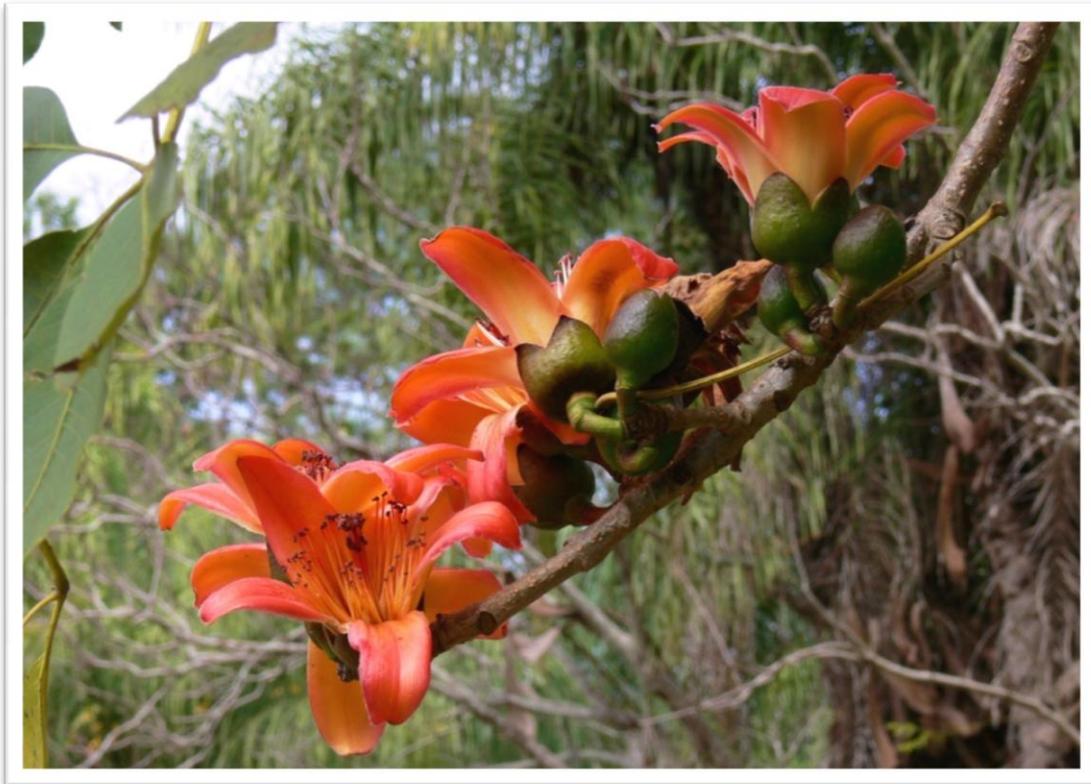


BEAUTYBERRY POST

THE NEWSLETTER OF MACKAY GARDENS AND LAKESIDE PRESERVE

May - June / 2014



In Touch by Steve Franklin

In one of his essays on Nature Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "In the woods we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life, no disgrace, no calamity which nature cannot repair." Those of us who volunteer a certain amount of our time and energy to the restoration and preservation of national, state, and local parks, preserves, and protected lands have, I'm reasonably sure, found those words to be very inspirational and true. Reconnecting with nature whether through the performance of good works in its varied habitats, the practice of some form of art, the creation of inspired dialog, or by simply sitting in its midst and observing all the life that its diversity has to offer is a wonderfully calming experience. It's also humbling. Historian Henry Adams wrote, "Chaos was the law of nature. Order was the dream of man." For years man's only aim seemed to be to make the lands

where he lived more productive. His intentions were good. He constantly had more mouths to feed, and so needed more space in which to grow food, establish money-making businesses, shelter his loved ones, and pursue happiness. Unfortunately, the pursuit of security and happiness has had an enormously negative impact on our environment. Thankfully, more and more people are realizing that and beginning to appreciate the necessity of returning to sustainable living practices. In his poem, "From the World" William Wordsworth wrote, "The world is too much with us, late and soon / Getting and spending we lay waste our powers / Little we see in nature that is ours..." Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve and parks and preserves like it are ours, and the only way to appreciate their importance to our survival and overall well-being is to visit them and embrace their subtle benefits. Why don't you come outside and reconnect today?

