

NEWSLETTER



VillageWalk Garden Club
of Bonita Springs



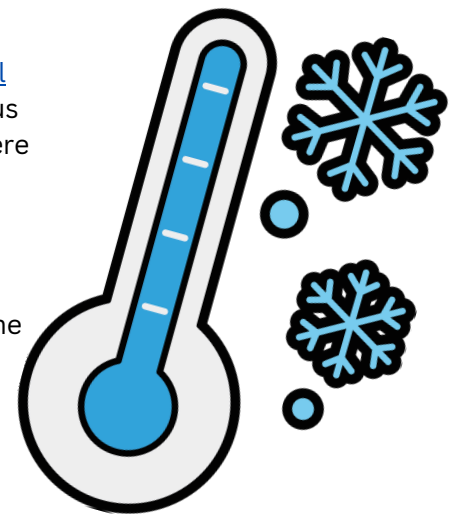
TRIPS AND TOURS – THOUSAND ISLANDS IN THE EVERGLADES



We all knew that it was going to be a cold adventure, but we did not realize how cold it would be! It was in the 40s when we got on the [Everglades National Park Adventures](#) pontoon boat in Everglades City. It was good that hoodie sweatshirts were available at the gift shop for anyone needing an extra layer. The temperature was fine when the boat was still or moving slowly, but when the boat sped up it was frigid with the wind chill!



Despite the cold, it was a wonderful trip. The scenery in the [Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge](#) was pristine and beautiful plus the wildlife was in abundance. Many birds were seen including brown pelicans, ospreys, double-crested cormorants, royal terns, and belted kingfishers. A few people were lucky enough to catch a glimpse of a rare, endangered [Big Cypress Fox Squirrel](#) along the shore near Everglades City.

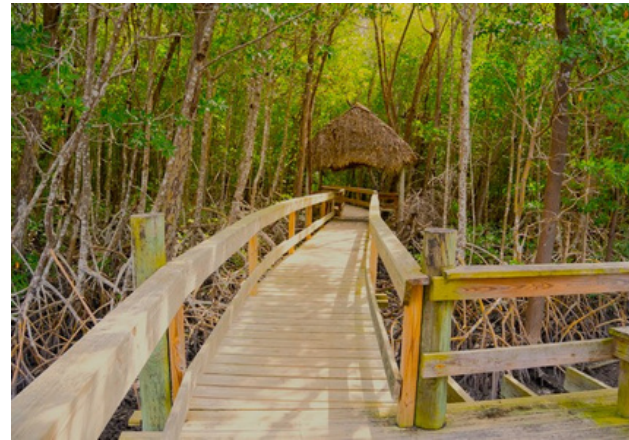
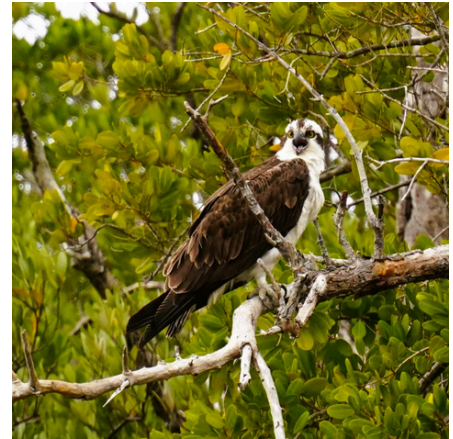


This newsletter is by the VillageWalk Garden Club of Bonita Springs Communications Committee:
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TRIPS AND TOURS – THOUSAND ISLANDS IN THE EVERGLADES

The highlight, however, was the many [Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphins](#) that we spotted several times on all sides of the boat. There were dolphins “surfing” in the wake of the boat. Others [breached](#) where they were leapt entirely out of the water. We even saw a baby dolphin swimming with its mother. After disembarking from the boat, some ventured on a boardwalk that meandered through the mangroves. It was a fun trip, and we all survived the cold to laugh about it!



THIS SATURDAY - BUTTERFLY FEST MARCH 7

You don't want to miss this event!
Something for Everyone



Free Family Event

Butterfly
FEST

Saturday

MARCH 7, 2026
Rain Date is Sunday, March 8

10:00am to 2:00pm

Held in front of the Butterfly Gardens
at VillageWalk of Bonita Springs

- COMPLIMENTARY FOOD
- EDUCATIONAL PLANT & BUTTERFLY DISPLAYS
- KIDS GAMES & PRIZES
- FIRE TRUCK
- LIVE MUSIC
- LEE COUNTY SHERIFF'S
 - ICE CREAM TRUCK
- FACE PAINTING
- GARDEN TOURS
- PLANT SALE
- RAFFLE ITEMS
- SILENT AUCTION
- AND MUCH MORE.....



