

BEAUTYBERRY POST

THE NEWSLETTER OF MACKAY GARDENS AND LAKESIDE
PRESERVE

July/August 2018



In Touch by Steve Franklin

The sun is nearing the tops of the forest-covered mountains that project from the western horizon like the ramparts of a massive fort. Its heat has been diminished

by frigid air that arrived with rain, which recently fell from an air mass thunderstorm. The anvil cloud's gray, washed-out remains will prevent the sun from raising the temperature any higher today. Water is still washing down the slope of the moss and grass covered trail by my campsite. Between me and the road, water draining from the mountainside has eroded several small trenches through the red clay and gravel of the campsite. I can hear these rivulets tinkle and gurgle as they stream toward gorges that will empty into silvery rivers in the surrounding valleys. The combined scents of rain, damp soil, and wet leaves are saturating the air. It's definitely an earthy aroma and a blessing. The whole scene makes me feel grateful once again for the opportunity to spend time in a wilderness sporting untold numbers of healthy trees with whispering leaves, shrubs with purple, white, pink, and flaming yellow blossoms, and vibrant wildflowers. That place is the invaluable Chattahoochee National Forest.

A little more than a hundred years ago the prospects of people enjoying nature at her best in this locale were bleak. Then a congressman named Weeks introduced an act by the same name, which allowed the government to begin purchasing land for conservation purposes. Up till then lumber companies had been indiscriminately de-foresting the Appalachian Mountains. This resulted in loss of habitat and erosion, which clogged and polluted rivers and streams that much of the southeastern U.S. relied on to supplement its water needs.

During the Great Depression the U.S. Forest Service, with help from the Civilian Conservation Corp. (CCC), also known as the Tree Army, continued an intense effort to restock the denuded mountain ranges. Their goals were to properly manage the timber, protect water resources and wildlife habitats, and insure that the people of the U.S. would continue to have places to enjoy a wide range of nature-related activities. Their efforts resulted in thousands of acres of healthy, productive temperate rainforests that millions of people visit each year. These forests are sanctuaries where we can come to escape the fast-paced, digitalized parts of the world in which most of us currently reside.

Now, how does all of this relate to Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve (MGLP)? Well, though it's much smaller at only 112 acres, by saving it from development the leaders of the City of Lake Alfred and concerned citizens took the initial steps toward returning portions of that valuable real estate to the people. They also set in motion the process of restoring the preserve to a pristine example of a natural Florida environment. Ecosystems that support native flora and fauna are beginning to be managed in a way that will encourage their original occupants to return home and thrive. The so-called unimproved north shore of Lake Rochelle, MGLP's land, is not contributing to pollution from chemical run-off that continues to plague many of the lakes in the Polk County watershed. And local residents and visitors have been provided with a location where they can enjoy passive recreation opportunities that heal body and soul. Soon, either through the acquisition of grant funds or the generosity of nature-loving philanthropists who are anxious to help people learn how to live an eco-friendly, sustainable lifestyle, we will also have a nature center located on an already designated portion of the preserve.

I'm finding it amazing how optimistic about the future of man and the earth a nature lover like me can become while living in a wilderness. Maybe it's the close proximity to a wide variety of blooming wildflowers and shrubs, leaf-enriched trees, and healthy wildlife from scampering chipmunks to trundling bears that lifts my spirit and gives me hope. Whatever the cause of these feelings of inspiration and confidence, I truly believe that getting closer to nature is an obvious solution to many of the challenges we all face today. How about it? Why not go for a walk in the woods at Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve? You too may become inspired to play a part in helping to protect a small but important, potentially influential, portion of our gracious natural home.



The feature photo is a historic rendition of the Mackay house entryway envisioned by artist and landscape architect Bill Bissett.

Calendar of Events

July

- 7/5- **First Thursday Workshop- CANCELLED**
- **July volunteer work days:** 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 Tuesday 8am-11. Please check in at the Parks and Recreation office for assignments.

August

- 8/2- **First Thursday Workshop-CANCELLED**
- 8/4- **Astronomy Night** with Cleve Carter- 7pm-10. This ever popular event teaches the basics of astronomy. An observation session on the back lawn will follow the presentation, weather permitting. Some telescopes will be provided but feel free to bring your own.
- **August volunteer work days-**7, 14, 21, 28. Tuesdays 8am-11.

All events are **free** unless otherwise noted.

Have you considered **volunteering** at MGLP? By donating a small portion of your time you are helping to improve and protect a piece of Florida's rich history and the habitats which surround it. If you'd like to become involved please contact Volunteer Coordinator Cathy Butcher at cassiebelle@verizon.net.



Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve is located at 945 Mackay Blvd. in Lake Alfred, Florida, 33850. It is free and open 7 days a week from dawn until dusk. To inquire about renting the house or picnic shelter, or to ask about upcoming events please call Parks and Recreation at 863-291-5272. Beautyberry Post is a bi-monthly newsletter edited by Cathy Butcher with assistance from Steve Franklin. To receive the BP by email please contact Anaeli Quinones at aquinones@mylakealfred.com



Tiger Hunt! by Cathy Butcher

Recently, while on vacation in the Northwoods of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, I participated in a tiger hunt. I successfully shot several. No, I'm not talking about rifles and wild beasts. I'm talking about photographing tiger swallowtail butterflies, of the genus *Papilio*. I needed photos for an article that I planned to write as part of my Wisconsin Master Naturalist educational outreach. During my research to learn more about these very common large butterflies, I discovered the surprising fact that the tigers I was shooting up north are actually a different species from the tigers we see back in Florida. I was unaware of any obvious differences. They looked the same. So I thought I'd share some of this interesting information with other casual butterfly observers out there who might be ready to learn a little more about this group of lovely butterflies.

