

# NEWSLETTER



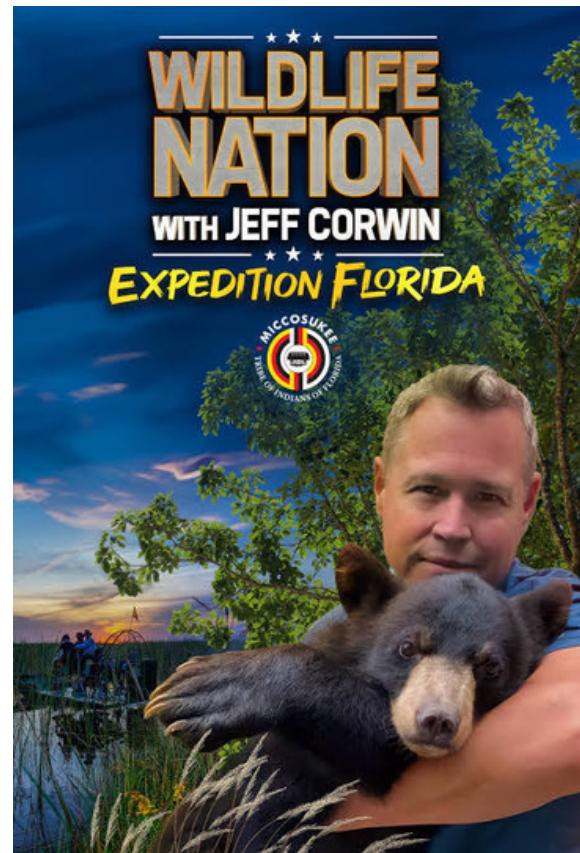
## FLORIDA WILDLIFE TV SHOW

Jeff Corwin, a conservationist and Emmy award winner, is hosting *The Wildlife Nation: Expedition Florida*. In Bonita Springs, it airs on ABC on Saturday mornings, which isn't always convenient, so fortunately it's easy to record for later viewing. The producers describe the show as follows.

*For the upcoming season, the show has partnered with the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, a federally recognized Native American tribe, to showcase the wildlife and conservation efforts focused on Florida's Everglades as the region wrestles with environmental challenges.*

Here's a sampling of some of the stories that have been covered.

- Hunting for pythons with scent specialist dogs
- Rehabilitating injured owls
- Working with conservationists to release baby sea turtles into the ocean
- Diving with sea turtle researchers to collect data
- Helping biologists care for sick and injured turtles
- Equipping a Florida black bear with a satellite tracking collar



Jeff Corwin

[Jeff Corwin](#) has hosted several other wonderful nature TV shows. He has a Master of Science degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Conservation from the University of Massachusetts, so he knows what he's talking about. Interestingly, his graduate school research was on bats (chiropterologist) and snakes (herpetologist)!

## TRIPS AND TOURS

**Island Walk Littoral Plantings** - Lakes tour & lunch at the Island Walk restaurant, April 10, 2025; meet at 9:15 at the Bocce parking lot. Please note that this outing is full and there is a Waiting List.

This newsletter is by the VillageWalk Garden Club of Bonita Springs Communications Committee:  
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# SHOREBIRDS IN VILLAGEWALK

Recently [Royal Terns](#) (*Thalasseus maximus*) have been seen fishing in the VillageWalk ponds. Although they are mainly shore birds, Royal Terns also travel to inland Florida lakes after non-breeding season and after a hurricane. At the shore, they are often seen in large groups. Their diet consists primarily of shrimp and small surface-schooling fish. Hovering above the water, they spot their prey then dive headfirst to capture it near the surface. In some instances, they will fly low to the water and skim the surface to catch their prey. Their food is swallowed while in flight. The entire feeding routine is very entertaining. The scientific name for Royal Terns, *Thalasseus maximus*, indicates how adept they are at fishing. “*Thalasseus*” means “fisherman” in Ancient Greek and “*maximus*” is Latin for “greatest”. The Royal Tern is the “greatest fisherman”.