Above photo: spectacular flowers of the red-silk cotton tree, *Bombax ceiba*. The red-silk cotton tree is from southern Asia although exact origins are unknown since the tree has been cultivated for centuries. Mackay Gardens has two very large mature specimens and two younger trees. Their stunning bloom cycle just ended. Now, seed pods are starting to release the soft, fluffy fibers embedded with small dark seeds. You might just see these little puffs of cotton floating gently along on the breeze over the next two weeks if you are strolling near the Mackay house. Photo by Cathy Butcher.

Calendar of Events

May 2014

- 5/1 -10AM First Thursday Master Gardener Workshop- Photography in the Garden

June 2014

- 6/5 -10AM First Thursday Master Gardener Workshop- Vermiculture Make n' Take
- Tuesday & Thursdays –Zumba classes 6-7PM, a small fee required for this class

July 2014

- 7/3-10AM First Thursday Master Gardener Workshop
- 7/19-time TBA Astronomy Night

Please note, guided nature walks and Mackay work days will resume in the fall. For more information contact Parks and Recreation at 863-291-5272.



Mature bald eagle perched in snag overlooking Lake Rochelle

Eyes on Mackay Eagles

by Jeannie Carroll

Eagle Watch Volunteer and
Mackayster

The afternoon of February 28, 2012 I received a phone call from my brother-in-law stating he had an injured eagle in one of his pastures. With the help of Debbie Helsel, Executive Director of Back to Nature Wildlife Refuge, and Reinier Munguia, Lake Region Audubon

President, we rescued the injured eagle. After being examined, Reinier determined her clavicle was broken. She would need to be taken to Center for Birds of Prey in Maitland, FL. My experience with rescue/rehabilitation was with mammals. Words cannot describe the adrenalin rush I felt being in her presence. As I held her in my arms, I looked into her beautiful golden-amber colored eyes and instantly fell in love. She wasn't "just a bird!" She was powerful, intelligent, and beautiful. She represented freedom, but somehow hers had just been taken away.

I then became involved with Lake Region Audubon Society Eagle Watch Program. After attending a training program, Reinier Munguia assigned volunteers nest(s) to monitor. I have monitored the active nesting pair of eagles at Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve for two years. It is a perfect location! It offers native pines, cypress trees, and snags (dead trees) used for "sentry" perches or just for roosting. The abundance of nearby lakes ensures sufficient food to raise their young without disputes from other eagles. Mackay also offers little disturbances from man, which is critical during the season. Disturbance may lead to nest abandonment or premature fledging, which can lessen the chance of survival.

The eagles I observe are descendants of Mackay eagles that date back at least to 1991. As a teenager, John Dame, Jr. would walk through the woods of Mackay property and climb up a big Cypress tree. There he would sit and sketch the eagles. The landscape is a little different now, but the nest he drew as a young man still sits in the fork of the same proud pine. They now use an alternate nest.

My respect and admiration for the eagles continue to grow. They mate for life, work cooperatively together, and both raise their young. They are exceptional parents. Our "Mackay eagles" are also

master builders. Each year they've woven new branches into the old making their tapestry bigger and better. The nest is huge and the pine is leaning as a result, but it has successfully held fledges in 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. This year's fledges are still close to the nest. Just yesterday I observed both of them enjoying floating on the thermal drafts, rising and falling like the steady beating of a drum. It has been such a joy to watch them grow from tiny, down covered hatchlings to eaglets with brown-to-black pin feathers, to soaring independently above their nest. Their behaviors are just like our children. They jump up and down in the nest, fight with one another, vocalize when they insist on being fed, and snuggle up to their parents for love and protection!



by Jeannie Carroll

Fledging eaglets and adult in nest at Mackay

Lake Alfred is so lucky to be home to these iconic birds! It is my sincerest hope that we will treasure their presence. I hope to always walk the paths of Mackay or the shoreline of Lake Rochelle or Lake Haines and look up and see the eagles soaring! The rescued eagle recovered and was released back in the area she was found. The more eyes and ears we have on the ground, the more eagles, directly or indirectly impacted by urbanization, will have a chance to remain wild and free! If you would like to volunteer for Eagle Watch, please contact: Reineir Munguia at eaglewatch@lakeregionaudubon.org.

Did you know?

