



Lisa Roberts, executive director of the Florida Wildflower Foundation, poses with photos during the opening of a John Moran Wildflower Exhibit at the W.T. Bland library in Mount Dora. (Tom Benitez, Orlando Sentinel)

### **Wildflower shots by nature photographer John Moran's on display at Mount Dora library**

By Christine Cole, Correspondent

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MOUNT DORA — Of the 3,000 species of wildflowers found in Florida, "La Florida: 500 Years in the Place of Flowers" depicts just 15 of the gorgeous blooms.

But what blooms. The lavender Florida paintbrush, for example, is one of Florida's showiest wildflowers, with blooms up to six inches across.

The touring exhibit of nature photographer John Moran's large-format photographs opened recently at the W.T. Bland Public Library. It continues through March 15.

Lisa Roberts, executive director of the Florida Wildflower Foundation, talked about the benefits of wildflowers beyond their beauty.

"People don't litter when wildflowers grow along roadsides," she said. "Wildflowers are a source of civic pride. They also absorb excess nutrients, adding to the quality of water, and are part of the habitat for pollinators."

Every third bite of food of native bees comes from wildflowers, so that when we lose wildflowers, we lose bees.

"It's up to us," Roberts said. Wildflower expert "Walter Kingsley Taylor said his squash was not pollinated this year. There were no bees."

### **'Soul of Florida'**

Moran, who traveled the state to find and photograph each wildflower in its natural habitat, located the white Atamasco lily, or rain lily, along a roadside, bluish-purple Gulf Coast lapine in the West and the beach morning glory, lying gracefully on the sand. "He reveals the soul of Florida," Roberts said.

She explained how the foundation got its start, giving credit to the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, and what difficulties had to be overcome. Growers needed to provide seeds and the knowledge of how to germinate them. Some seeds, for example, need scarification — scratching — before planting.

Roberts took the opportunity to tout the Florida Wildflower license plate, which contributes \$15 to wildflower planting and education, and a new app for smartphones, available at iTunes, that identifies birds, butterflies and wildflowers along the Great Birding Trail.

The exhibit of Moran's work is booked through 2013 and into 2014. For a list of the venues, or to learn more about the federation, see [flawildflowers.org](http://flawildflowers.org).

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