

Savannas Preserve State Park
MCFNPS Field Trip November 3, 2012



On a crystal clear, cool, Saturday morning fifteen of us walked the Gopher Tortoise trail at the Savannas Preserve State Park guided by Henry Maursey and Penny Snyder, volunteers at the preserve. Henry gave us James Oglethorpe's (the British founder of Georgia) 1732 definition of a savannas as being an open grassland with sparse, low growing trees; that certainly fit the view before us from the porch of the Welcome Center.



It was not long before we were all engaged in admiring and identifying the cheery wands of yellow flowers: the golden rod (*Solidago stricta*) with flowers on a spike-like raceme - whose many, tiny flowers have a pedicel; and the sunny yellow flowers of the silk grass golden aster (*Pityopsis graminifolia*). A tiny Oak toad scampering underneath, caught our eyes as did the and the small yellow star grass (*Hypoxis juncea*) looking as if it had indeed just dropped down from the heavens. The almost bare topped elephant's foot (*Elephantopus elatus*) could have been missed but its basal rosette of leaves was obvious—once it was pointed out.

Waving between the many grass clumps were the purple spikes of the blazing star (*Liatris tenuifolia*), also the purple paintbrush's flat heads (*Carphephorus corymbosus*), a single rose rush (*Hygodesmia aphylla*) and the deep purple flowered Ironweed (*Vernonia* spp).

This state park had had a prescribed burn this past August 10. The new growth was very apparent. Leaves of the shiny blueberry (*Vaccinium myrsinites*), gopher apple (*Licania michauxii*), pennyroyal (*Piloblephis rigida*), St. John's wort (*Hypericum reductum*), blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*), sensitive vine (*Schrankia microphylla*) announced that they too shared this habitat. The gallberry bush (*Ilex glabra*) was full of ripe black fruit and the Dahoon holly's (*Ilex cassine*) red fruit stood out; close by a single blueheart (*Buchnera americana*) raised its purple flowering head and the saltbush (*Baccharis halimifolia*) showed off and spread its fluffy white seed clusters.



Turning back towards the Welcome Center we passed many Ludwigia--big and small, a cluster of bachelors showing off their buttons (*Polygala rugelii*) and what we think is upland cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum*). It was a perfect 2 hours spent in a perfect savanna on a perfect Florida day.

Florence Chatowsky, president

(Thanks to Linda Eastman for photos)

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golden rod (*Solidago stricta*)
 silk grass golden aster (*Pityopsis graminifolia*)
 tiny Oak toad
 yellow star grass (*Hypoxis juncea*) heavens.
 elephant's foot (*Elephantopus elatus*) basal
 rosette of leaves pointed out.
 Waving blazing star (*Liatis tenuifolia*),
 paintbrush's flat heads (*Carphephorus*
corymbosus)
 rose rush (*Hygodesmia aphylla*)
 deep purple flowered Ironweed (*Vernonia* spp
 shiny blueberry (*Vaccinium myrsinites*),

gopher apple (*Licania michauxii*),
 pennyroyal (*Piloblephis rigida*),
 St. John's wort (*Hypericum reductum*),
 blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*),
 sensitive vine (*Schrankia microphylla*)
 gallberry bush (*Ilex glabra*) ripe black fruit
 Dahoon holly's (*Ilex cassine*) red fruit
 blueheart (*Buchnera americana*)
 saltbush (*Baccharis halimifolia*)
 Ludwigia--big and small
 batchelor buttons (*Polygala rugelii*
 upland cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum*).

Florence Chatowsky, president

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