Mackay is pronounced “Mac- EYE”

Master Gardener Corner by Cathy Butcher, Polk County Master Gardener

MGLP is honored to be a host site for one of the four Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ demonstration gardens in Polk County. These educational gardens offer the public a sampler of ideas that utilize the Nine Principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™. By applying these principles to their yard design, homeowners can achieve beautiful landscapes that work with Florida's unique habitats, help conserve and protect the quality of our water supply, and protect the environment as well.

Polk County Master Gardeners recently provided funds to extend the existing demo garden around the nearby restrooms. This refreshing addition gives a sense of balance and completion to the landscaping and much-needed beautification of the dreary building.

Anne Yasalonis, Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program Coordinator, created a landscape plan to utilize Florida-friendly drought-tolerant plants, install a trellis for vines to soften the harsh look of a wall, and incorporate two distinctly different mulch types to define beds versus pathways. Anne coordinated the installation with Master Gardeners and Mackayster volunteers who implemented the project over several work days. Plant labels will arrive in the near future.

Through creative use of leftover building materials, assistance by Lake Alfred City crews with mulch delivery, and generous donations of plants, this project was achieved under budget!

Thank you Polk County Master Gardeners for financial assistance, Lake Alfred Department of Parks and Recreation for mulch delivery, Anne Yasalonis for the creative design, and Joel Campbell, Norma Skobel, and the Master Gardener Plant PropagATORS for their valuable plant donations!



To learn more about the Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ program visit the UF/IFAS site at <http://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/homeowners/publications.htm> .

Angel Flight

(While canoeing the Peace River)

---And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest---

Shakespeare, Hamlet, V, 2

At first the tree was a snowcapped mountain
Raised by imagination's perception.
It glistened, a pearl in the morning sun,
But then erupted---birds rising as one.
They were fleeing, their pallid wings beating
Like the dull rumble of distant thunder,
And the tepid air was torn asunder
As sinews perked and white feathers fluttered
And rowdy traffic-jamb squawks were uttered.

They circled higher---a swaying spire
With cross at its peak to appease His wrath.
Spiraling up an invisible path,
The pale flock seemed to melt into a cloud
As angels might ascending as a crowd.

And then silence...and I felt no regret
For my brief envy of the elegant
Egret.

Steve Franklin

History by Steve Franklin

Before the City of Lake Alfred was given control of the property they would name Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve, archeologists conducted a reconnaissance of the land. Based on their observations during this survey and the study of some artifacts previously found on the property by amateur naturalist John Dame, Jr., it was determined that aboriginals probably occupied the lake shore from 3000 BC to 1000 AD. Where did these earliest of Floridians originate?

There are differing theories. One states that people who occupied a 1000 mile wide strip of land between Siberia and Alaska during the last ice age decided to move. Through many generations they'd occupied this harsh tundra until some family camps finally decided to migrate further east. These people followed caribou trails into more pleasant valleys surrounded by the mountains of Alaska. Years later, as the last ice age came to an end, the land mass on which they'd lived disappeared beneath the Bering Straits. The melting ice had caused waters in the oceans to rise. The land mass which connected Siberia to Alaska had once again become part of the ocean floor.

For many more generations these first nomadic Americans continued to migrate south and east. Sometimes a tribe would settle permanently, becoming well-adapted to their chosen environment. Others would find it necessary to keep moving, following herds of animals once the land seemed to lack the resources they needed to survive.

In the beginning the people were hunters, and they found game plentiful in the flatlands of North America. In the north they found giant moose and bear-sized beavers. Near the wooded areas were found caribou and sloths the size of elephants. On the plains they could hunt long-horned bison and huge mammoths. To the south were seen mastadons, horses, camels, and what seemed like unlimited numbers of water birds. Carnivores like the wolf, sabre-toothed tiger, and panther were ever menacing, and they were much larger than modern day species.

The Paleo-Indians became great hunters, but their successes combined with their growing numbers probably accelerated the eventual extinction of some of the animals they hunted. That development forced them to become hunter/gatherers. In Florida they learned which plants could be made edible or used as medicines. They learned to hunt and trap smaller game such as rabbit, raccoon, opossum, white-tailed deer, and tortoises. They fished and gathered snails and shellfish using dugout canoes.

