IN RELATIVELY DRY AREAS. SIMPSON STOPPER IS AN AMAZING ADDITION TO YOUR PLANTING SPACE AS IT IS A SLOW GROWER, HAS LOW WATER REQUIREMENTS, AND OFFERS HURRICANE WIND PROTECTION IF PLANTED AS A FOUNDATION SCREEN. FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT HTTPS://WWW.FNPS.ORG/PLANT/MYRCIANTHES-FRAGRANS



L- A mature specimen (approx. 12 yrs. Old, 20ft tall. Middle- The bark of mature Simpson Stopper sheds in layers. R-An adult screech owl with its fledgling in the branches of this mature Simson Stopper.

19|February 2024

Information Page: Want more?

Chapter Website <u>https://www.searocket.fnpschapters.org</u>

Chapter Calendar https://searocket.fnpschapters.org/calendar/

For additional information on FNPS: <u>http://www.fnps.org</u>.

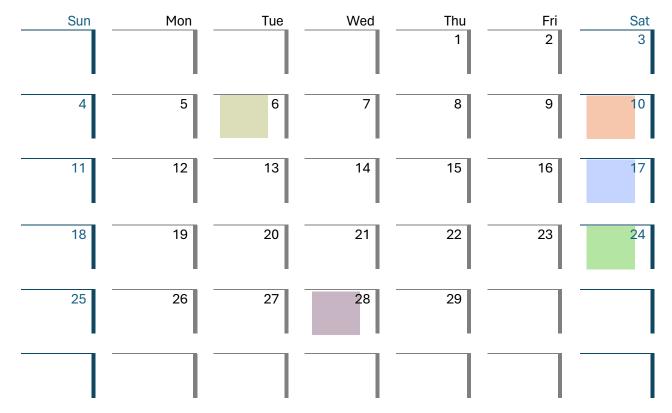
NEW Facebook Page <u>https://www.facebook.com/searocketchapterfnps</u>





| February 2024

Sea Rocket February 2024 Events



Feb 6th- Board of Directors Meeting from 6:00-8:00PM at Enchanted Forest Classroom, open to all members.

Feb 10th- The 12th Annual Pioneer Day festival will be from 10 am to 4 pm at Sams House on Merritt Island. Please see pg. 4 for more information, we'll see you there!

Feb 17th- Field Trip to South Lake Conservation Area, from 9:00 am-12:00. Please pg. 5 for directions, a packing list, and contact information.

Feb 24th- Garden Workday in the Butterfly Gardens at Enchanted Forest Sanctuary from 9:00-11-00AM. Please see pg. 6 for interesting facts, volunteer progress, and gardening ideas!

Feb 28th- General Membership meeting at Enchanted Forest Classroom. Speaker: Skip Healey. Note: Elections will be held on this date.

EFS*- Enchanted Forest Sanctuary is located at 444 Columbia Blvd., Titusville, Florida 32780 For more information please visit https://searocket.fnpschapters.org/calendar/

February 2024 Events at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary

Nature Storytime

Wed., Feb. 7th 10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Geared towards ages 5 and under. <u>Theme:</u> <u>Lively Lichens and Magnificent Mosses</u> Learn about lichens through fun activities and crafts. Registration required, please call 321-264-5185 to sign up. NO SAME DAY SIGN UPS.

Star Party

Sat., Feb. 10th 6:00 p.m. to 10 p.m. Join the Brevard Astronomical Society and us for a night under the stars! Guided hikes and star gazing will start at 6-6:15pm. Registration required no later than the day before, please call 321-264-5185, to sign up. **LIMITED SPOTS**

Off the Beaten Path Hike: Wetlands

Sun. Feb. 17th 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Visit some of our wetlands in areas that are not open to the public with Naturalists and explore how elevation and land management are critical to these habitats. Bring hiking shoes, water, and bug spray. Registration required, please call 321-264-5185 to sign up.

Sanctuary School

Wed., Feb. 21# 10 a.m. to 11a.m. Geared towards ages 6 through 12. <u>Theme: Likeable Lichens and Marvelous</u> <u>Mosses!</u> Join us to learn about lichens and mosses through fun activities and crafts. Registration required, please call 321-264-5185 to sign up. NO SAME DAY SIGN UPS.

Garden Workday

Sat. Feb. 24th 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Grab your hat, sunblock, and water and come help maintain the butterfly garden at the Sanctuary with the Sea Rocket Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society! Registration required. Please call 321-264-5185 to sign up.

Tai Chi at the Forest

Every Sat. in Feb. 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Join instructor Kate Perez for a beginner level class on the porch! Loose-fitting clothing, and a water bottle are recommended. Registration required no later than the day before class, please call 321-264-5185. SPACE LIMITED. NO SAME DAY SIGN UPS.

Yoga in Nature

Every Sun. in Feb. 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Join local yoga instructors for a traditional class for all levels on the porch! Wear loose-fitting clothing and do not eat anything an hour before class. Bring water and a mat. Registration required no later than the day before class, please call 321-264-5185. SPACE LIMITED. NO SAME DAY SIGN UPS.

Guided Hikes

Openings Sat/Sun. in Feb. at 10 a.m. Enjoy a 45-minute guided hike. Please bring a hat, water and walking shoes. Based on staff availability. Availability has been limited recently so keep that in mind when calling to register. Registration required no later than the day before the hike, please call 321-264-5185 to sign up. NO SAME DAY SIGN.