

Old Trees, Cats and a Duck

On March 8th a group of ten Cocoplum Chapter members navigated their way to the interior of a maze of rural roads in Palm City where we visited the new home of the Hobe Sound Animal Protection League. The five acre property was recently acquired by the 501(c)3 charity to provide services and sanctuary for rescued felines. The Native Plant Society was asked to assist the League with plant expertise at their new location and we were able to use an unplanned opening in our field trip schedule to help out.

In one corner of the site an idyllic pond is surrounded by old trees. Toni Barnes of the League explained that that area will become a contemplative garden for the humans who work with the cats in other parts of the property. Our task was to identify and label native and invasive plant species surrounding the pond. We found plenty of unwanted poison ivy, along with Brazilian pepper and Old World climbing fern to be removed. Our members enjoyed discovering and debating plant identities as we shared and sharpened our knowledge of each. At present charming willows grace the waters edge and low stands of cabbage palms, a tall maple and wax myrtle provide shade and background. The age of the native trees speaks to the suitability of species to location through wet and dry seasons over many years. A list of native plants we identified at the site was provided to Toni who will oversee removal of invasives and maintenance of the natives within the garden. It's already a beautiful spot and with informed removal and judicious pruning and care the natural garden will be stunning. After finishing up we were alerted by a frog's plaintive squeal and watched as a duck prized her meal from the mud within this little wildlife community.

Because I live with two cats I was especially curious about the work of the cat folks and open to assisting them. It turned out that the sheltered cats were not yet on site and still reside at the nearby Caring Fields Animal Sanctuary also in Palm City. I hope to return to the garden again and see the new kitty cottages, roaming ranges and napping nooks after they are in place. Personally it felt good to help the cat people while enjoying time with the plant people and furthering our mission in service of native plant communities.

Ellen Broderick
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