

The Quarterly Journal of the Florida Native Plant Society

Palmetto



Hunting Wildflowers at Tosohatchee WMA

Walter Kingsley Taylor

Right: Checking the book.
Photo by Vince Lamb.



The long-anticipated day had arrived. It was Thursday, May 19, and the 31st Annual Conference of the Florida Native Plant Society was a reality. The fruits of labor from all the planning, numerous meetings held, and emails exchanged would come to fruition. Field trip “G” to the Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area (TOS) near Christmas, Orange County, Florida, was about to roll. Just a few days earlier, the new Taylor Creek Road bridge was finished and opened for traffic. This cut traveling miles for the 20 folks scheduled to come on trip “G”, and the other TOS FNPS field trip led by Katherine Bowman and Pete Dunkelberg.



The weather was perfect. Fortunately, the area had recently received a needed rain and I knew the plants would be perked-up and ready to show off their colors. About a week before this gorgeous day, Karin and I motored to the TOS to survey things only to find the ground to be quite dry with many plants drooping.

As we drove through the TOS main gate, there were our good friends Ray Jarrett, Sid Taylor, and Rita Grant, and a few other attendees to greet us. Ray had his boots on and was ready to go. He had directed the first vehicles to the appropriate parking area. He’s a fine fellow and good organizer. With the anticipated 35-40 vehicles showing up for the two trips, there was concern about parking, so things had to be organized.



It wasn’t long until the vehicles began rolling in the place. I could tell folks were excited with high spirits – there were so many smiling faces! The many familiar faces that Karin and I hadn’t seen in a while included Sid and Rita from Citrus and Hernando counties, Cindi and David Stewart from Jackson County, Katy Roberts from Pinellas County, Betty Wargo and Carmel vanHoek from Hillsborough County, Lassie Lee from Duval County, Vince Lamb from Brevard County, Ray Jarrett from Volusia County, and Sharon Lynch from Seminole County. The rest of the group came mostly from beyond the central Florida boundaries: Allen Burdett, Ina Crawford, Dottie Hanna, Peter Moeller, Jon Pospisil, Susan Rang, Sandra Saurers, and Janet Thome. Ina Crawford of Panama City had traveled the longest distance. She and her sister, Lassie use the FNPS conference for their annual visits. I could not have asked for a better group of folks. I was excited!

We were honored to have Friday’s keynote speaker, Rick Darke along. I had been told he wanted a workout, and I was

Above, first row, top to bottom:
Bacopa caroliniana; *Hypericum myrtifolium*; *Polygala cymosa*.

Second row, top to bottom:
Dr. Walter Taylor (photo by Vince Lamb); *Sabatia calycina*; *Sabatia grandiflora*; *Rhexia alifanus*.
Plant photos by Walter K. Taylor.



determined not to disappoint him. I was impressed how well Rick related the TOS flora of wildflowers to those found in his northern neck-of-the-woods. If he didn't get the species, he knew the genus. At the time, we didn't know that Rick would feature our field trip in his Friday presentation, *Livable Florida: Native by Design*.

After signing the register and paying the entrance fee, Ray and I continued to get the vehicles parked, and it wasn't long until a carpool of 5 vehicles was formed. It was a pleasure to have folks so willing to cooperate and make logistic matters smooth.

Our first stop was on St. Nicholas Road. Because of the profusion of wildflowers always at this site, we spent over an hour here. We found eastern false dragonhead (*Physostegia purpurea*), fourpetal St. John's-wort (*Hypericum tetrapetalum*), orange milkwort (*Polygala lutea*), starrush whitetop (*Rhynchospora colorata*), and many others too numerous to list. Next we took off to the wetter areas of the TOS on Beehead Road (Ranch Road) to see the hand fern (*Ophioglossum palmatum*). The TOS is famous for having the rare fern, and folks always want to see it. After locating the ferns we checked out a nearby wet area where we found several blooming coastal rosegentians (*Sabatia calycina*), axillflowers (*Mecardonia acuminata*), Baldwin's eryngo

(*Eryngium baldwinii*), lemon bacopa (*Bacopa caroliniana*), dwarf St. John's-wort (*Hypericum mutilum*), and scores of others.

