



ECHOS

<http://www.friendsofsavannas.org>

Winter Solstice Drum Circle



Celebrate the beginning of winter with local drumming enthusiasts at the 8th annual Winter Solstice Drum Circle hosted by the Savannas Preserve State Park and Kevin Beatkeeper! The drum circle will take place on the evening of December 19, 2021 from 6-8pm in front of the park's Education Center, located at 2541 SE Walton Road.

You are encouraged to bring your own chair. You are also welcome to bring your own drum or borrow an instrument during the event. You can also just come and enjoy the sights and sounds of the drums in this beautiful and natural Preserve.

Please check our website often for additional details on ticket prices and sales in the near future! Questions about the event can be directed to the Education Center at 772-398-2779.

An Insider's Guide to the Savannas by... **Lena**

Lena Andreas, one of the park's newest volunteers, has always been an outdoorsy person, so after moving from California to Florida in December, it's no surprise she discovered the Savannas. And are we glad she did! As a volunteer, Lena has helped out in many ways, including caring for our "Animal Ambassadors", preparing materials for events, and assisting with online advertising. Lena loves her connection to the park



Park volunteer Lena Andreas

so much that even when she's cleaning out animal enclosures, she doesn't view it as a laborious chore. "When you love what you do," she says, "it's not really work." Lena likes volunteering because it gives her a chance to do something outside herself. And she's happy to give her time to the Savannas, a place where rangers and fellow volunteers strive to protect the ecosystem and its inhabitants.

Lena says ...

"My favorite Savannas Preserve experience is the drum circle. During the summer equinox drum circle, people were dancing and drumming and doing their own thing. Even when the rain started coming down in buckets, everyone just moved under the pavilion and kept on playing. I loved the sense of belonging and community. It was a judgement free zone where people could dance and be themselves."

Natural Wonders in the Preserve

FLORIDA PINE SNAKE

The Florida Pine Snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus mugitus*) is a non-venomous native found throughout Florida. Woody Jr (right) calls the Savannas Preserve State Park Education Center home.

- **How to identify** - Typically 4-5 feet long, the Florida pine snake is a heavy bodied snake with a small, pointy head, cream colored belly, and tan back with black and brown mottled pattern.
- **Habitat**— The Florida pine snakes prefer upland pine forests and sandhills, but also live in scrub flatwoods and oak scrubs.
- **Diet**— As snakes that can constrict their prey, Florida pine snakes eat a variety of rodents, small mammals like rabbits, and ground nesting birds.
- **Interesting Fact**— Though one of the longest snakes in the eastern US, Florida pine snakes are non-venomous. Unfortunately, when they get frightened, they make rattling noises, a mimicry behavior exhibited by several non-venomous snake species used to protect themselves from predators.
- **Significance at the Savannas**— The Florida pine snake is listed as a species of special concern by the Florida FWC. With a substantial home range of up to 400 acres, ensuring they have large tracts of safe, protected habitats like that at the Savannas is essential for their survival.



COCOPLUM



In this issue, we'll take a closer look at the cocoplum (*Chrysobalanus icaco*), one of Florida's more bountiful native plants.

- **Height**— A cocoplum typically grows 5-20 feet tall and 3-10 feet wide, but can reach heights as tall as 30 feet and as wide as 20 feet.
- **Shape**— Cocoplums are considered a shrub or small tree with a multi-branched trunk that has brown or reddish-brown bark.
- **Leaves**— Leaves are evergreen, leathery, and roundish.

They are bright green with reddish tint and can grow to 3 inches long.

- **Flowers**— Peaking in late spring but produced all year, flowers of the cocoplum are small, white, and grow in clusters
- **Fruit**— Cocoplum drupes, which can be white, pink, or dark purple, are also produced year round but are most abundant from late spring through summer.
- **Habitat**— In Central and South Florida, the cocoplum is native to pinelands, scrubs, swamps, coastal strands, and hammock edges.
- **Interesting Fact**— The fruits are edible to both wildlife and humans. And although cocoplum is an important native species, it can become invasive, especially in disturbed areas. Cultivated species are more likely to exhibit this behavior.
- **Significance at the Savannas**— The dense foliage and abundance of fruit provide cover and food for the many birds and small animals found at the park. Gopher tortoises at the Savannas especially love eating the cocoplum's fruit.



Photos: Friends of PSL Botanical Gardens

ALIEN INVADER I

Sickle Bush

(*Dichrostachys cinera* ssp. *africana*)

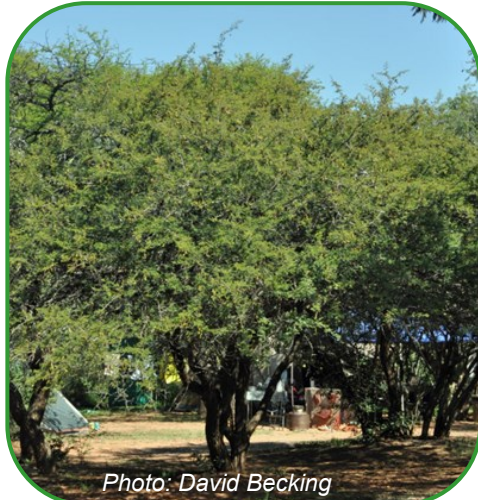


Photo: David Becking

Sickle Bush is an Early Detection, Rapid Response species for the Treasure Coast Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (TC-CISMA)

- **Habitat:** Semi-deciduous tree up to 7m tall. Brown bark except on new branches where it is green and hairy. Alternate spines up to 8cm long
- **Leaves:** Bipinnate, dark green above, pale below, leaflets and stalks hairy (Fig. 1)
- **Flower:** Bottlebrush-like spike of dense flowers, pink above and yellow below (Fig. 3)
- **Seeds/Fruits:** A narrow pod, yellow to brown, twisted, 10cm long with 4 black seeds (Fig. 2)
- **Could be confused with the native Sweet Acacia** (Fig. 4)



Photo: David Becking

Fig. 1. Growth habit and leaves



Photo: Keith Bradley

Fig. 3. Sickie Bush flower

Sweet Acacia



Photo: Shirley Denton



Photo: Edward Gilman

Fig 4. Sweet acacia has elongated, cylindrical seed pods; yellow, round flowers; and white thorns



Photo: David Becking

Fig. 2. Seed Pods

If you think you've seen this species, report it!



