

Letters



THE BRIGHT SIDE OF WETLAND PROTECTION

The fall issue of *The Palmetto* notes darkly that wetlands have a darker side.

In spite of becoming the star of stage, screen, and radio, and a friend of politicians running for state office, wetlands are still in trouble. We are still destroying them at a great rate. We are still ignoring the fragile complexity of their functions and values, and the consequences of their destruction.

To add insult to injury, we have added the concept of mitigation in which the wetland is "saved" by getting rid of it and making a new one, sometimes out of an upland. It's better not to sacrifice either.

We are not faced with the dilemma of wetlands vs. uplands, but rather the difficulty of defining and enforcing proper stewardship of all our scarce resources.

It is not the fault of wetlands that uplands have been ignored. Both can be saved and still allow reasonable development options on the land. County land use plans and codes can and do require preservation of upland habitat and endangered species. You will find that those counties with the strongest wetland protection have the strongest upland protection. On the regional level, many a Development of Regional Impact (DRI) has protected swamp and sandhill, 'gator and gopher tortoise.

Wetland protection is not what is causing the devastation of uplands. Improper development is. Those who love wild places should have the courage and foresight to fight for what is right instead of being ensnared in indefensible compromise. If land use is appropriate to the rareness and value of habitat—wet or dry—both can be saved.

To blame wetlands for the new fad in mitigation is illogical. Those who believe in strong wetland protection don't generally believe in creating wetlands out of uplands as a substitute for the real thing and an excuse for destroying it. Those of us who like mud between our toes would like to see both wetlands and uplands left alone.

We can't leave it all alone. Even us mud lovers realize that. We can save wetlands because they are vitally important and are unsuitable for development in their functioning state. We can save uplands, even when they

are suitable for development, if they are vitally important or if they are home to living things that can't be replaced.

The success of wetland protection is that it lays the groundwork for an understanding and appreciation of the whole natural world. The bright side of wetland protection is that it arises from and leads to a decent respect for creation.

That—rather than "wetlands vs. other natural areas"—should be the message of the Florida Native Plant Society.

• Maggy Hurchalla
Martin County Commissioner

WANTED: VOLUSIA CHAPTER

I have been rather disappointed that a chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society has not been started in Volusia County. However, there is a sort of rival organization, Botanical Gardens of Volusia, with 300 members according to a newspaper story. I have not joined it as yet. They have a campaign to compile a list of the county's big native trees. But I have dropped out of searching for champion tree species.

I saw an article in the July 1986 *Good Housekeeping Magazine* listing Lady Bird Johnson's favorite wild flowers, as follows:

1. Primrose
2. Maximilian's sunflower
3. Coreopsis
4. Winecup
5. Gay feather
6. Engelmann's daisy
7. Phlox
8. Gaillardia
9. Poppy
10. Indian paintbrush

The above coreopsis may very well be the same as the *Coreopsis lanceolata* mentioned in a recent *Florida Naturalist*. Winecup is a species a poppy mallow. Florida has a related species, a very beautiful flower according to illustrations.

My hobby of finding and listing plants in bloom is a sort of substitute for my yearly bird lists, as I am not doing too well with those because of cataracts in my eyes. I have been a non-professional wild flower hunter for over 30 years up north in Michigan and down here in Florida. Thus I have no difficulty finding 350 or so species in blossom every year, by taking frequent trips in my home county (Volusia) with my little library of botanical books.

• Harold Nett
Ormond Beach

Dear Mr. Craig:

I have been interested in Florida wild flowers for 37 years, a member of the Pompano Beach Garden Club for 35 years. There was very little interest in wild flowers in this area at that time, so I elected myself "wild flower chairman" of our club.

One year at the Club's annual flower show, I exhibited 68 species of Florida wild flowers, and the club was awarded the state prize. They were cut flowers, labeled with their common names and botanical names.

As the vacant lots slowly disappeared, I collected and grew the plants in my own garden.

Now I am along in years, have moved in a retirement life care center, John Knox Village. I have lost my husband, and have slowed down. But I do have a small garden around my villa, with about a dozen wild flower plants among other flowering plants.

Just thought you would like to know of one other native plant lover.

I am joining the Florida Native Plant Society, even though I probably cannot contribute much to the Society. Good luck in trying to conserve, preserve and restore our native plant communities. It is very much needed.

• Hermia H. Gordon
(Mrs. W. Duncan Gordon)

the natives

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