Eventually, the Paleo-Indians of Florida formed large communities. In southwest and central Florida three of the largest tribes were the Calusa, the Tocobaga, and the Timucuan. By 1000 A.D. these people had become the most advanced culture north of Mexico. We know that some of them spent time along the shores of lakes like Rochelle because a Spanish boy by the name of Fontenada was captured by the Calusa when he was 13 years old and spent 17 years with them. Sometime in the 1500's, after returning to Spain, he wrote that summers with the Calusa from southwest Florida were spent fishing and hunting along the shores of the lakes in central Florida.

When Europeans arrived in the 1500's they didn't come alone. They brought with them germs called smallpox, measles, and influenza. Between the effects of these diseases and the slave trade the Ancient Floridians virtually disappeared, and that's why most of today's Floridians are unaware that they ever existed.

Recent Happenings

- First Thursday Master Gardener Workshops, hosted by Master Gardeners Pat Farrell and Debra Howell, continue to set record-breaking attendance.
- Juliet Rynear, Bok Tower Garden's Rare Plant Conservation Program, announced the discovery of five endangered scrub lupine sprouts on Mackay property, the first generation of naturally propagated lupines on the experimental site.
- FWC continues herbicide spraying along the shoreline of Lake Rochelle in an effort to eradicate invasive cogon grass from Mackay property.
- Conservation Planning Services of the FWC are developing a plan of action for restoring our gopher tortoise habitat in the Preserve. Volunteers, Art Wade and Steve Franklin, completed a gopher tortoise burrow survey of the property, a necessary step before any projects can be started or grant funding allocated.
- Jeff Tillman is researching grant funding for help with removal of a long list of exotic, invasive plants already overtaking and altering the native habitats within the Preserve.
- Several plants removed intentionally or inadvertently from the historic Gardens over the years were replanted within the landscape. Cathy Butcher propagated and replaced red bauhanias, variegated Arabian lilac, angel's trumpet, and a silk oak tree.
- Lake Alfred work crews continue removing invasive running bamboo.
- An outdoor classroom with benches was built in a serene wooded area by volunteers from the First Baptist Church of Lake Alfred. City Commissioner, Charles Lake, led the project. This sitting area will be used as a stopover point in future nature hikes and provide an outdoor classroom for the Lake Alfred Summer Camp. Area schools, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and others, will be encouraged to use this area for field trip presentations.

Our new outdoor
classroom!



Margrit Valliere and Steve Franklin admire the new outdoor classroom

Final Thoughts from Cathy Butcher

As we approach the hot, rainy days of summer, the scheduled work days at Mackay come to a halt until cooler days of fall arrive. Many volunteers cannot tolerate the humid working conditions and others leave the state during this time. However, the need remains for maintenance of the landscape and Lake Alfred City crews will be consumed with mowing obligations. Typically, much of the progress we make during fall, winter, and spring will appear to be lost as the Gardens rapidly grow. However, there are a few hardy volunteers who have committed to summer work. Last summer the Gardens remained in beautiful condition due to the sweat labor of these dependable folks. Thank you! And thank you to all volunteers that have contributed even one hour of effort to restore these lovely gardens and preserve. The benefits are shared by all. Tom Zimmers deserves special recognition for his many hours of weeding everywhere and keeping the grotto in lovely condition, an enormous task.

We appreciate the donations of time and materials from the First Baptist Church of Lake Alfred. The outdoor classroom was high on the wish-list. Thank you Pastor Mike Jones, Commissioner Charles Lake and all the gang that built benches and spread mulch.

Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve depends on the help of volunteers. There will ALWAYS be a need for volunteer assistance. If you would like to help but cannot do physical work, please consider how you might contribute in other ways. Other opportunities include; assisting with educational seminars and nature hikes, creating environmental or historic displays, and developing fund-raising ideas. Please contact Cathy Butcher, Volunteer Coordinator, at cassiebelle@verizon.net.



The Beautyberry Post is coming to you from volunteers who still struggle to get the computer turned on sometimes. We hope you enjoy watching the progress we expect this newsletter to make. Thanks to everyone who has sent an email of support and ideas. We also have lots of ideas for upcoming newsletters but we like hearing from you as well. Please send remarks and suggestions to: cassiebelle@verizon.net. Include Beautyberry in your subject line.

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