



The Rhexia

Paynes Prairie Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

www.paynesprairie.fnpschapters.org

May 2022



May Meeting

Science for Conservation: FNAI's role in protecting Florida's biodiversity

with **Geoff Parks,**

Research Scientist, Florida Natural Areas Inventory

Tuesday, May 17th, 2022, 7:00 p.m.

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Sanctuary

4225 NW 34th St, Gainesville FL 32605



The Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) was founded in 1981 to provide sound scientific information to support the conservation of biodiversity in Florida. Now housed at Florida State University, FNAI is part of a network of over 60 natural heritage programs in North America. Geoff Parks, Research Scientist at FNAI, will give an overview of FNAI's work –from its integral role supporting the Florida Forever land acquisition program to field projects for partners such as the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Florida State Parks-- and share interesting things seen along the way.

Prior to joining FNAI, Geoff Parks spent 18 years with the Nature Operations Division of the City of Gainesville's department of Parks Recreation and Cultural Affairs, managing the City's nature parks. Before moving to Florida, Geoff spent 4 years focused ecology and conservation of birds, conducting field work in Arizona, California, South Carolina, and Puerto Rico. Geoff has a BA in Biology from Wesleyan University and an MS in Botany from the University of Florida, where his research focused on seed banks and seedling germination of groundcover plants in longleaf pine sandhills.

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The Rhexia is published eight times a year by the Paynes Prairie Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society.

Comments are welcomed. Readers are encouraged to submit articles and images for publication consideration to gracehowell@gmail.com

A Message from the President...

Hello Paynes Prairians!

After a wet spring, we are headed into the dry month of May and then the summer rains start in June. Get out into the yard before the humidity becomes unbearable. Ben Williams' talk at our April meeting was excellent and the field trip to his and Luann's property, Wetlands Preserve, was even more so! Thanks to Susan Carr for setting this up. And, thanks to Ben and Luann for spending pretty much their whole Saturday showing us their extraordinary property. Heather Evans has documented the field trip and it's an excellent read. Her husband Pete took the photos. Thank you Heather and Pete!

May will be our last meeting of the "Spring Semester" and we will again meet in person at the Unitarian Fellowship hall. Geoff Parks, a botanist/research scientist at Florida Natural Area Inventory will be our speaker. Carol Lippincott will lead our field trip to Fort White Environmental Area. But!!!! This will be on May 14th, the Saturday before our meeting on the 17th. The instructions are below.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank Karen Schneider, Heather Goston and Karie Garren for tabling at Santa Fee Zoo. Thanks also go out to Howard and Lisa Jelks, Heather Goston and Karie Garren for tabling at the ACT Tree Fest at Swamp Head Brewery. I suspect Rob Garren also provided some assistance so thanks to him as well. Lastly, by the time you read this we will have tabled for the Nature Day in May ACT event at Little Orange Creek, so thanks to Ellen Thoms, Lee Bloomcamp, Michael Bubb and Karie Garren for helping out with this as well. Last but not least, thanks in advance to Ellen Thoms who is tabling solo for a Master Gardeners event also in May.

That's pretty much all I have for now. Mark your calendars and we'll see you soon.

-Mark



Tuberous grasspink,
Calopogon tuberosus

Grace Howell



APRIL FIELD TRIP REPORT

“A Mini-Universe Conveying Mastery Over an Inhospitable World” A Tour of Wetland Preserve with Susan Carr

April 23, 2022

Report and Photos By Heather Evans

The phrase “cabinet of curiosities” came to mind as I entered the cabin where we started our tour of Wetland Preserve. Nondescript on the outside, inside it was filled, floor to ceiling, with examples of the flora and fauna of Wetland Preserve. Shelves on one end held various skulls, turtle shells, a bowl of tree fungi, a glass jar of snake skins, and hand-made pine straw baskets. Nailed to the walls were a couple of dozen skins—otter, bobcat, red fox, fox squirrel, coyote, and so on.

“They’re almost all road kill,” Louann Williams quickly reassured us. I wondered about the 13 foot alligator skin.

Ben Williams, Louann’s husband and co-owner of Wetland Preserve, gave a short talk to orient us to the property we were about to tour. Using a large map, he showed how their 3,900 acres next to Rice Creek Conservation Area fits into the Ocala to Osceola (O2O) Wildlife Corridor.

Field trip organizer Susan Carr, Strategic Conservation Manager at Alachua Conservation Trust, who has worked with the Williamses to identify land to extend Wetland Preserve, spoke briefly about the conservation easement Williamses recently sold to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. It ensures the property will never be developed.