**Royal Tern**

*[Main Sources: Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon Society, Florida Natural Areas Inventory, iNaturalist]*

## NATURE FUN FACT - EXOSKELETONS

Many animals like insects (e.g. butterflies and bees), arachnids (e.g. spiders and scorpions), and crustaceans (e.g. lobsters and crabs) do not have internal skeletons (endoskeletons) like bones. They have an external skeleton called an exoskeleton. Note that “endo” and “exo” derive respectively from the Greek words for “inside” and “outside”. The exoskeleton defines the animal’s body shape and protects internal organs. It also helps with water retention to prevent dehydration and serves as attachment points for muscles.

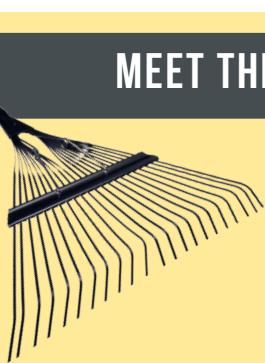
As we learned from the March newsletter, butterflies are full-grown adults, and they do not grow larger. Other animals like spiders, scorpions, lobsters, and crabs do grow, but their exoskeleton is a limitation because they are hard and do not change in size. For these animals to become larger, they shed their external skeleton in a process called molting. The new larger exoskeleton grows underneath their current exoskeleton thus forcing the small exoskeleton to shed. Initially the new exoskeleton is soft like the soft-shell crabs that are sometimes seen in seafood restaurants. With soft exoskeletons, these animals are vulnerable to predators (like hungry diners!), so they often do a lot of hiding during the molting stages of their life.

We do share things in common with these animals with external skeletons. Their exoskeletons are mainly composed of chitin which is the same material that makes up human fingernails and toenails. Like external skeletons, the primary function of nails is for protection of the delicate tissues.

Now you are well prepared for any oddball trivia questions involving exoskeletons and nails!

*[Main Source: Insect Lore, Next Generation Science, Utah State University]*

## MEET THE GARDENER – HERB HOFMANN



Thank you to Don Blackwell for providing this profile of Herb Hofman.

Walk past Garden #10 on any Tuesday or Friday morning and you will see Herb Hofmann at work, usually on his knees annihilating any weeds within reach.

Herb worked in aircraft maintenance for Eastern Airlines at LaGuardia Airport for many years, retiring in 1988. He won't say that he was indispensable at Eastern, but he will note that within a year of his retirement they filed for bankruptcy and then ceased operations in 1991. Hmm...

Herb moved to VillageWalk in July 2023 and lives with his daughter and son-in-law. He joined the Garden Club at the first meeting of the 2023/24 season and volunteered for the Butterfly Gardens shortly thereafter. He has faithfully reported for duty since then, through the summer heat and winter "cold".

Herb began his Butterfly Gardens career in Garden #9 under the tutelage of Linda Blaise. After serving his apprenticeship there, he was ready in the Summer of 2024 to step up to the Big Time in Garden #10. Don Blackwell welcomed his help, and together over the last few months they have tamed the beast that was the Garden 10 jungle.

Herb has a passion for weeding; that is the only way to describe it. The exacting approach he developed in his work career shows when one sees the crisp bedline and clear ground after he has tackled an unkept garden area.

In addition, Don and Herb like to use Live Oak tree leaves for mulch in Garden #10. Fallen leaves are plentiful from December to March. They add acid to the soil and break down slower than hardwood mulch. The only cost is the effort that it takes to rake or sweep them up and transport them to the garden. Herb accepted the challenge. For the past several months, he has brought multiple large bags of leaves per week to spread in 10. He started by raking his own yard, then the sidewalk strip in his neighborhood, and when that was bare, he moved to the sidewalk strip on Latitude Drive. Always wearing his blue Butterfly Gardens Volunteer shirt, he gives positive publicity for the Gardens. Thanks to Herb's efforts, the large expanse of Garden #10 is well-mulched for the next year.

