



# THE PAWPAW PRESS

Newsletter of the Pawpaw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society: May 2019

## Pawpaw and Audubon partner for the environment

Ranger Celena Zimmerman of Gamble Rogers/North Peninsula State Park hosted a “Landscaping for Wildlife” event on Saturday, May 25, and invited Halifax River Audubon and the Pawpaw Chapter to participate as co-presenters. An attentive group of about 25 people took in valuable information and stayed after the event to ask many good questions of Sande Habali, Tom Colvin, Melissa Lammers, and Ranger Zimmerman.

Using Audubon’s “Plants for Birds” program as a springboard, Melissa, Sande, and Don Spence have been speaking at events and to homeowner’s associations about the essential role native plants in home landscapes play in stopping the decline of North American songbird populations and, indeed, in maintaining the biodiversity that supports all life. They emphasize that planting native plants for birds is far kinder and gentler on our environment, and especially our water, than typical Florida landscape practices, and provide a “roadmap” to help others begin to go native.

If you know of a group or homeowners’ association that would be interested in learning about “Native Plants for Birds,” please contact Melissa at [melissalammers@gmail.com](mailto:melissalammers@gmail.com)—*Melissa Lammers (Photo by Luis Villalon)*



*Melissa Lammers, Tom Colvin and Sande Habali at the 'Landscaping for Wildlife' event.*



*Left, Barbara Kieran on a conference field trip led by Dr. Walter Taylor. Right, Karen relaxing at one of the evening dinners offered as part of the conference.*

## Conference 2019: a first-timer’s view

*The 39th annual conference of the Florida Native Plant Society in Crystal River was a first-time experience for our chapter treasurer, Karen Walter, who first learned about FNPS through the conference Pawpaw hosted in Daytona Beach. Karen offers her thoughts on her first conference:*

The mission of FNPS (“to promote the preservation, conservation, and restoration of the native plants and native plant communities of Florida”) is exactly what I believe. But how do I do it? The annual conference held this year in

Crystal River offered an opportunity to hear from top environmentalists and to meet and spend time with people from other chapters. These opportunities allowed me to discover more about FNPS in general, as well as how individual chapters are working on the mission statement.

The field trips were the highlight of the conference for me. They offer experiences with leaders in their fields. We got to see new and different plant communities. These opportunities gave us a first-hand glimpse into our fabulous, fragile, and unique Florida, thus furthering our understanding of our need to preserve, protect, and conserve.

We also heard from inspiring and entertaining speakers who shared information about FNPS projects and policies. The opportunity to witness the enthusiasm for our organization gave me inspiration and new energy for what our organization stands for and can accomplish. It is an opportunity everyone should experience.

*Editor's Note: Annual conferences are opportunities for members to expand their knowledge and benefit from the research and science of the society. Members at all "levels" can benefit. While attending the conference is not free, each year the Conference Committee offers opportunities to volunteer and mitigate the cost. By volunteering for a day, for example, you get a free field trip. If you haven't attended in the past, come see for yourself next year when the conference takes place in Jacksonville at the University of North Florida. (Photos by Sonya Guidry)*

## Natives nurture art, and science

Randall Preston, art teacher and garden club sponsor at Indian River Elementary in Edgewater, received a native plant educational grant from the Pawpaw Chapter for her school's gardens. Students from the garden club planted and tended the plants in preparation for the school's "Earth Day Extravaganza." The gardens became a focal point during the celebration, providing inspiration for artwork and opportunities of study for young citizen scientists.

Randall's art classes continue to utilize the gardens in their art. Most recently, artists drew pictures of themselves as plants! The Education Committee of the Pawpaw Chapter will continue to support these endeavors in following school years with advice on care and propagation as well as donations of more plants to complete the garden beds. —*Sande Habali*



## Upcoming events:

June 10 (Mon): Pawpaw Chapter meeting with Renee Stambauch on landscaping with native plants

June 15 (Sat): Pawpaw field trip to Lake Ashby Park for walk and picnic. Leader: Warren Reynolds

June 15 (Sat): Cuplet Fern Chapter's tour of natural areas at Stetson (reservations required)

June 15 (Sat): Pollinator Day at Tomoka State Park

June 17 (Mon): Park of Honor workday, Olive Street, South Daytona

July 8 (Mon.): Pawpaw Chapter meeting with Dr. Jennifer Mitchell on St. Johns River restoration

July 13 (Sat): Pontoon boat eco tour on St. John's River from Astor to Lake George with lunch at Blackwater Inn.

