

## Botanical Forays to Florida

LOIS FARQUHARSON,<sup>1</sup> Franklin College and MILLARD S. MARKLE,  
Earlham College

At Indiana University and at Earlham College "forays" or field trips to Florida have been initiated in the past few years, and it was felt that members of the Taxonomy Division of the Indiana Academy of Science would be interested in knowing more about these trips—their "clientele," cost per student, places visited, traveling and living arrangements, and most important of all, the values of such trips. The following questions and their answers are an attempt to compare and contrast the trips.

Question 1) How many students and what kind of students went on the trips?

*Dr. Farquharson:* From ten to fourteen Indiana University students usually take the trip, and the background of these students varies considerably from year to year. Graduates and undergraduates in botany, as well as graduate students in education, have composed the group.

*Dr. Markle:* Twelve to eighteen students have gone on the trip, and they have nearly all been juniors and seniors, and many of them members of the class in field botany, which is ecological and taxonomic in scope. All have been majors in biology, with varied main interests—plants, birds, reptiles, shells, photography.

Question 2) When or what time of year did you go and how long a trip was it?

*Dr. Farquharson:* We make the excursion during the latter half of August, chiefly because it fits into the Indiana University two-week short session after the regular summer school courses end. It has turned out to be a satisfactory time of year, Florida not being any more uncomfortable than southern Indiana during the summer. Then too, many plants are in fruit, and frequently we are able to take advantage of off-season motel rates.

*Dr. Markle:* The trip is taken during a twelve-day spring vacation, the last of March and early in April. This is a trifle early for the northern part of the area, especially Okefenokee Swamp, but it is a fine time for birds and plants in Florida.

Question 3) Where did you go and what were some of the interesting stops?

*Dr. Farquharson:* The trip is usually routed through the Great Smoky Mountains, and the first extensive stop is in southern Georgia where

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<sup>1</sup>At the suggestion of Dr. Paul Weatherwax, Dr. Farquharson presented the material for the trips which Dr. Weatherwax conducts at Indiana University.

the Okefenokee Swamp and a lumber mill are visited. Then we travel south along the east coast of Florida, stopping in St. Augustine to see places of historical interest as well as plants. From headquarters in Homestead, side trips are taken into the Everglades, out on the Keys and to several botanical gardens in the Miami-Homestead area, including the Subtropical Experiment Station near Homestead which has many interesting fruits. Crossing the Tamiami Trail and turning north, stops are made for cypress knees near Palmdale, gardens in St. Petersburg, and carnivorous plants in northern Florida. In Alabama some time is spent observing crops such as cotton, sugar cane and peanuts.

*Dr. Markle:* The trip is mostly routed through the interior of Florida, avoiding populated areas. We visit the shores of Sanibel or of Marko Islands for shells, cypress swamps near Immokalee, Everglades National Park. The Everglades boat trip was disappointing this last year. Interesting stops and good overnight headquarters were found at Osceola National Forest, beach near Marineland, Highland Hammock State Park, Alexander's Springs. Hamlet's Birds of Prey Institute, Ross Allen's Reptile Institute were other stops of interest, and Hialeah was good for flamingoes. The area south and west of Lake Okeechobee was good for plants but particularly good for birds as was the area near and south of the Tamiami Trail from Monroe Station.

Question 4) How much did the trip cost per student and how did you travel and what were the "living" arrangements for food and shelter?

*Dr. Farquharson:* The trip costs approximately \$110-\$120 per student. This figure includes tuition and a share of the gas and oil expenses as well as food and lodging costs. We stay at motels and eat in restaurants rather than camping out, largely to save time and simplify the organization of the trip.

*Dr. Markle:* The trip costs approximately \$35-\$40 per student. We go in private cars and drivers are paid for gas and oil. Our trip is not connected with a course, hence no credit and no charge for tuition. Students sleep in sleeping bags, instructors in a Nash car. We use State Parks or other camping areas which provide good camping facilities. Much of the food is provided by the college at wholesale rates, and fresh fruits and vegetables are purchased en route. Breakfast and the evening dinner meal are prepared in camp by "meal squads" of three students. Lunch is prepared at breakfast time, and taken in the cars, therefore avoiding the necessity of time out for preparation at noon.

Question 5) What do you consider are the chief values of such trips?

*Dr. Farquharson:* 1. The students gain an appreciation of an entirely different part of the country—its history, geology and people as well as the plants of the area.

2. Many profit from the experience of learning to get along with others in such a group.

3. Botanically, the trip provides an excellent opportunity to survey the plant kingdom (from marine algae along the Keys, through the lower vascular plants such as *Psilotum*, *Lycopodium* and *Selaginella*, to the *Cycadales* and the flowering plants) and to study plants of agricultural and horticultural importance.

*Dr. Markle:* 1. Learning to live and work together on a group project.

2. The direct observation of nature by a group with varied interests, who learn from one another. Contact with unfamiliar habitats.

3. Learning the techniques of collecting, preserving or maintaining alive specimens of a great variety of plants and animals, previously largely unknown.