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NATURE FUN FACTS – FLOWER FRAGRANCES



Some plants have fragrant flowers to attract pollinators like insects and birds. It is a mutually beneficial relationship where animals obtain food (nectar and/or pollen) from plants, and animals transfer pollen to aid in plant reproduction.

[Natalia Dudareva](#), Distinguished Professor of Biochemistry/Horticulture and Landscape Architecture at Purdue University, and other researchers have worked on unraveling the world of floral scents. Here are some of their interesting findings.

- No two plants have exactly the same scent. The unique scent profiles are complex combinations of volatile organic compounds that easily disperse into the air. For example, it was found that the aroma of a rose is a mixture of 400 chemicals!
- Unique scents attract different types of pollinators. Bees and many butterflies like fresh, sweet fragrances. Flies and beetles are attracted to flowers that smell like rotting meat and dung. An unusual example of the latter is the massive [Titan Arum](#) or [Corpse Flower](#) (*Amorphophallus titanum*). Mature specimens of this Sumatran native plant bloom every 3 to 7 years and the flower only lasts for 1 to 2 days. It is considered by many to be the worst smelling flower in the world. The plant/flower is often given names like Frederick (Como Park Zoo and Conservatory), Dame Judi Dench (Harvard), and the Beast (Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park). When a Titan Arum blooms in a botanical garden, it can be quite an event. Crowds will line up for hours to experience the vile odor!
- Bees and butterflies visit plants that release their fragrance during the day. Moths and bats pollinate plants that emit their aromas at night.
- The intensity of the scent is a way that plants encourage pollinators to find flowers with the most abundant supply of pollen. Young flowers with little pollen generate less fragrance. Mature flowers with a greater amount of pollen emit more scent. Older flowers will fade and produce less aroma.

In addition to attracting pollinators, plant aromas can be used for other purposes.

- [Carnivorous plants](#) (e.g. pitcher plants, Venus flytraps, and sundews) use scents to attract prey.
- For protection, some plants produce aromatic chemicals to repel herbivores (e.g. rosemary, mint, sage, thyme, garlic, and onion) and to attract animals like wasps that prey on herbivores (e.g. maize, lima beans, cucumber, rice, and tobacco).

Scented flowers are key components of perfumes. Chanel No. 5 is often considered to be the most famous perfume. Two key ingredients in a 30 milliliter bottle are the extracts from 1000 [Grasse jasmine](#) (*Jasminum grandiflorum*) flowers and 12 [Hundred Petal Roses](#) (*Rosa centifolia*) that are only grown on one farm in Pégomas, France (a small village near Grasse) to ensure the highest quality. Because the scent of the flowers starts declining and changing within minutes, the processing of the flower petals is completed within hours of picking. There are good reasons why a small bottle of Chanel No. 5 retails for over \$100!

[Main Sources: Scientific American, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Scientific American, ScienceLine, Florist.co.nz, Cal Poly News, United States Botanic Garden, The New Yorker, Vancouver Sun]



Corpse Flower (credit - California Polytechnic State University)



Monkey Cup Pitcher Plant at the Quito Botanical Gardens



Grasse Jasmine (credit - Pepiniere-Sainte-Marguerite)



Hundred Petal Rose (credit - Trevor White Roses)

ATALA BUTTERFLY COLONY AT 6 MILE CYPRESS SLOUGH

When visiting [6 Mile Cypress Slough Preserve](#) (slough is pronounced “slew”) in Ft. Myers, people often only walk on the boardwalk and miss the small butterfly garden in the middle of the parking lot. That is unfortunate because an [Atala butterfly](#) (*Eumaeus atala*) colony exists there. The head gardener, Donna, mentioned that it took many years to establish an Atala colony at the Slough.



An examination of the garden reveals the reasons for their success.