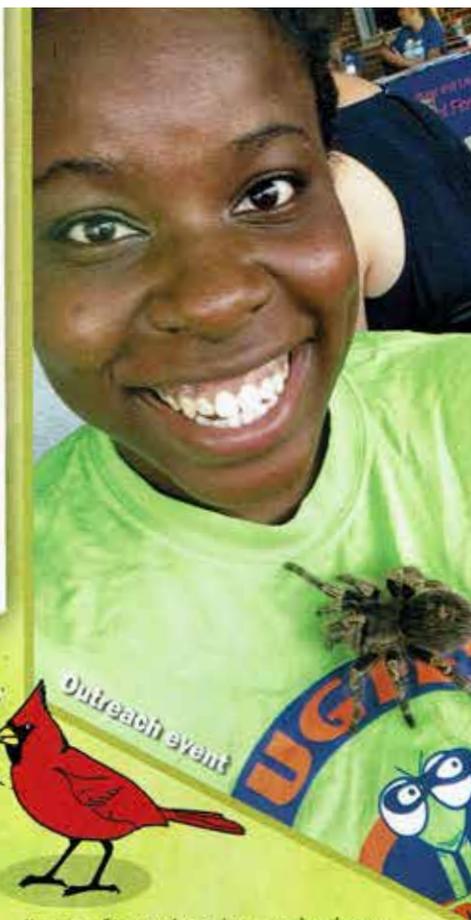
\$32 per person. Meet at 9:30 or 10 am at Blackwater Inn

July 15 (Mon): Park of Honor workday, Olive Street, South Daytona

Aug. 12 (Mon.): Pawpaw Chapter meeting with Byron White on Yaupon Brothers, his agribusiness growing and manufacturing Yaupon holly tea.

Aug. 17 (Sat): Native plant swap and picnic, Indian River Lagoon Park off Saxon Avenue, New Smyrna Beach

**Keep up with chapter events at [facebook.com/pawpawchapter/](https://facebook.com/pawpawchapter/)**



# Time for Constance

IT'S RARE to find anyone as excited about bugs as UF entomology senior Constance Darrisaw. From common pest insects to outreach exotics, she is always ready to wrangle.

**A** NATIVE of New Smyrna Beach, Florida, Constance graduated from the Volusia County school system in 2015 and went on to pursue her Associate of Arts degree from Daytona State College before transferring to the University of Florida in January 2018.

**How long have you been into bugs?**  
The short answer would be "my whole life." I can't remember a time when I wasn't in love with insects. As a little girl my mom would take me to the library a lot, and I must have checked out every insect book in the children's section of the New Smyrna Beach Library. Probably three times over! I think I could still point you to the right shelf.

As much as my parents didn't understand me, they didn't try to stop me. My garage was a graveyard of plastic bug catchers and butterfly nets. I was always content to be outside and with the help of my assistant, my big sister, I would catch anything I could get my hands on.

**Then no one was surprised that you took up this major?**

Actually, it was still a surprise, even for me. Although I had spent the better part of my formative years announcing to everyone that I would become an entomologist. I was never exposed to the world of entomology and therefore didn't know how real it was.

By the end of middle school, when they wanted to start hearing realistic answers for future careers, I decided I should choose something that wasn't just a hobby and took up interest in the medical field. I went through high school and the first year of college pushing my ever-present love for bugs to the back burner.

**So, what brought you 'back to the light?'**

While at my state college I met my mentor, Ms. Sonya Guidry. A godsend, honestly! She got me involved with the Florida Native Plant society, which got me outside again after all those years. Then she took me on an expedition with Earthwatch Institute to study the butterflies and bees of the Indian Himalayas. That did it. After spending nearly two weeks doing entomology field research as a citizen scientist, I knew I couldn't possibly deny the call any longer. As soon as I got back home, I started my research into entomology programs.

**Do you actually love bugs as much as they say?**

Yes, and probably more! The joke around the lab is that I stand outside and sing for all the bugs to come to me. Everyone at home is really shocked to see my insect



collections for my classes because they know that, for me, killing bugs is a cardinal sin. They're also pretty confused about me working in pest control.

