



Florida Native Plant Society

Sea Rocket Chapter

Update

September 2024

Announcements

- **November Meeting Date**

Don't forget! Our November meeting will be held on the third Wednesday of November, instead of our usual 4th Wednesday meeting date, due to the Thanksgiving Holiday. Mark your calendars now so you can be sure to join us on November 20th, *and....*

- **\$\$\$ It's Budget Planning Time! \$\$\$**

The Board has begun work on the Sea Rocket Chapter's 2025 budget, which will be presented for approval by the General Membership during the November 20th meeting. If you have suggestions or questions, feel free to check with any Board member, or email srsecretary@fnps.org.

- **News from the Board of Directors**

Brittany Bayliss, our Newsletter Editor, will be resigning from the Board as of October 1st. Each Newsletter Editor has made their publications their own, sometimes using templates, Microsoft Word, or other applications. Several Board members provide assistance by writing announcements, reports and articles, or to help get things rolling. We thank Brittany for a great newsletter and everything she has done as a member of our Board.

Megan McCormick joined our Board as Treasurer on September 3rd. Welcome to the Board of Directors, Megan!

- **Educational Material Available**

We have a new supply of booklets and brochures on Florida native plants and pollinators available to members and the general public. Stop by any membership meeting, plant sale, or other outreach event to see what's available.

- **Sea Rocket Chapter Tokens**

The long-awaited Sea Rocket Chapter Tokens, or wooden coins, have arrived and are a great way to remember our Chapter and where to go for information on upcoming events for members and the public alike. Tokens will be available at general membership meetings, plant sales and other outreach events. Get yours soon!

Upcoming Events *Mark Your Calendars Now!*

- **September 3rd: Board Meeting**

All Chapter members are welcome to attend.

- **September 7th: Garden Workday, Enchanted Forest Sanctuary *Volunteer***

Opportunity Join us from 9:00 - 11:00am as we work in the Butterfly Gardens! It's a great way to learn about Florida Native Plants and make new friends. Be sure to prepare for **hot weather** and bring water. Wear a hat and bring garden tools if you have them. Don't forget the sunblock!

- **September 14th: Field Trip to Cruickshank Sanctuary, Rockledge 9:00am - noon**

We'll be meeting at the kiosk on Barnes Boulevard to check out this habitat restoration success story. If you have never seen a Florida Scrub-Jay up close and personal, this may be your chance! For more information, visit our website or Facebook page using the links at the end of this update.

- **September 25th: General Membership Meeting**

Speaker: Rochelle Hood, Executive Director, Merritt Island Wildlife Association

Topic: From Hurricanes to Happy Pollinators

Rochelle will share the story of how some pesky hurricanes resulted in an enhanced pollinator habitat at the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. As the story unfolds, the group will learn how the Friends Groups of National Wildlife Refuges help to fuel their mission and the part a "native plant inspired" Eagle Scout played in making a new home for bees and butterflies. Listen for the plot twist that turns the spotlight to the Sea Rocket Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society. The story concludes with a hopeful epilogue, illustrating how the love for and enjoyment of native plants can have lasting impact.

Rochelle serves as the Executive Director for the Merritt Island Wildlife Association (MIWA), the Friends Group for the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. Her role includes advocacy, fundraising, education, and membership engagement in support of the Refuge's wildlife conservation mission.

Before joining MIWA, Rochelle demonstrated her leadership and entrepreneurial acumen by founding and successfully leading a management consulting firm for 13 years. She held global roles with responsibility for product management, Global Business Services leadership, process engineering, data analytics, and program management.

Rochelle holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting from College of St. Mary and an MBA from Webster University. Her professional credentials include Project Management Professional (PMP), Certified Scrum Master (CSM), and Lean Six Sigma Green Belt. Rochelle is a certified Florida Master Naturalist. She currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Space Coast Audubon Society and the Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival.

- **September 28th: *Plant Sale 9:00am – 1:00pm Volunteer Opportunity.***

We'll be open for purchases from 9:00am - 1:00pm. A list of plants we expect to have will be available through our website calendar about a week before the sale. Remember, members are eligible for discounts!

