More than plants

Wildlife also abounds at Naples Botanical Garden

An immature ibis wades in a pool at Naples Botanical Garden in East Naples.

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When we think of wildlife at the Naples Botanical Garden, we think first of plants. There is much more. Longtime garden friend and neighbor Jim White made these photos of the animals frequenting the grounds these days:

“Jim is a passionate wildlife photographer who has been involved, along with his wife, Linda (a former board chair, current board member and heart and soul of the garden for many years) with the garden pretty much from its inception,” said Executive Director Brian Holley. “Jim and Linda live in Windstar and also have a northern home near the Chicago Botanic Garden.”

“Right now the birds are really amazing. We are really excited that the white pelicans have returned for a second year,” Holley said. “We had roseate spoonbills and black-bellied whistling ducks last week, lots of egrets, herons, wood storks, warblers and orioles, too. Naples is just the best!”

WHEN YOU visit Naples Botanical Garden, you are surrounded by tropical beauty. The grounds spread out in various wings and units. There are various services offered, the region’s only neonatal intensive care unit. That was little more than 15 years ago. Those trips out of the region would not be necessary today because children’s medical services have expanded and thrive at the Lee County facility. The new hospital, scheduled for completion in 2016, will keep even more children and teenagers close to home.

Last week, Lee Memorial CEO Jim Nathan took me and Daily News Editor Jeff Lytle on a tour of the current children’s hospital, which is spread out in various wings of the medical center at the health park. The various services of Golisano Children’s Hospital of Southwest Florida provide specialized health care for children from infancy through age 18 and features the region’s only neonatal intensive care unit.

Nathan and Dr. Emad Salman explained the current services offered, the growth of those services and what the new facility, named for Naples philanthropist B. Thomas Golisano, will mean to pediatric neurosurgery and pediatric urology.

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