Online: IveGot1.org - OR - Use the **IveGot1** app

<https://www.floridinvasives.org/Treasure/>



ALIEN INVADER II

Torell's Eucalyptus

(*Eucalyptus torelliana*)



Photo: Peter Diamond

Mission Grass is an Early Detection, Rapid Response species for the Treasure Coast Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (TC-CISMA)

- **Habitat:** Tall evergreen tree up to 30m in height
- **Bark:** Rough grey to black on bottom, smooth gray-green above (Fig 1)
- **Leaves:** Alternate or opposite leaves, simple, leathery and rough to touch, ovate to 20cm long and 11cm wide, with wavy margins (Fig. 2)
- **Flower:** Small, white and in clusters of 3-7 flowers. Oval to egg-shaped buds 7-12mm long. Flowers can bloom all year. (Fig. 3)
- **Seeds/Fruits:** Large woody capsule, 9-13mm long, 10-14mm wide, with many reddish seeds (Fig. 2 & 3)
- **May be confused with other eucalyptus species, but Torell's has wider leaves**



Photo: David J. Stang

Fig. 1. Rough bark at the tree's base, smooth bark above it



Photo: Peter Diamond

Fig. 2. Wide leaves with wavy margins and seed capsules



Photo: J. L. Dowe

Fig 3. White flowers in clusters and seed capsules



If you think you've seen this species, report it!

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<https://www.floridainvasives.org/Treasure/>

PARK HIGHLIGHTS

- + Park staff conducted a 110 acre prescribed burn in the areas surrounding the Education Center on September 9th.
- + AmeriCorps Members Annie and Arianna have been hard at work treating the non-native plant species *Scleria*.
- + A concrete slab has been poured for the new Ranger Compound Pole Barn (see photo at right).
- + New signage has been installed at trail entrances notifying visitors of general trail conditions (Easy, More Difficult, Most Difficult).
- + Exotic Plant Maintenance was performed on 2050 acres from Walton Road north to the FPL Power Lines.



FRIENDS HIGHLIGHTS

I recently processed a CSO membership whose message to the gift's recipient said, "To Nature, Love L ...". This lovely act of appreciation gave me pause. The collective efforts of CSO members and volunteers are perpetual, but so are those of Mother Nature. It reminded me of a quote from Kahlil Gibran: "And forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet & the winds long to play with your hair".

Shade House Team: Upcoming pre-holidays online Native Plant Sale Events will find forever gardens for the collection of beautiful, mature native plants that Sue Munson's Team has tended to all Summer. Watch our webpage or Facebook page for dates and available plants.

Can-Do Crew: Tom Fox, Can-Do Crew Leader, reports they've been busy doing "odds & ends", which includes emergency repair of a park fence (broken after hours), and preparation of an area that will eventually house & protect park equipment from baking in the sun (concrete is poured). They are such talented "fixers".

Please stay safe, be healthy.

Diana Gregory, CSO President

Become a Member of the Friends of Savannas

Friends of Savannas is a volunteer-based, nonprofit corporation created to enhance, support, and educate while also protecting the natural and cultural resources of the Savannas Preserve State Park.

By becoming a member, you will play a critical role in preserving the largest freshwater marsh system on the southeast coast of Florida.

Membership benefits include:

- * 10 FREE entries to Savannas Preserve State Park
- * 10% discount in the Friends' Gift Store
- * Invitations to Member-Only events

Visit us online or at the Park during business hours to learn more!



SAVANNAS PRESERVE EVENTS



Flatwoods Hikes 9-11am

Hike a mile with a naturalist to learn more about the park's flatwoods. Reservations required.

Oct 3 Nov 7 Dec 5



Hawk's Bluff Hikes 9-11am

On this mile long guided hike you'll learn about the park's scrub habitat and freshwater marsh. Reservations required.

Oct 23 Nov 20 Dec 18



Full Moon Hikes

Traverse the park after dark with a park ranger guide. Hike may be up to one mile. Reservations required.

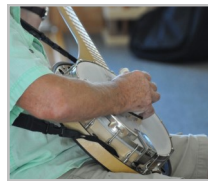
**Oct 20, 6:15-7:15pm
Nov 19, 5-6pm**



Turkey Waddle Hike 9-11am

Walk off those Thanksgiving dinner calories with a one-mile hike at the Savannas. Reservations required.

Nov 26



Song Circle & Folk Jams 3 - 4:30pm

Bring a stringed instrument and jam or just come by and listen. Free with park admission fee.

Oct 10 Nov 14 Dec 12



Winter Solstice Drum Circle 6 - 8pm

Bring a drum or just enjoy the ambiance. Check the website for ticketing info closer to the event.

Dec 19

Kayaking

The water levels in the park's fresh water basin marsh varies depending on rainfall, sometimes drying up during prolonged dry spells.



➤ The Park is open to the public 7 days a week, 365 days a year, from 8am to sunset.

➤ The Education Center remains closed until further notice for renovations.

➤ Park entrance fees can be paid online or with exact cash on site - \$3 per car, \$2 per person or bicyclist

➤ For a park map, visit the park's website at: <https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/savannas-preserve-state-park>