

# SIX HUNDRED MILES OF NATIVE PLANTS

by Paul and Sherry Cummings

If you enjoy a good walk and appreciate the beauty of Florida's native flora and fauna, then you should become acquainted with The Florida Trail. Six hundred miles of this proposed 1200-mile hiking trail that will extend the length and breadth of Florida already exists.

The Florida Trail is the dream of a group of hiking enthusiasts from all over the state, who began fifteen years ago to carve it out of the Florida backwoods. They have put together bits and pieces of land, some owned privately, other sections belonging to either State or Federal governments, to make it. The sections of the trail owned by the government, such as the parts through the Ocala National Forest or Wekiwa Springs State Park, are open to the public. Those portions of the trail owned privately however, are open only to members of the Florida Trail Association, who **must** carry their membership card with them on hikes through these areas.

The trail is laid out, cut, maintained, and accurately mapped by volunteers.

Of interest to members of the Florida Native Plant Society is the fact that the trail traverses many sections of the state rich in native plants.

The present southern terminus of the trail is the Tamiami Trail in Dade County. Here the trail traverses large wet areas of dwarf pond cypress covered with *tillandsia*, as well as drier areas of cabbage palm, pine, and saw palmetto.

The trail continues north on the dike system running east of Conservation Area #1. Along the dike one can see pickerel weed, *Myrsine*, *Myrica*, *Sagit-*

**continued next page**



Two hikers on the Florida Trail through the Tosohatchee.

Photo courtesy Florida Trail Association

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Articles on any aspect of Florida native plants are invited. Include drawings or photos, if possible. They will be handled with care, and will be returned if you include a self-addressed stamped envelope. Send to Peggy S. Lantz, Editor., **The Palmetto**, Rt. 3, Box 437, Orlando, FL 32811, 305/299-1472.

**IN THIS ISSUE**

**PAGE**

Education Comes First . . . . .	3
FNPS Conference . . . . .	3
Plants for Birds . . . . .	4
Water Experts Speak . . . . .	5
Society Business . . . . .	6
Authors and Artists . . . . .	8
Brazilian Pepper Cut-Down . . . . .	8
Query Corner . . . . .	9
<i>Sabal etonia</i> . . . . .	10



600 MILES ————— from page 1

*taria*, elderberry, and dahoon holly.

From Lake Okeechobee on, the trail follows the Kissimmee River into central Florida. Here you will find the beautiful live oak hammocks at Prairie Lakes State Park.

From Orlando north is the longest continuous completed section of the trail. It winds through the Ocala National Forest, where pines, oaks, maples, and an understory of gallberry, blueberry, and other shrubs may be found.

Farther north in the Osceola National Forest, the trail runs through pine-palmetto flatwoods, and through swamps with cypress, blackgum, bay, and maple trees. Wildflowers such as *Atamosco (Zephyranthes)*, wild azalea, and pitcher plant add their colorful touches.

When the trail reaches the Suwanee River, it heads west. Some locations along the trail have clusters of huge cypress and oak trees in the middle of primitive swamps. Sparkleberry, dogwood, and redbud grow along the path.

Farther west, the trail passes through Torreya State Park, which has a wide variety of forests, including river swamp, hardwood hammock, and high pine land. Here you can see the rare Florida yew tree, the largest broadleaf magnolia in the United States, yellow jessamine, and the tree for which the park is named — *Torreya*, also known as gopher wood, or "stinking cedar". From here on, the pines and junipers predominate, but you will also find ash, tupelo, titi, and yaupon. Along this section of the trail, the hardwood foliage changes color in the fall, and from March through November, the wild flowers are abun-

Dorie Karl



*Myrsine floridana*

dant wherever you walk.

So if you've had a dream of hiking the back country of Florida, your dream can now be a reality, because of the work of some other dreamers who have made The Florida Trail.

For more information, contact The Florida Trail Association, P.O. Box 13708, Gainesville, 32604.



**FNPS T-SHIRTS**

T-shirts with the saw palmetto logo printed on them are available and will be on sale at the FNPS Conference in Gainesville. They are short-sleeved, 50% polyester/50% cotton, and the logo is printed in green on beige material. We have all men's sizes, S,M,L,XL, and women's sizes, S,M,L. The cost is \$7.95 plus \$1 postage.

Window decals, and the first edition of the massive bibliography project that Carol Lotspeich has been working on, will also be on sale at the Conference.

Send your name, address, sizes desired, and check to Florida Native Plant Society, 935 Orange Ave., Winter Park, 32789.

**ISSUES THAT NEED YOUR ATTENTION**

The Florida Department of Natural Resources is receiving considerable opposition to recent proposals to carry out their charge to protect Florida's natural plant communities. The issue is the removal of feral hogs from state parks. These animals, though very much a part of Florida's recent history, are destroying natural habitats and present a threat to native plant communities and to rare species of plants that are the reason for the existence of many of the parks.

An editorial in the Fort Myers News-Press criticizing DNR for their proposed action acknowledge that the hogs are known to destroy "... rare plants in their rush to gobble down snakes." but they added that "Wild plant lovers apparently haven't filed any formal complaints."

Perhaps it is time that the DNR received some support from "wildplant lovers" and that state representatives and the governor and cabinet heard about it. Write: Dept. of Natural Resources, 3900 Commonwealth Blvd., Tallahassee, FL 32303.

Dick Workman