



## Camp Salmen Nature Park - March 18, 2017

### Official Monarch WayStation: Garden preparations

On Saturday morning March 18, 2017, the skies were clear blue and the weather was a bit nippy when volunteers arrived, ready to prepare the ground selected for the new Camp Salmen Nature Park Monarch WayStation. Camp Salmen board member Bart Henderson and I were admiring the blooming Mayhaw trees at the entrance when Park Ranger Ben Taylor came at 9am to open the front gate for us. Soon thereafter, several others arrived at the pavilion--Emily Taylor (Dixie Landscape ), Donna Bush (Slidell Magazine reporter), Amy Nichols (representing Crosby Arboretum), Lintz Adams (Project: MONARCH teacher from Green Park Elementary), Cathy Domangue (Bayou Liberty neighbor), and Mignon Tourne ( LA Master Naturalist). After all the introductions, we started measuring the borders for the two new garden beds. Located in the main parking lot near a grand Live Oak tree, the new "**Camp Monarch**" gardens will be twenty feet long and four feet wide with a four foot walkway in-between. Amy, a landscaper, pulled out her measuring tape and began placing the orange flags to mark the corners. Weeds were pulled and Lintz repotted some useful plants to be relocated. Two very interesting black millipedes were revealed as Cathy raked the leaf litter! Several bags of soil were added plus weed barrier was placed and secured.





Meanwhile a group of Girl Scouts and their leaders were collecting leaves for a leaf badge. They inquired about our project so I told them our plans to prepare the beds today, then install the butterfly host and nectar plants on **Saturday, April 22.** (The whole list of plants we use will be printed in my next article about planting day.)

On **Saturday, May 13,** our exciting "**Nature Celebration!**" event will unveil and present the completed project to the public. "Nature experts" and folks representing several nature clubs will be present to answer questions

and hand out information from 10 am until 3 pm. Butterflies will be released at 1:30pm!

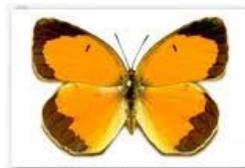
Next on our schedule was to hike the trails, selecting eight areas to "enhance" with specially selected plants to attract particular wildlife. During visits, hikers can use our new "Nature Discovery Map" to explore, hunt, and find these areas to learn about the plants and wildlife. Near the pavilion will be "**Cassia Corner**" where folks will look for the different Cassia and Senna plants, hosts of four Sulphur butterflies--Cloudless Sulphur, Little Sulphur, Sleepy Orange and Orange-barred Sulphur (shown below). Mamou (Coral Bean), a preferred nectar flower of sulphurs, will be next to the "Cassia corner". The Mamou's red flower, unusual and gorgeous, will later turn into coral-colored beans, thus the name.



**Cloudless Sulphur**



**Little Sulphur**



**Sleepy Orange**



**Orange Barred**

We enjoyed watching the Cloudless Sulphur butterflies sipping nectar from the pretty Tung tree flowers that had fallen to the ground. Bumble bees and honey bees were visiting the dewberry vines that were bursting with white flowers. Beautiful blue iris spotted the bayou's edge. As we walked towards the boardwalk, I smelled the wonderfully sweet fragrance of the native honeysuckle azaleas' pink blooms. I was pleased to see a patch of Boehmeria plants, the host for Red Admiral butterflies. Emily Taylor spotted a cluster of Buck Moth stinging caterpillars hanging on a low Oak tree branch. Of the over 3,000 Louisiana moths, there are only four caterpillars that can sting (shown below)--Buck moth, Io moth, Saddleback moth and the Puss moth. No Louisiana butterfly caterpillar will sting.



**Buck Moth**



**Io Moth**



**Saddleback Moth**



**Puss Moth**

As we strolled the boardwalk, we saw fresh green sprouts of Iris and Spider Lily foliage, growing like a carpet amidst multiple-sized cypress knees on the swampy wet dirt. Across the bayou and sprawling along the shoreline a spray of glorious white Cherokee rose flowers was making a real statement and catching our attention. "Snake!" yelled Emily and we all rushed over to take pictures of the Texas Rat Snake. Within a few steps, Emily's keen eyes spotted a darling tree frog poised on a palmetto leaf. A Common Checkered Skipper was flitting around in the sunshine while hunting Sida plants, their host.