After the talk, the Williamses and 15 members of the Paynes Prairie chapter loaded into three electric vehicles in the open-air garage to the side of the cabin. I ended up at the wheel of a golf cart, with my husband Pete beside me and another couple behind. Off we went on one of the old logging roads through the property that the Williams had spent two years opening up and clearing.

We motored along silently on the grassy road between oak scrub on one side and planted longleaf pine on the

other. The sky was blue with few puffy clouds. The temperature was in the mid-70s. It was a glorious day.

First stop: A recently burned pine flatland. FNPS members swarmed over the site, squatting down to peer at plants while Ben talked about the value of prescribed burning. He explained that the section of pine forest had been burned within the past two months. While the longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) trunks were scorched, the ground was verdant. Like most people I’ve met who do controlled burns, Ben is an evangelist for the importance of periodic fire to restore natural landscapes to support plants, insects and animals.

Greenbriar (*Smilax* sp.) vines, for example, grow quickly after a burn and their tender tips are food for deer, wild turkey and other wildlife. However, if they continue to grow unchecked, their tender ends grow out



Susan Carr shows the red roots of
Lachnanthes caroliana





of reach, leaving only the tough, thorny stems, which cannot be used as food. "Anyone want to try it?" Asked Louann. "It tastes like asparagus." I took the piece she had picked and enjoyed the delicious flavor and tender crunchy texture.

Another native plant Louann was especially excited to show us was a large hooded pitcher plant (*Sarracenia minor*) nearby—and we Paynes Prairie members were suitably enthralled with her find.

We took off again, stopping at various points to identify and admire unusual native flora. We were all enjoying the hunt and ensuing debates regarding species. Genus is easy for these folks, who include botany or entomology grad students, professors or retired professors from University of Florida. Their erudition could be intimidating if they weren't so unaffected and excited by everything. Sightings included nodding clubmoss (*Lycopodiella cernua*), dense-spike blackroot (*Pterocaulon pycnostachyum*), grass-leaved ladies' tresses (*Spiranthes praecox*), and yet another carnivore, blue butterwort (*Pinguicula caerulea*).

Despite being a business school grad from New York City, I managed to contribute to a couple of debates by using the [Seek app by iNaturalist](#), which I had downloaded and tested the previous week. The Paynes Prairie members were overall more able to identify to the species level than the app, but there were one or two instances when the app decided a tie. Observations with the app can be uploaded, automatically tagged with location and time, to iNaturalist, where they must be confirmed by two researchers before being accepted as scientific observations for research.



Hooded Pitcher Plant, *Sarracenia minor*



Florida Anise, *Illicium floridanum*

We were running late for lunch by now and hadn't even observed the disjunct population of Florida anise (*Illicium floridanum*). That search led us into a dense, buggy woods carpeted with netted chain fern (*Woodwardia areolata*). We found the exotic flowering shrub beside a clear stream and admired and photographed it until the bugs drove us back to the electric carts.

After a brown bag lunch with beverages and chocolate courtesy of the Williamses back at the cabin, some of us joined an optional additional tour of a nearby sandhill. Controlled burning has brought back gopher tortoises to this area dominated by power lines. We saw several gopher tortoise holes in current use. Plants now thriving in this ecosystem include gopher apple (*Geobalanus oblongifolius*), netted pawpaw (*Asimina reticulata*), queen's delight (*Stillingia sylvatica*), and Florida greeneyes (*Berlandiera subacaulis*).

Back at home, I looked up "cabinet of curiosities" to check the association. Cabinets of curiosities were developed as a form of after-dinner amusement in noble households during the Italian Renaissance and could indeed occupy an entire room like the one at the Williams's cabin. "Standing at the center of this mini-universe and pointing at the objects to disclose their deepest secrets, collectors felt a sense of ease and mastery over a world that most

often appeared too big, too confusing, and too inhospitable," according to Sotheby's. Centuries later, the Williams's passion for wildlife and saving it for future generations gave me a sense of comfort and hope in a world that can feel too confusing and inhospitable. I am very thankful to them for the experience that Saturday and the work they are doing to preserve such an important part of Florida.



A Special Trip to Chiappini Farm Native Nursery

By Mark Elliott

We had a great time at Chiappini Farm Native Nursery on Saturday, April 30! At least 15 chapter members and friends descended upon the nursery. They were ready and waiting for us and explained we would be following a variation of the old "park a plant" system. Armed with white grease pencils we scattered across acres of native plant beds in search of those hard to find plants that we just couldn't live without. Cheering us on the Chiappini folk cruised the aisles in their electric carts and picked up the pots we had initialed and set aside. Back at the shop we found our stashes, tallied it all up and packed our cars full.

