

If You Can't Watch the Crocodiles, Enjoy the Butterflies

By Rachel R. Peine

While Rich and I were sitting on the bench in the butterfly garden at Crocodile Lake Wildlife Reserve in Key Largo, a Winnebago from Minnesota pulled into the parking lot. "Where do we go to see the crocodiles?" the driver asked. "Well, the refuge itself is actually closed," we replied, "but you can walk through the butterfly garden."

We heard about the butterfly garden from Nikki Laak, author of "Woodrat Jill", a children's book about work being done in the refuge to protect not only the endangered crocodiles, but also the Key Largo woodrat and the Schaus Swallowtail butterfly. If you missed the story in the January 2009 issue of this paper, you can read it online in our archive at www.theconchtelegraph.com

The butterfly garden is a tiny treasure hiding to the left of the Refuge parking lot. An archway covered in vines beckons you in, along with the peaceful sound of the waterfall at the center of the pond. I always wonder how butterflies know where someone planted their favorite shrubs and flowers, but they must get the message through their own version of the "coconut telegraph".

We saw orange butterflies that I think are "Julias", based on the posted pictures and description of several species that can be found in this area. There were also swallowtails and a dark-winged butterfly that we couldn't identify. The volunteers who maintain the garden have planted and labeled many native and non-

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Photos by Rich Peine

It's Never Too Late Getting Back to What You Love

There are times in life when we are committed to pursuing our passions. Every molecule in our body is focused on doing what we love. At other times, necessity and responsibility dictate that we put our dreams aside and do what needs to be done. It is during these moments that we may choose to forget what it is that we love to do. There are many other reasons for why we may leave our passions behind. A hobby may lose its appeal once we've realize it will never turn into our dream job. Someone important to us may keep telling us that our passions are childish and unsuitable - until we finally believe them.

Forgetting about what you love to do can be a form of self-sabotage. If you can forget about your dreams, then you never have to risk failure. But just because we've decided to ignore our passions doesn't mean they no longer exist. Nothing can fill the emptiness that remains in a space vacated by a passion that we have

tossed aside. Besides, life is too short to stop doing what you love, and it is never too late to rediscover your favorite things. If you gave up playing an instrument, painting, drawing, spending time in nature, or any other activity or interest that you once loved to do, now may be the time to take up that passion again. If you don't remember what it is that you used to be passionate about, you may want to think about the activities or interests that you used to love or the dreams that you always wished you could pursue.

You don't have to neglect your responsibilities to pursue your passions, and you don't have to neglect your commitments to do what you love. When you make an effort to incorporate your interests into your life, the fire within you ignites. You feel excited, inspired, and fed by the flames that are sparked by living your life with passion for what you love.



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