**Gulf Fritillary**



**Variegated Fritillary**

Next to the stand of bunching bamboo, we plan to erect a "tee-pee" made of cut bamboo branches so that the passion flower vines can crawl up the "**Fritillary Wigwam**" and attract both Gulf Fritillary and Variegated Fritillary butterflies (shown above) to lay their eggs. The Passion Flower Vine flower is also unique and beautiful. The bright orange Gulf Fritillary caterpillars with black (non-stinging) barbs will use the vines as their host plant.

Across the boardwalk will be the "**Monarch Munch**" area where a patch of native Aquatic milkweed, *Asclepias perennis*, will be planted. Monarchs will lay eggs on the plants where the black, white, and yellow striped Monarch caterpillars will munch away before they decide to find a spot where they can turn into their bright green chrysalis with gold spots. Nearby two Pearl Crescent butterflies were observed chasing each other around a patch of Aster, their host plant.



**Asclepias perennis**



At the next turn, we were surprised to see several canoes at the boat landing and a group of folks milling about. It was Byron Almquist leading the Louisiana Master Naturalists on a canoeing and hiking learning adventure! Jeanne Stangle was giving a talk about the Camp Salmen history as we walked up to say hello. I told everyone about our project and several commented that they would join our efforts. A beautiful black and yellow Giant Swallowtail glided across the path then landed on a tree.



As we hiked further, we were awed by Bayou Liberty's beauty, accented by ancient Live Oak trees draped with Spanish Moss. Tiger Swallowtails were gracefully gliding through, stopping to nectar on the azalea flowers. Close to the Goldfish Bayou, we selected two more special areas--"**Hackberry Hang-out**" and "**Red Admiral Roost**". Along the bayou bank, we will install Boehmeria (False Nettles) for the pretty Red Admiral butterflies to use. Hackberry trees will support four different butterfly caterpillars -- Hackberry, Tawny Emperor, Question Mark, and Snout. Emily discovered a fat Speckled King Snake slithering along the shoreline. An anole green lizard was sun bathing on a tree branch.



**Red Admiral**



**Hackberry Butterfly**



**Tawny Emperor**



**Question Mark**



**Snout**

Across the foot bridge is the Grotto area where we spotted several Carolina Satyr butterflies bobbing along the ground covered with leaf litter. A Palamedes Swallowtail quickly zipped in front of us and disappeared just as quickly without stopping. An American Painted Lady Butterfly was tasting various leaves with her feet, searching for Cudweed flower bud tips to lay her eggs.



**Zebra Swallowtail**



**Pipevine Swallowtail**

In the woody understory, we plan to create the "**PawPaw Patch**" to attract beautiful Zebra Swallowtails and PawPaw Sphinx Moths. These trees like to grow in a "colony" and spread by the root system. The Zebra caterpillars are green with thin yellow and black stripes. A pair of Little Wood Satyrs, Spring time butterflies, were bobbing alongside the path when one paused long enough for all of us to get a good look at it-- as if it was trying to tell us, "Photo opportunity!" The Pipevine Swallowtail uses the Pipevine plants as their host. "**Pipevine Place**" will have three different types of pipevines--*Aristolochia fimbriata*, *Aristolochia triloba*, and *Aristolochia tomentosa*. Each sports very interesting flowers that resemble a pipe, thus the name. The Pipevine Swallowtail caterpillars are black with bright orange spots and they do not sting.

Many tasks were accomplished plus everyone enjoyed seeing the nature diversity of plants and wildlife. It will be interesting to monitor any increased butterfly activity after we install the buffet of caterpillar food/host plants.

Anyone wanting to join our fun as a volunteer, please contact Linda Auld at [nolabuglady@gmail.com](mailto:nolabuglady@gmail.com)



