

Friends of Deerfield Island Park

June 2021 Newsletter

Save the Date: Our next Board/Members Meeting will be on Friday, June 11 10:00 am

We will either Zoom or meet at Sullivan Park.

Watch your email for more details and Agenda.

Minutes of April meeting is now available on our website: [Click Here](#)

You can now view the past 2021 newsletters on our website. [Click here](#)

From the President

"When is the park going to open?" I get that question all the time and we ask it of the Parks Department all the time. Here is what we know. The Parks Department is now reviewing its staffing for the island, with some potential new hiring. When staff at Quiet Waters is finished giving vaccinations, the Park will get readied to be opened.... maybe early summer. *There is nothing official yet, though.*

Remember our "Coastal Cocktails" that was cancelled last minute in 2020? Well, our VP, Pat McGonigal, has been graciously storing all the donated prizes in her townhouse since then. This week, Ira Wechterman and Pat moved all the prizes to the island shuttle for transportation to our office. Thanks Pat, for keeping them all this time. We are looking forward to rescheduling the event next year.

In anticipation of the island reopening, we are working on improving the Ambassador program. We have a new scheduling portal, we are working on making the Pocket Field Guides, that were so beautifully done by Barb Collins, available to all Ambassadors as part of their training..... and we will be setting up training sessions once the island opens.

Also, we have been in consultation with the Parks Department environmental group regarding the Butterfly Garden and work on design and plant selection is continuing. Caroline Steffen has been the point person for us on this project.

So, as I have said before, hang in there. We will get back to our special island soon.

Helene Wechterman, Pres.



Flora and Fauna

Not Just Any Butterfly

by Diana R. Lopez

Designated as the state butterfly of Florida in 1996, the zebra longwing butterfly, or *Heliconius charithonia* (Linnaeus), with narrow, long, black and white striped wings, is distinctive and unmistakable. It is common to Mexico and Central America and can be found in almost all of Florida including Deerfield Island Park and its environs. Because of its distinctive markings, graceful and slow movements and the fact that it is not readily startled, it can be easily identified and closely observed.

Lifespan

An unusual feature of the zebra longwing is that the adults are relatively long lived. Most

butterflies live only a few weeks, but the zebra longwing, due in large part to its tropical and subtropical habitat, continues to live and lay eggs for several months. In addition, adult longwings possess feeding habits peculiar to its species. Unlike most other butterflies that feed solely on nectar, it feeds not only on the nectar of flowers, but also it can feed on pollen. Pollen is high in protein and therefore very nutritious, whereas nectar contains primarily sugars. This high protein diet is another factor contributing to a long life span and remarkable ability to continue to produce eggs for several months.

Host Plants

The plants of those flowers upon which the zebra longwing and other adult butterflies feed are of a different species from those plants upon which they lay their eggs. The zebra longwing is known to feed on a variety of flowers such as lantana and shepherd's needle, but after mating, the adult zebra longwing lays its eggs on one of several species of passion flower plants, *Passiflora*. Emerging caterpillars feed on these plants and absorb some of the toxins that are present in the leaves thereby making them distasteful to predators. Their striking patterns and colors advertise this toxicity and add as a predatory deterrent.



Lantana



Shepherd's Needle



Purple Passion Flower



Eggs



Chrysalis



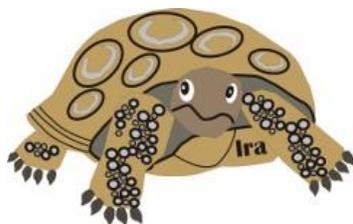
Mature Larva

Are Butterflies Intelligent?

Zebra longwing and other heliconians are, by reputation, known to be very intelligent insects. When roosting at night, they have a social order whereby the oldest members position themselves in the choicest places. It is these senior members who "rule the roost" and who initiate rousing in the morning by gently nudging the others to get going. They habitually and predictably return to the same plants daily where they had fed previously. It is this specialized behaviour, called *trap lining*, that enables them to conserve energy by spending less time searching for food and to dedicate the bulk of their time and effort to consuming it.

Respect, Observe and Preserve

The zebra longwing, our state butterfly, is more than worthy of its celebrity status, and we owe it our reverence and respect. Once Deerfield Island Park reopens, concentrated efforts will be dedicated toward the planned expansion, enhancement and revitalization of its butterfly garden, and the zebra longwing will be just one of the many species it will attract. When complete, it will be a haven where visitors, young and old, will be able to stroll among the various plants and flowers and learn about and observe the abundance of butterfly species and revel in their unique beauty.



Friends of Deerfield Island Park (FODIP)

Formed in March 2015

We are dedicated to preserving and protecting our unique green island as a natural habitat for native plants and for the island's animal inhabitants. We have been approved by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization for this purpose.

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