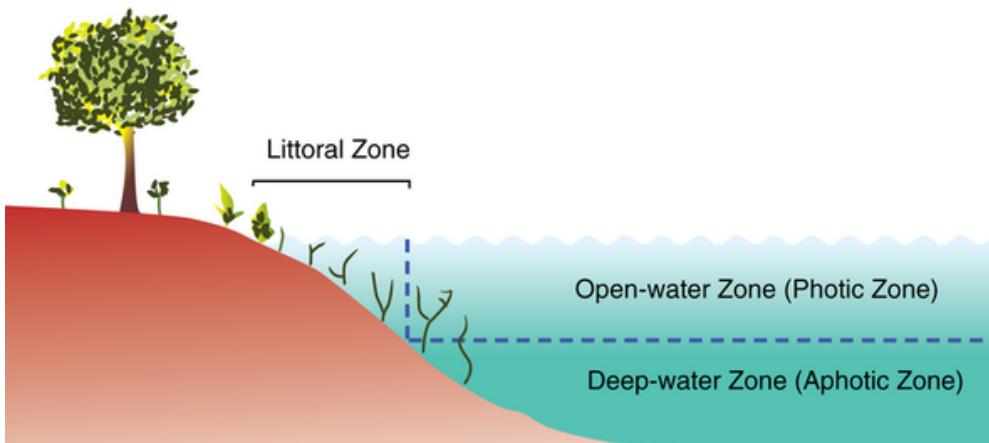
By the way, the next time you don't have the energy to tackle your work around your house, remember that Herb turned 94 last month ...



# LITTORAL ZONE

Thanks to Cheryl Gedris for contributing this article.

The Sustainability Committee brought forth the idea of Littoral Zones to be established in our waterways. The committee presented the concept first to the CDD and then to the HOA. The Sustainability Committee is excited that both the CDD and HOA have endorsed this initiative.



## Littoral Zones what are they?

The “littoral zone” is the shallow down-sloping area of a lake, pond, or ocean. It begins at the high-water line, which is usually exposed to air. It ends where the sunlight penetrates to the bottom, allowing for the growth of rooted aquatic plants. The water usually has a depth of less than 5 feet deep with high light penetration. Sunlight is essential for photosynthesis to occur in aquatic plants. The littoral zone is a vital component of healthy ecosystems.

## What do they do?

A littoral zone is a transitional area that is critical for the transport of nutrients, sediment, organic matter, and species that utilize both the lake and the land. Proper native aquatic plants along the shoreline are essential to filter pollutants from water, stabilize shorelines against erosion, and provide a habitat for wildlife. Specifically, it can buffer stormwater runoff that contains nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus or other pollutants. Thus, fewer nutrients are available for algae growth, which negatively affects the health and beauty of the lake. This environment attracts insects like dragonflies and frogs that eat mosquitoes. Littoral zone plantings can also provide important economic benefits, such as improving neighborhood aesthetics and increasing property values. A well-balanced lake will support healthy plants and wildlife and will require little maintenance and few, if any, chemicals. It will be aesthetically pleasing, reduce foul odors, control erosion and will be cost effective.

More information on the Littoral Plantings is available on the garden club website in the Stop Erosion section of Sustainability (<https://villagewalkgardenclub.com/stop-erosion/>). Also note that there will be a littoral lakes tour at Island Walk and lunch at their restaurant on April 10th.

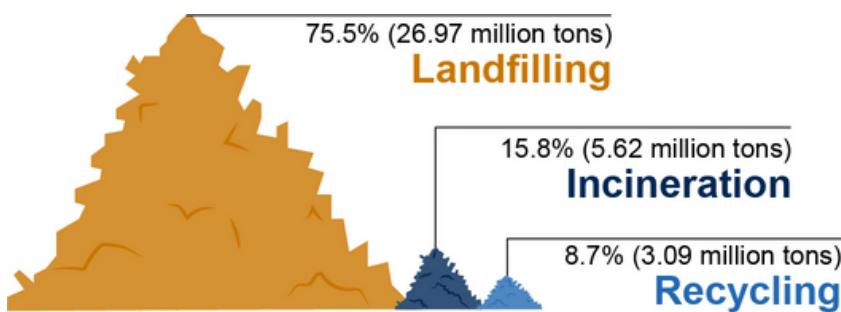
## Important Dates to Remember

- **April 15 - Garden Club Meeting** 1:00 pm VW Town Center - Bromeliads
- **May 20 - Garden Club Meeting & Plant Exchange** 1:00 pm VW Town Center

