

Science Roundup

by I. Jack Stout

(Dr. Stout, Professor of Botany at the University of Central Florida and Science Committee Chairman for FNPS, will be presenting this regular column.)

One of FNPS's members, Dr. Ann Johnson, with various co-workers, has written five volumes of wonderful material on coastal upland ecosystems (natural communities) of our coasts and barrier islands. The second volume in this six-volume series focuses on the Florida Keys and was prepared by Curtis R. Kruer. The primary title of each volume is: *An Assessment of Florida's Remaining Coastal Upland Natural Communities*; secondary titles reference the region of coastal Florida that is reported on in the particular volume. Full titles are listed at the end of this review. The objective of the study was to identify the undeveloped coastal upland natural communities in each coastal county. Parcels greater than 20 acres were eventually ranked according to plant species diversity, structure, and the degree of exotic invasion. Site visits and surveys of the vegetation allowed these remaining communities to be described based on the dominant plant species and their frequency of occurrence. Plants

were referenced as abundant, locally abundant, frequent, occasional, and rare, based on the canopy coverage. Community classification followed the scheme outlined in *A Guide to the Natural Communities of Florida*, published by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory and the Florida Department of Natural Resources in 1990. The communities reported in this series include beach dune, coastal strand, coastal grassland, coastal hammock, and coastal rock barren.

The contents of the separate volumes varies slightly, but each reports on the communities discovered, plant species found in each community, and rare plants and animals. Common and scientific names are provided for the various taxa. Community composition by region is summarized in terms of acreage (albeit imprecise), ownership (public and private), and rating of quality. United State Geological Survey quad sheets were photocopied to produce maps of each parcel discussed in the site summary appendix. The site summaries are extremely valuable, providing descriptive text on the physical setting, plant communities, and rare species, among other things.

The collective work is outstanding and illustrates the level of field effort needed to get a handle on a subset of natural communities and the associated biodiversity. These data provide a strong scientific basis for thoughtful efforts in land acquisition at state, regional, and local levels of government and in the private sector.

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derived from the Florida Department of Natural Resources, the Florida Department of Environmental Regulation, and the Conservation and Recreational Lands Trust Fund.

Johnson, A.F., J.W. Muller, and K.A. Bettinger. 1990. *An Assessment of Florida's Remaining Coastal Upland Natural Communities: Southeast Florida*. Florida Natural Areas Inventory, Tallahassee, FL.

Johnson, A.F., J.W. Muller, and K.A. Bettinger. 1992. *An Assessment of Florida's Remaining Coastal Upland Natural Communities: Panhandle*. Florida Natural Areas Inventory, Tallahassee, FL.

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