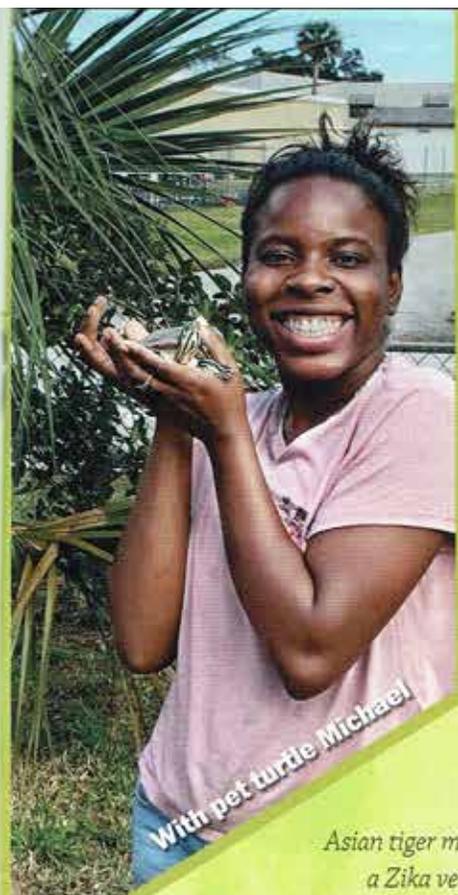
But I love more than just bugs. I have four turtles, two tadpoles, a giant water bug, a young tarantula, and a plethora of fish. I also used to raise frogs every summer. My parents were very allowing. Thanks for that.

**So how did a girl from the beach end up in the swamp?**

When I found out that UF had an undergraduate entomology program it became my first choice. The fact that it's the No. 1 program in the world was merely a perk. I immediately contacted the advisors to make sure I would have all the prerequisites taken care of so I could transfer over.

**Speaking of girls, are you intimidated to be in a male-dominated field?**

Absolutely not! As a female and a minority, I feel that my difference often becomes my strength. I am afforded opportunities to reach crowds that others may not connect with. I also find the entomology field to be pleasingly diverse, and right now UF's Entomology and Nematology Department is skewed toward women. Many of my professors and peers are highly respected women for the work that they've done. I'm hoping to follow their examples to success. We're making a comeback in a big way, and pretty soon that's going to be reflected throughout the pest control industry.



With pet turtle Michael



With mentor Sonya in India



Asian tiger mosquito, a Zika vector

**You're involved with a lot of outreach. Are you in it for the bugs or the people?**

A little bit of both. I love any chance to handle the live arthropods, but I also love educating the public about them. I especially love teaching children about them. I learned this during my two years working at the New Smyrna Beach Boys and Girls Club. I took every opportunity to teach the students about insects and even ran a program about our native pollinators and made bee houses. I think it's important to expose children to entomology early because even if it doesn't become their dream job, we could at least get rid of some of the stigma around bugs.

**How did you get involved with Dr. Koehler and the UF Urban Lab?**

Last spring I wanted to get into research, so I looked through the undergraduate research directory. When I saw that Dr. Koehler was looking for some help with a project concerning Zika-carrying mosquitoes, I was in. I met with him and started later that week. I've been in the lab ever since.

**What projects are you working on?**

I'm working on a joint project between urban entomology and materials science engineering under Dr. Chris Batich. We are hoping to create an artificial blood meal to lab-rear mosquitoes, especially for implementation of sterile insect technique.

In the near future we may eliminate the need to purchase blood for our mosquitoes.

**How has your work in the Urban Lab helped you?**

Working in the urban lab has exposed me to the world of applied mosquito-control research. The knowledge and experience I gained here even in just one semester of volunteering under Dr. Sanchez Arroyo were enough to help me get a summer position last year with the Manatee County Mosquito Control District. It's also been great interacting with members of the pest control industry and getting an idea of how it all works.

**You're still an undergrad. What does your future look like?**

Well, I plan to graduate in December with my bachelor of science, then I'm hoping to go straight into my masters. Maybe about halfway through that you could ask me about a PhD.

After all of my schooling I'd like to get a job doing applied mosquito-control research. I'm not overly excited about the idea of spraying every mosquito to death, so I'd like to get into some biological control work. **PP**



With mom, Felicia



In Meteora, Greece