- The host plant for the Atala caterpillars is the [Coontie](#) (*Zamia integrifolia*), North America’s only native cycad. Coonties and other cycads are considered “living fossils” because they have been around since the time of the dinosaurs! It is plentiful in the garden. The caterpillars eat the young, tender Coontie leaves, and their droppings fertilize the plant. In addition, the Coontie leaves contain a toxin that protects the caterpillars, butterflies, and eggs from predators.
- The Atala butterfly has a short proboscis to collect the nectar, which means it requires smaller flowers. They prefer white flowers like [Bidens alba](#) (aka Spanish Needles or Beggarticks), [White Salvia](#), [Scorpionstail](#) (*Heliotropium angiospermum*) and [Wild Coffee](#) (*Psychotria nervosa*). All of these plants can be found in the garden. *Bidens alba* is a particularly valuable food source for the Atalas (and many other insects) because it blooms throughout the year. It is especially important during the winter months when many nectar plants are not in bloom.

[Atala butterflies](#) are very interesting to observe because they are quite social. Two butterflies are sometimes seen collecting nectar from the same flower. Female butterflies lay their eggs in clusters. Caterpillars often congregate to feed and to form their chrysalises.

On the VillageWalk Garden Club website, there is an interesting [educational article](#) on the resurgence of the Atala butterfly from near extinction and the attempt to introduce this butterfly to the VillageWalk Butterfly Gardens. The Atalas are not currently seen in the VillageWalk Butterfly Garden, but Coontie and *Bidens alba* (and other small white nectar flowers) are present to attract Atala butterflies, so the “seeds for success” are there to establish a colony.

[Main Sources: 6 Mile Cypress Slough, Florida Wildflower Foundation, UF/IFAS]



1: Eggs (intact and opened)



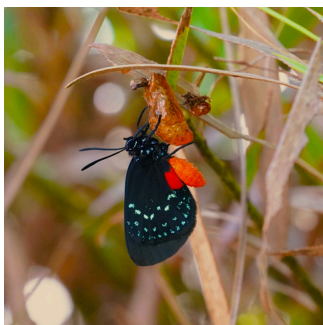
2: Caterpillars (aka Larvae)



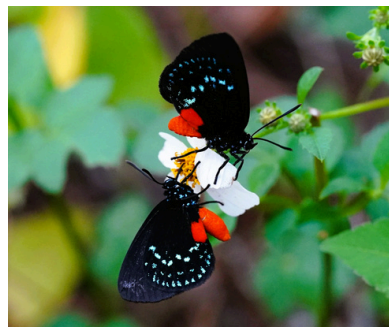
3: Chrysalis (aka Pupa)



3: Cluster of Chrysalises (aka Pupae)



4: Butterfly Newly Emerged from a Chrysalis



5: Butterflies Feeding on a *Bidens alba* Flower



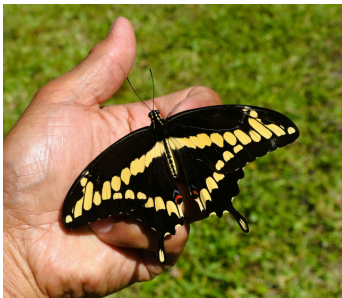
Coontie Host Plant with Center Cone Containing Seeds

FEBRUARY GARDEN CLUB MEETING PRESENTATION – THE IMPORTANCE OF BUTTERFLY COUNTS

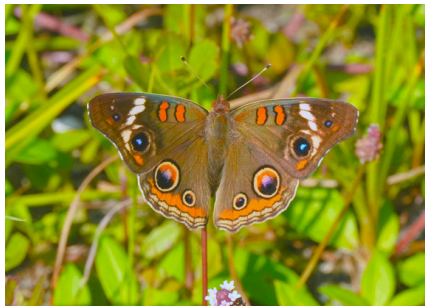
Connie Naegle of [The Friends of Collier County Butterflies](#) gave a presentation on butterflies, their habitat, and butterfly counts. The protection of butterflies involves four activities – landscape management, education, community involvement, and the collection of scientific data including butterfly counts. These activities are critically important because [butterfly populations have declined](#) 22% nationwide from 2020 to 2022. Specifically, there have been decreases of 99% for the [Florida White](#) (*Appias drusilla*), 55% for [Red Admirals](#) (*Vanessa atalanta*), and 44% for the [American Painted Ladies](#) (*Vanessa virginiensis*). The drastic decline of the Florida White puts it in danger of extinction. Additionally, butterflies and their caterpillars are a vital part of the food chain for birds and other animals. Birds may need 200-500 caterpillars a day for themselves and their young. A decline in butterflies also results in a decline in the bird population.