- **Heads up for other upcoming events**

* October 1st – Board Meeting

* October 19th – ***Plant Sale***

* October 5th – Gardens Workday

* October 23rd – General Membership Meeting

Outreach Reports

- **August 10th: Honeybee Festival**

Thank you to Beverly Lewis, Jesse Baker, Elizabeth Bishop, Brittany Bayliss, Laura Covell and Paul Schmalzer who worked in our outreach booth. The day was fun, enlightening, and hot! The Honeybee Festival, sponsored by Brevard Beekeepers, is an annual event held at the UF/IFAS Center in Cocoa. Our Chapter distributed lots of educational material on Florida native plants and the new wooden coins advertising FNPS and our Chapter were a big hit, especially with the kids. Several Atala butterflies were observed near the on-site coontie plants.

- **August 28th: General Membership Meeting Speaker** – by *Paul Schmalzer, Ph.D.*
Our August speaker was Becky Bolt, speaking on the topic “Climate Change Impacts in Our Own Back Yards”. Becky is a wildlife ecologist with undergraduate and Master’s degrees from the University of Central Florida.

Global temperatures and those in Florida are increasing. In many ways Florida is ground zero for climate change; its low elevation and extensive coastline make it susceptible to rising sea levels, rising inland water levels, hurricanes, and other storms. Rising temperatures also increase suitability for invasion and spread of exotic plants and animals.

Most flowering plants are pollinated by insects (bees, butterflies, etc.). These plants are expected to lose habitat to rising water levels. An additional concern is that warmer temperatures will extend or alter growing seasons disrupting pollination cycles. Warmer temperatures also decrease the sugar content of nectar potentially affecting pollinator nutrition. Warmer temperatures, particularly if accompanied by more standing water, will increase mosquito populations and thus the potential for mosquito-borne diseases.

Ectotherms (whose regulation of body temperature depends on external sources) include amphibians and reptiles and are expected to be affected by rising temperatures directly, through habitat changes, and other effects. Many amphibians depend on shallow water breeding habitat that may dry with higher temperatures. Changes in insect prey populations may be detrimental. Several diseases have impacted amphibians in recent years and may spread with higher temperatures.

One impact of concern for reptiles is that sex determination depends on temperature in the nest. Higher nest temperatures result in more female sea turtles but a higher proportion of males in alligators. If nest temperatures exceed 93 F, 50% of diamondback terrapin eggs die. This species is also losing nesting habitat to rising sea levels. Increasing temperatures also facilitate invasion of non-native species; there are at least 60 non-native reptiles in Florida. Increasing temperatures are changing bird migration patterns with birds migrating earlier. This may disrupt food cycles so that not enough insect prey is available to feed the young of migrating birds.

Mammals are also losing habitat to sea level rise. The Southeastern beach mouse has lost much of its habitat to development, and remaining habitat is threatened by rising sea levels. Constructed dunes on Kennedy Space Center built to protect launch facilities have provided beach mouse habitat, but how long it will persist is uncertain. The Key deer population is expected to lose 30-60% of its remaining habitat on Big Pine Key in several decades. For species with such limited ranges, difficult questions arise regarding whether and where to move remnant populations.

Florida manatees are frequently in shallow waters where they are subject to greater temperature stress than if in deeper waters. During extreme storms manatees experience more physical stress in shallow waters. Extreme storms are increasing with climate change. Algal blooms and red tide events have caused declines in manatee populations in recent years.

The rate of climatic change makes it difficult for animal populations to adapt. Some fish populations are moving north. Vegetation may increase with greater atmospheric CO₂, but this increase may be limited by water or nutrients.

What can you do?

Learn more through research. Practice energy efficiency. Grow a planet friendly yard. Consider climate policy when voting. Tell your friends!!

Board of Directors

President - Paul Schmalzer, Ph.D.
Vice President – Open
Treasurer – Megan McCormick

Secretary - Laura Covell
Newsletter Editor – Brittany Bayliss
Chapter Rep - Elizabeth Bishop

Education / Outreach - Open
Hospitality - John Stiner
At-Large – Jesse Baker

For More Information...

On the Web

Website: <https://searocket.fnpschapters.org>

Calendar: <https://searocket.fnpschapters.org/calendar>

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

Chapter Secretary: srsecretary@fnps.org

Florida Native Plant Society: <https://www.fnps.org/>

Facebook Page