As noon was approaching, we headed to the Powerline Road disturbed area that always supports a profusion of blooming May wildflowers including many yellow colic-roots (*Aletris lutea*), largeflower rosegentian (*Sabatia grandiflora*), pineland chaffhead (*Carphephorus carnosus*), and the rare (for Central Florida) Savannah meadowbeauty (*Rhexia alifanus*). At the pitcherplant bog, surrounded by a large pine flatwoods, there were several blooming milkworts (tall pinebarren, *Polygala cymosa*, orange, *P. lutea*), the beautiful myrtleleaf St. John's-wort (*Hypericum myrtifolium*), sandweeds (*Hypericum fasciculatum*), and hooded pitcherplants (*Sarracenia minor*) that had just finished blooming. Here we crossed paths with Catherine and Pete's group.

Now it was hot as the sun's rays beamed on us, and it was approaching 1 p.m. Folks were ready for the box lunches and a place to sit and talk, so off to the Youth Camp we headed. Here under large oaks we used the picnic tables for our outdoor feast of sandwiches, drinks, cookies, and chips. After we finished eating and Vince Lamb took the group picture, Field Trip "G" was officially terminated. Yes, it was a great time together. We had fun, sweated, saw a lot of wildflowers, and made good memories.



Above: Hand fern (*Ophioglossum palmatum*).

Above right: Field trip participants. (Back row, left to right) Rick Darke, Sharon Lynch, Cindi Stewart, David Stewart, Jon Pospisil, and Susan Rang. (Middle row, left to right) Janet Thome, Rita Grant, Sandra Saurers, Carmel vanHoek, Karin Taylor, Betty Wargo, Lassie Lee, Katy Roberts, Ina Crawford, Burdett Allen, Dottie Hanna, and Sid Taylor. (Front row, kneeling) Walter Taylor, Ray Jarrett. Not pictured, Peter Moeller. Photo by Vince Lamb.

About the Author:

Dr. Walter K. Taylor, a native of Kentucky, has lived in central Florida for over 42 years. After 35 years of continuous service, Professor Taylor retired from the University of Central Florida, where he taught a variety of biology courses including General Zoology, Ornithology, Biodiversity, Florida Natural History, Local Flora, and Florida Wildflowers. Upon retirement in 2004, Dr. Taylor was named Professor Emeritus of U.C.F.

Taylor has led numerous field trips on wildflower identification and given a variety of talks on Florida natural history to various organizations. He has written two widely used books on Florida wildflowers: *The Field Guide to Florida Wildflowers* (Taylor Publ. Co., Dallas, 1992), and *Wildflowers in Their Natural Communities* (Univ. Press of Florida, Gainesville, 1998). In the spring of 2002, his book *André Michaux in Florida, An Eighteenth-Century Botanical Journey* (Univ. Press of Florida, Gainesville, 2002), coauthored with Dr. Eliane M. Norman, was published. His most recent book, *A Guide to Florida Grasses* was published in 2009 (Univ. Press of Florida, Gainesville).

Further Reading:

1995. Taylor, W. K. Noteworthy Plants from the Tosohatchee State Reserve. *Florida Scientist*. 59:12-15.

<http://myfwc.com/viewing/recreation/wmas/lead/Tosohatchee>



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We welcome articles on native plant species and related conservation topics, as well as high-quality botanical illustrations and photographs. Contact the editor for guidelines, deadlines and other information.

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Official definition of native plant:

For most purposes, the phrase Florida native plant refers to those species occurring within the state boundaries prior to European contact, according to the best available scientific and historical documentation. More specifically, it includes those species understood as indigenous, occurring in natural associations in habitats that existed prior to significant human impacts and alterations of the landscape.

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