To produce a healthy habitat for butterflies, gardens should focus on suitable host and nectar plants. Each butterfly species is only attracted to specific host plants for their eggs and caterpillars. Butterflies will smell with their antennae and taste with their feet to determine whether a particular plant species is a suitable host. In general, butterflies live for 21-30 days, and caterpillars live for 10-20 days before they enter the pupa stage (forms a chrysalis) which may last for 7-10 days before the butterfly emerges. Butterflies rely on flowering plants for their sustenance, which is mainly nectar. Pollen is also used as a food source for some species. Consequently, suitable plants are needed to support the whole life cycle of these insects from egg to caterpillar to pupa to butterfly.

Native species are the best choices as host plants for butterflies because they have co-evolved. Here are a few examples of butterflies found in VillageWalk, the Butterfly Garden, and Flint Pen Strand nature preserve which is on Bonita Beach Road across from VillageWalk.



Giant Swallowtail Raised by Amy Swanson in VillageWalk



Common Buckeye at Flint Pen Strand



Ceraunus Blue in the Butterfly Gardens

- [Giant Swallowtail](#) (*Papilio cresphontes*) needs the [Wild Lime Tree](#) (*Zanthoxylum fagara*) as a host plant for eggs and caterpillars.
- [Plantains](#) (*Plantago spp.*) and the [Snapdragon](#) family (*Antirrhinum majus*) are major host plants for the [Common Buckeye](#) (*Junonia coenia*).
- [Milkpeas](#) are the hosts for [blues](#) like the Cassius Blue and Ceraunus Blue butterflies.
- The [Golden Canna](#) (*Canna flaccida*) is the host plant for the [Brazilian Skipper](#) (*Calpododes ethlius*). This plant is a candidate for the littoral plantings in VillageWalk.

Although it is not a Florida native, [pentas](#) (*Pentas lanceolata*) are Florida-friendly nectar-rich plants that serve as great food sources for butterflies. They do well throughout Florida's hot and humid summer months.

FEBRUARY GARDEN CLUB MEETING PRESENTATION – THE IMPORTANCE OF BUTTERFLY COUNTS - CONTINUED

During [Butterfly Counts](#), citizen scientists identify the species and abundance of butterflies over a specified time in a given area. Data collected from Butterfly Counts increases our scientific knowledge and raises awareness about butterfly conservation. The results are entered into a national database. Additionally, results can also be shared with others on the iNaturalist phone app or website which are joint initiatives of the California Academy of Sciences and National Geographic. iNaturalist is a platform where other naturalists can aid in butterfly species identification.

Connie leads The Friends of Collier County Butterflies which conducts Butterfly Counts in both Collier and Lee Counties. She along with volunteers like Linda Blaise and Amy Swanson have been involved in the three annual counts that have been held in our VillageWalk Butterfly Garden. 27 Species of butterflies have been sighted during these Butterfly Counts. There are other butterflies (like the Julia) that have been seen in the Butterfly Gardens in addition to the butterflies observed in the counts. See the results in the Table. There is quite a diversity of butterflies in our community. Another extremely rich habitat for butterflies is Flint Pen Strand. During a two hour Butterfly Count at the Strand in October 2025, 294 butterflies of 22 different species were observed. It was an amazing experience to see so many butterflies in such a short amount of time. They were literally everywhere that you looked! This particular Butterfly Count was truly exceptional. It is not something that you can rely on every time you visit Flint Pen Strand. Nature is unpredictable, so you never quite know what will be on display on a visit to any location. Maybe we have piqued your interest in Butterfly Counts? There is an upcoming [Butterfly Count at Flint Pen Strand](#) on April 15. Later this year there will be the 4th Annual VillageWalk Butterfly Garden Count in December.