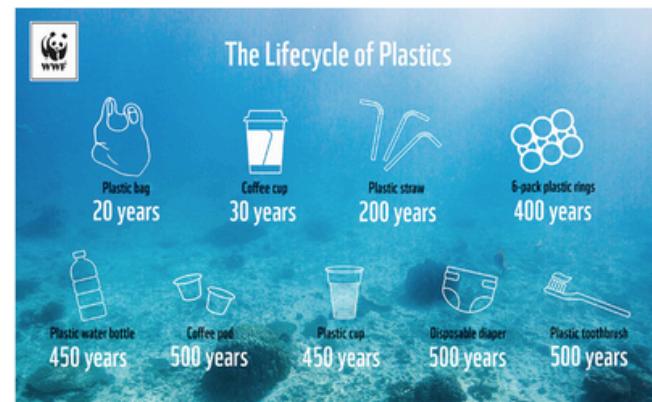
# MICROPLASTICS POLLUTION PRESENTATION

Laura Reynolds and Joanne Huskey, from the [League of Women Voters of Collier County](#) (LWVCC), gave a presentation entitled “Take a Pass on Plastics” at the March Garden Club meeting. They spoke about single-use plastics pollution and its detrimental effects on people/wildlife and the things that people can do to deal with the issue. “Single-use” refers to items that are typically used only once and then they are disposed of or recycled.

40 metric tons (1 metric ton = 2205 lbs.) of plastics are produced in the U.S. every year, but only 9% is recycled. Most of it is landfilled (76%), and the balance is incinerated. Note that not every plastic item is recyclable, even if it has a recycling symbol on it. Small items (less than a fist) like coffee pods are not recyclable. Dirty/contaminated items or items put in plastic waste bags will be rejected at recycling facilities. Guidelines for Lee County can be found at <https://www.leegov.com/solidwaste/recycling>.



Source: GAO analysis of 2018 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) data. | GAO-21-105317



Plastics that are not part of the waste disposal process end up polluting terrestrial and aquatic environments. In the oceans, there are five large accumulations of plastic waste called “garbage patches”. The “Great Plastic Garbage Patch” in the Pacific Ocean is the largest accumulation, with an estimated area twice the size of Texas. Plastics in the aquatic environment can severely affect wildlife. In Florida, manatees can ingest plastics, and turtles can get entangled in fishing lines.

Plastics do not easily decompose and therefore, can accumulate. These plastics can take decades and even hundreds of years to break down into small particles known as microplastics and nanoplastics, which refers to their size. These small particles are known to enter and accumulate in human organs and can adversely affect people’s health.

Follow the 4Rs to help combat the problem.

To be more specific, there’s the “Pass on Plastics Pledge”.

- **REFUSE** disposable plastic whenever possible
- **REDUCE** disposable plastic you use; instead find alternatives
- **REUSE** durable bottles, bags, containers and other everyday items
- **RECYCLE** what you can’t refuse, reduce or reuse

- **Use** a reusable water bottle and coffee mug
- **Use** your own grocery and produce bags for shopping
- **Use** ground coffee, not plastic pods
- **Use** non-plastic food wrap
- **Use** bar soap
- **Use** cleaning products that don’t come in plastic bottles
- **Say** “no” to straws, cutlery, and packets of condiments

The presentation ended with a memorable quote from Margaret Mead, the noted American anthropologist and author. **“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”**

The organization has made the highlights of their talk available online at <https://lwvcolliercounty.org/plastic>.

# SHANGRI-LA SPRINGS TOUR



Fun day at Shangri-La Springs

Thank you to Leslie Bischoff for contributing this article. On the 27th of February, a group of avid Garden Club members visited [Shangri-La Springs](#) in Bonita Springs for a tour of the historic grounds and gardens with diverse plants. The tour ended with a delicious private lunch at the Harvest and Wisdom restaurant.