Swallowtails come in many species. Their range covers most parts of North America, Canada, and Alaska. So I'm betting that most people have seen some kind of swallowtail butterfly in their life.

The first known painting of a tiger swallowtail was a watercolor done by Englishman John White in 1587. White participated in Sir Walter Raleigh's expeditions to explore Virginia for future colonizing. Part of his job was to sketch the landscape, animals, and native people of the New World. He titled the painting "Mamankanois" which was thought to be the Native American word for "butterfly". All of his surviving paintings are now in the British Museum's collection. In 1758 the Eastern tiger swallowtail was assigned a binary name, *Papilio glaucas*, by Carl Linneaus who devised the two-part naming system used to classify life forms. Since 1906 the northern species, that I was photographing (top photo), was considered to be a sub-species of the Eastern tiger swallowtail. Then in 1991, studies and genetic testing confirmed enough differences between the two that allowed assignment of a new species name, *P. canadensis*, now commonly called the Canadian tiger swallowtail.



The common name, tiger swallowtail, has been used for 150 years. It's easy to understand the reference to tigers since they share a similar tawny-gold color and black stripes. I speculate the second part of the name was a comparison of their shape to a man's coat worn in the 1850's known as a "swallowtail" or "tails", cut high at the front waist with two long tails left suspended down the back.

Physical differences between the Eastern and Canadian species are so slight that I cannot tell them apart unless I'm comparing photos side by side, certainly not while chasing one down the road. The Canadian tigers are smaller but their range may be the easiest determining factor for identification. They survive in regions with harsh winters and short growing seasons. The chrysalis has the ability to hibernate. In May a butterfly emerges, quickly locates a mate, and produces one generation only. The Eastern tigers live in areas of warmer habitats. They can produce two or more generations during a season. Also, each larva has a favorite food source that the other cannot tolerate. Birches (*Betula spp.*) and quaking aspen trees (*Populus tremuloides*) are favored by the Canadian tiger larvae while the tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) is a favorite food of the Eastern tiger larvae. Another unusual difference is that female Eastern tiger butterflies have a black form while the Canadian tigers do not.

Central Florida is blessed with a display of butterflies almost year-round. Tiger swallowtails are plentiful and can be seen in moist habitats, meadows, and forest edges as long as enough food sources are available for both larvae and adults. The larvae eat leaves of ash trees (*Fraxinus spp.*), sweet bay (*Magnolia virginiana*), and black cherry (*Prunus serotina*). Adults nectar from a

variety of flowering plants and will visit city parks and backyard gardens looking for food. Tigers are frequent visitors to my yard and I see them at MGLP as well.

Tiger swallowtails are active in Florida from March thru November and can produce three or four generations. Their life cycle begins as a single egg laid upon a leaf of a host plant. In peninsular Florida this is typically the sweet bay. If you are out looking for young tiger larvae on sweet bay leaves, expect the unexpected. They have a camouflage technique that protects them from being noticed by predators. They look like brown and white bird droppings. Now who would want to eat that? As they mature into lime green caterpillars, another set of self-protection tools develops. The tiger babies now have colorful, scary fake eyes on the sides of their head and when feeling threatened they display what appears to be a forked-tongue and emit an odor that predators must find repulsive. I'm sure most predators flee in horror at this sudden confusing transformation from tasty plump worm to evil-eyed smelly snake thing.

Once the caterpillar fully matures it moves down the tree trunk and forms into a chrysalis on nearby leaf litter or the trunk itself. Over time it develops within the chrysalis into a butterfly and when seasonal conditions are right it will break free, rest and allow its wings to unfold and fill with blood, and then fly off in search of a mate to begin the cycle all over again.

There are many online resources dedicated to Florida butterflies. Visit these University of Florida IFAS Extension sites to learn more about Florida butterflies including how to attract them to your yard:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/IN/IN21800.pdf>

http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/topic_butterflies#

The Canadian tiger swallowtail photo was taken by Cathy Butcher.

The image of the John White tiger swallowtail watercolor was used by permission © **Trustees of the British Museum.**

ENJOY!

Kindly Sisters

Serenity and Silence are sisters
Who are generally found in the woods
Expressing ideas with calm gestures
Meant to make them easily understood.

The gentle movements of their limbs convey
Sentiments foreign to other places,
While the peace of their attitudes just may
Remove long-creased frowns from angry faces.

Their fresh, life-sustaining breaths are fragrant
As wildflowers are pleasing to the eye.
Their perfect lines are real as a Rembrandt;
A concept a critic cannot deny.

Seek the woods when you find yourself lonely
Or disenchanted with life among crowds.
Those kindly sisters may own the only
Grace that can relieve your mind of dark clouds.

Steve Franklin

May 3, 2018