Brazilian Skipper in the Butterfly Gardens



Cassius Blue in the Butterfly Gardens

Common Name	Seasonality											Count	Count	Count	Total	Times Counted	
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	12/06/25	12/07/24			12/01/2023
Atala													0	0	2	2	1
Barred Yellow / Barred Sulphur													7	32	0	39	2
Black Swallowtail													0	0	5	5	1
Brazilian Skipper													0	0	1	1	1
Cassius Blue													40	14	2	56	3
Ceraunus Blue													6	2	0	8	2
Clouded Skipper													1	0	1	2	2
Cloudless Sulphur													38	5	2	45	3
Dainty Sulphur													7	0	1	8	2
Giant Swallowtail													12	0	1	13	2
Gulf Fritillary													5	43	13	61	3
Long-tailed Skipper													0	1	0	1	1
Mallow Scrub-Hairstreak													0	1	1	2	2
Monarch													13	33	27	73	3
Ocala Skipper													0	0	1	1	1
Orange-barred Sulphur													5	11	4	20	3
Palamedes Swallowtail													0	0	1	1	1
Phaon Crescent													0	3	0	3	1
Polydamas Swallowtail													6	0	0	6	1
Queen													0	5	4	9	2
Soldier													0	1	0	1	1
Three-Spotted Skipper													2	0	1	3	2
Tropical Checkered-Skipper													0	2	1	3	2
Twin-spot Skipper													0	0	2	2	1
White Checkered Skipper													0	1	0	1	1
White Peacock													0	14	6	20	2
Zebra heliconian													10	8	0	18	2
UI Blue													6	0	2	8	2
UI Skipper													0	1	0	1	1
UI Sulphur													0	4	2	6	2
UI Swallowtail													0	0	3	3	1

Annual Butterfly Counts in the Butterfly Gardens

TRIPS & TOURS



TRIPS/TOUR	DATE	SCHEDULE	COST
Naples Botanical Garden – Guided Orchid Experience	April 16, 2026	1) Carpool from Bocce Parking Lot: 9:00 a.m. 2) Tour: 10:00 a.m. (90 min.)	Members: \$55 Non-Members: \$75 (min 10 and max 20 people)

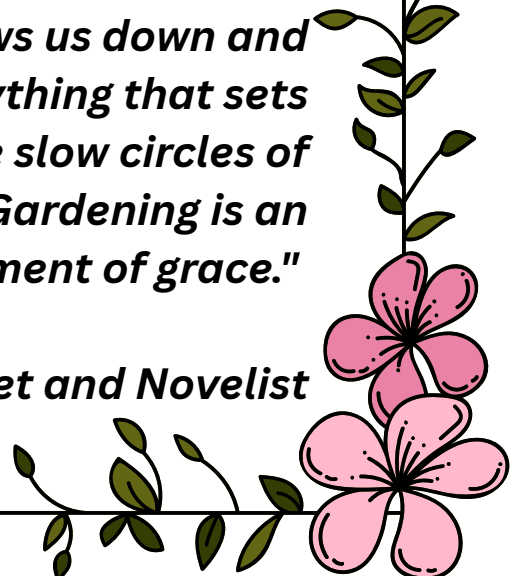


More details on the above Trips/Tours are available at the Garden Club meetings and in upcoming email announcements. Signing up for the Trip/Tour can be done at the monthly Garden Club meetings or by getting in touch with the Trips and Tours Committee (Eileen Rowell & Rita Pignato, Co-Chairs; Jackie Fegan, Gail Brinley, and Leslie Bischoff). Please direct your questions to them.



"Everything that slows us down and forces patience, everything that sets us back into the slow circles of nature, is a help. Gardening is an instrument of grace."

-May Sarton - Poet and Novelist



IMPORTANT DATES FOR THE 2025-2026 SEASON



***Note that all the Garden Club meetings are on Tuesdays except the one on April 23 which is on a Thursday.**

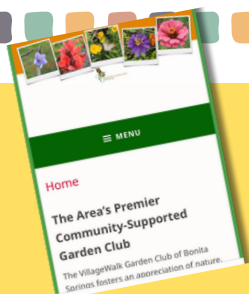
MEETING/EVENT	DATE	TIME	LOCATION
Garden Club Meeting	Mar. 17, 2026	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Town Center
Garden Club Meeting*	Apr. 23, 2026	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Town Center
Garden Club Meeting and Plant Exchange	May 19, 2026	1:00 - 2:30 PM	Town Center

Area Events

AREA EVENTS	DATE	LOCATION
Naples Flower Show and Garden Market	March 13 - 14, 2026	Naples Botanical Garden (Naples)
Grow Ft. Myers & Orchid Symposium (FREE)	April 11-12, 2026	Edison and Ford Winter Estates (Ft. Myers)
CREW Spring Butterfly Count (Free)	April 15, 2026	Flint Pen Strand (Bonita Springs)

“In his garden, every man may be his own artist without apology or explanation.”

-Louise Beebe Wilder - Gardening Writer and Designer



CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE!

www.villagewalkgardenclub.com

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