## What is the history of Shangri-La Springs?

The history of Shangri-La Springs starts in the 1920s when Gilmer Heitman, a visionary of Bonita Springs, constructed the hotel with 35 rooms along the Tamiami Trail, which is now known as Old 41 Road. The hotel was built as a place to stay for buyers during the construction of their homes. Built on more than 8 acres in the heart of Bonita Springs, it delivers a boutique hotel experience with a prized full-service spa, organic restaurant, and one-of-a-kind event space in the gardens and gazebos.

Nestled among a lush botanical garden overseen by two large Mysore fig trees, the property has “natural springs” that Shangri-La Springs is named after. The Spring has been cherished since the time of the Calusa Indians. Several artifacts from the Calusa’s beliefs and culture can be found on the property.

In addition to organic natural plantings and beautiful surroundings, the property has played host to the famous, the infamous, and those seeking “privacy and rejuvenation” for nearly a century.

Don’t hesitate to visit this one-of-a-kind spot for a delicious lunch or a special occasion.





## BUTTERFLY FESTIVAL 2025

The Butterfly Festival has so many purposes like education and awareness of nature and the environment, an opportunity for the community to come together, fundraising, and of course just plain fun! It was bigger and better than ever, and the attendance was outstanding. It was great to see so many young families with children there. There were many highlights and here are a few of them.

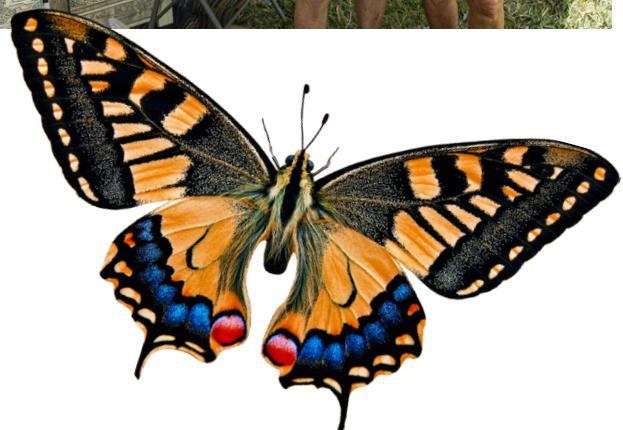
- Attendees painted rocks that would be put together to form the individual sections of a caterpillar. These caterpillars will be displayed in the gardens where the artists can search for their painted rocks. This activity is a way to encourage visitors to walk inside the garden paths instead of just walking on the sidewalk. Thanks to Sally Golightly for this great idea.
- In the Butterfly Education Tent, butterfly-related videos were running on a TV screen as another way to disseminate information. Linda Blaise and Toni McGlynn were instrumental in making this happen.
- Butterflies were released in memory of loved ones that passed away. In many cultures, butterflies represent the spirits of departed loved ones. It was a special way to cap off the Butterfly Festival.

A huge THANK YOU to the many volunteers, sponsors, KW, HOA Board, the Lee County Sheriff's Department, the Bonita Springs Fire Department, Bird Gardens of Naples and CREW Land and Water Trust for making this year's Butterfly Festival a truly wonderful event. Of course, it couldn't have happened without the drive and determination of Linda Blaise! It took many months of planning and countless hours of effort to make it all come together.

We received many photos from Club members. Between the Communications Committee photographers and club members, there are hundreds of pictures for this story. Because of file size limitations, we can only display some of the many photos in this newsletter. We'll try and get more photos onto the website and in the slideshow at the Annual Holiday Dinner Party. Thanks for sending in the photos and please continue to send them in for future Club events and outings.



# BUTTERFLY FESTIVAL 2025



# BUTTERFLY FESTIVAL 2025



**CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE!**

[www.villagewalkgardenclub.com](http://www.villagewalkgardenclub.com)

Our website is full of information about the garden club, events and sustainability practices.

