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Palmetto

E.O. Wilson, Anthill & Biodiversity ● Natives in Action ● Golden Dewdrop – Native or Not?
Action Natives in Photos, above, left to right: buttonbush (Cephalanthus occidentalis) & silver-spotted skipper; pileated woodpecker and chick; softhair coneflower (Rudbeckia mollis) & blue dasher; young raccoon reaching for hackberry berries. Below left: Rusty lyonia (Lyonia ferruginea) & eastern amberwing.

PHOTOGRAPHY by Peg Urban
Peg Urban’s joy in the natural world shines through in her photography, which depicts native plants and the animals that visit them. Her images are rich with life and color. Peg says “I have always loved all aspects of nature, and from a young age have had a passion to capture its beauty in photographs. Only in recent years have I had more time to devote to that pursuit.”

Peg is originally from London, Ontario, Canada, but for the past 9 years has become a Florida resident with her husband, Hal, after being snowbirds for 16 years.

She credits her knowledge of native plants to her involvement with Pear Park, a 314-acre county environmental preserve near the town of Leesburg. Peg joined the Pear Association (PEAR is an acronym for Palatlakaha Environmental and Agricultural Reserve) 9 years ago, and has worked as a volunteer, helping to restore various types of ecosystems. She has worked with scrub, sandhill, riverine woodlands, and wetlands ecosystems, and with the restoration of grasslands for quail, meadowlarks and other birds. Volunteers at Pear have also worked to create native demonstration, bird, and butterfly gardens featuring representative plant species that can be used for educational purposes.

Peg says of Pear Park, “and so we planted… and they came! I was able to observe and appreciate the interaction between native plants and wildlife, and learned to anticipate what animals would be attracted to the various blooming and fruiting plants over the seasons. That helped me capture them in my photographs. Fellow volunteers became used to me dropping my work and chasing after a special bird or butterfly!”

In addition to volunteering at Pear Park, Peg also created a garden at home so she could enjoy the native plants and their animal visitors in her spare time. Of her photography technique, Peg says “The key for me is to have a dependable, fast shooting camera with quick recovery and a good zoom lens. My current camera is a Canon Powershot that is two years old and already outdated, but it has been quite reliable.”

“Morning and evening light provides the best light for outdoor photography, but of course butterflies don’t know that, and they are more active in the middle of the day. My photographs come with
a price — sweating in the hot sun and discomfort from the awkward positions I get into while stalking butterflies, but its well worth it.”

Peg closes by saying, “its been a blessing to me to be a part of establishing natural areas for wildlife to thrive, and to be able to capture the results to share with others. I hope that people enjoy seeing the photographs, and learn from them as well.”

Volunteers work in cooperation with Lake County Parks and Trails and receive financial support from Pear Association dues. Donations and grants from Lake County Water Authority, Florida Native Plant Society, National Tree Trust, Florida Wildflower Foundation, and The United States Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission also support the park. Additional support was received from the Central Florida Woman’s Club, various local garden clubs, and scout troops. The local chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society (Lake Beautyberry) provided knowledge, support, and plant donations.

About the Artist

Peg Urban is a member of The Florida Native Plant Society, National Audubon Society, and in 2002 took a Florida Master Naturalist course through The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS)

For information on Pear Park, visit www.pearassoc.org.

Photos, clockwise from top: Pinewoods milkweed (Asclepias humistrata) and queen butterfly; luna moth on sweetgum, rough green snake in plum; monarch pupa on coontie.
The purpose of the Florida Native Plant Society is to conserve, preserve, and restore the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

Official definition of native plant: For most purposes, the phrase Florida native plant refers to those species occurring within the state boundaries prior to European contact, according to the best available scientific and historical documentation. More specifically, it includes those species understood as indigenous, occurring in natural associations in habitats that existed prior to significant human impacts and alterations of the landscape.

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Editorial Content
We welcome articles on native plant species and related conservation topics, as well as high-quality botanical illustrations and photographs. Contact the editor for guidelines, deadlines and other information.

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