We managed to wrap it all up in a couple of hours and let them get back to their regular Saturday afternoon routines. The Chiappini folk are knowledgeable and friendly and a great resource for native plants and information. We are happy to support their mission and business and appreciate their willingness to share part of their weekend with us.

Dont forget!!
FNPS Annual Conference,
May 20-22, 2022
[Register here](#)



LOCAL NATIVE PLANT NURSERIES

Chiappini Farm Native Nursery

Open Monday-Friday 9am-5pm
150 Chiappini Farm Road
Hawthorne
352-475-5413

Falling Creek Nursery

Open by appointment, in Lake City
386-965-2389 (call or text)

Natural Treasures

Open by appointment, in Trenton
352-225-1381
naturaltreasuresfn@gmail.com.

Notestein Native Nursery

Open by appointment, in Gainesville
352-372-2107



Blueflower butterwort, *Pinguicula caerulea*

Photo by Grace Howell



May Field Trip to Fort White Wildlife and Environmental Area with Carol Lippincott Saturday, May 14, 8:30 am meet in Gainesville

[Fort White Wildlife Environmental Area](#) (WEA) consists of 1,610 acres purchased in 1997 and managed by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). It is located about 4 miles west of the town of Fort White, and borders the Santa Fe River.

Over half of Ft White WEA is longleaf pine sandhill, interspersed with oak hammock and hardwood forest, with floodplain forest along the Santa Fe River. Several rare plant species live here, such as spiked crested coralroot orchid, sandhill spiny-pod, cardinal flower, and atamasco lily. Check out species recorded from Ft White WEA by visiting the Fort White WEA [Nature Trackers Project](#).

Rating: Moderate difficulty. We will walk 1 to 3 miles at a leisurely pace on marked sandy trails through the forested floodplain along the Santa Fe River, then through longleaf pine sandhill. You can turn back any time if you don't want to walk further.

Bring: Sun hat, drinking water, lunch, closed walking shoes, rain gear.

- Don't bring your dog – dogs are not allowed and the sand spurs would be hard on their feet.
- There are no restrooms at the trailhead.

Meet Time: To caravan or carpool, meet at 8:30 AM at the Home Depot parking lot on Hwy 441 at 53 Ave. We will park near the Waffle House restaurant. It is a 50-minute drive from there.

For those who want to drive directly there, meet at 9:30 AM at the trailhead for the North and South trail loops, which is on NE 2 Way near the boat ramp on the Santa Fe River. (Do not go to the address shown on your GPS navigator.) Here is a [trail map](#) of the Ft White WEA.

Questions? Call or text Carol at 352-226-4500. She will decide whether to postpone due to weather.

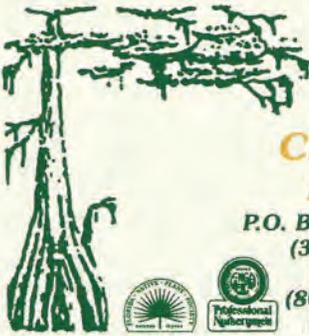
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Vouchers for the Florida Native license plate can be bought at any county tax collector's office in Florida, through the Florida Native Plant Society or through a separate online sales portal set up for the purpose. The cost of the voucher is \$33, and as soon as 3,000 vouchers are sold, the plate will be printed and buyers will receive a new license plate for their voucher. Purchase yours at this link:

<https://www.fnps.org/support/license>



PLEASE SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS - THEY HELP FUND OUR CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



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

The society fulfills this mission through:

- Support for conservation land acquisition
- Land management that enhances habitat suitability for native plants
- Education
- Public policies that protect our native flora, especially rare species
- Research on native plant species and,
- Encouragement of local landscaping practices and policies that preserve Florida's native plant heritage.

CALENDAR **Paynes Prairie Chapter** **Florida Native Plant Society**

May 17:
General Meeting
7:00 pm IN PERSON

(See page 1 for details)

May 14:
Field Trip
Fort White WEA
with Carol Lippincott
8:30 am

(See page 6 for details)

May 20-22:
41st Annual FNPS Conference
(Virtual)

(See page 5 for details)

Have a great summer!
See you in September!

Photo Credits: Our thanks to Wesley Hetrick for permission to use his photo, Sunrise at Paynes Prairie, on Page 1. See more of Wesley's images at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/wesleyhetrick>