

♦ **Florida Keys Green Living and Energy Education Expo** March 31, 2007, at the Stanley Switlik School in Marathon. Free, including workshops, exhibitors and vendors. See www.keysglee.com or call 305-291-7658

♦ **Key Largo Hammocks Botanical State Park Lecture Series. The Delicate Balance of Nature.** 7:30pm - 8:30pm, Key Largo School, MM 105 Oceanside Overseas Hwy. Free. Bring a seat cushion for comfort. For more info call the Park Ranger Station at (305) 451-1202.

◊ **Mar.14: *Upheaval in the Coral World: What We Might Learn from Recent Disturbances.*** Bernhard Riegl, Associate Director, National Coral Reef Institute.

◊ **Mar. 21: *Butterflies of the Florida Keys.*** Marc Minno, author of *Butterflies of the Florida Keys*.

◊ **Mar.28: *Mangoes.*** Richard Campbell, Head of the Tropical Fruit Program, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.

KEY LARGO HAMMOCKS STATE PARK NURSERY

by Sue Miller

Leave it to Jim and Janice Duquesnel and a team of local volunteers determined to spread the word about the benefits of native landscaping - and the plants, too! In 1995 a native plant nursery was created as part of the Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park. The program is thriving with an all volunteer staff supervised by Jim Duquesnel. The nursery has an average of 3200 plants at any one time, about 120 different species, nearly all of which have been propagated from plants that are found in the park.

The Keys members of the Florida Native Plant Society and guests got to see the operation first hand at their January, 2007, monthly meeting. Nursery manager and guest speaker, Jackie DeGayner, has been a loyal volunteer for the last 5 years and has 15 other regular volunteers assisting her at the nursery. Every year the nursery donates about 3000 plants for landscaping efforts of government agencies and residents throughout the Florida Keys and much of South Florida. Benefactors include wildlife refuges in Key Largo and Big Pine Key, Sonny McCoy Indigenous Park in Key West, all of the state parks in the Florida Keys as well as several on the mainland, local churches and schools, and community greening efforts.

To avoid competing with commercial nurseries, these donations are made primarily when the plants cannot be obtained from commercial sources (typically a rare species, or one not popular in commercial trade), or when there are no funds available to purchase plants.

As part of its "Good Neighbors" program, the park also gives plants away to Keys residents who live adjacent to the park boundary, often to help encourage their removal of invasive exotic landscaping. Additionally, the nursery volunteers have become native plant "ambassadors," promoting the use of native landscaping in their own neighborhoods and, as several are "snowbirds," even beyond South Florida.

In consideration of genetic issues, plants whose seeds are normally distributed by birds may be distributed as far as 100

miles from the nursery, but wind dispersed seeds are usually not sent beyond 50 miles from the original seeds source. This helps protect rare species from "genetic swamping." Parks have even sent seeds from their own local population to the Key Largo facility for rearing, the seedlings are then returned to that park ready for installation.

PICAYUNE STRAND RESTORATION PROJECT, AN ENORMOUS LITTLE DISCOVERY

by Steven W. Woodmansee

IRC recently began work on monitoring the vegetation at Picayune Strand. Picayune Strand State Forest (PSSF) is located in East Naples west of the Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve. Prior to becoming a state forest, roughly 40 years ago PSSF was slated to be developed as part of Golden Gates Estates. This real-estate boondoggle helped fuel the infamous expression "If you believe that... I've got some Florida Swampland to sell to you." Although little of the land was used for houses, an extensive network of asphalt roads and canals was placed throughout the region. Over time due to drainage and severe wildfires, the plant communities began to change from pristine cypress swamp to disturbed thickets with cabbage palm. The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) plans to restore this area by filling in the canals and removing the roads in hopes of fixing local hydrology, and preserving the valuable water for the rapidly growing Florida southwest coast. IRC's role is to monitor the vegetation beforehand (and hopefully after) so that the SFWMD may precisely gauge the success of hydrological restoration on native plants.

Though many areas are overgrown with dense vegetation, making work difficult, we managed to make a surprising discovery. Hidden on moist flatwoods soil amidst the many herbs and grasses, growing about one inch high and ½ inch wide, was *Ophioglossum crotalophoroides* or bulbous adder's tongue, a species never collected nor to my knowledge ever observed in South Florida. (To see a photo of this plant check out the back cover of Gil Nelson's *Ferns of Florida*, 2000.) A native fern of the Southeastern U.S., in Florida where it occurs sporadically, the closest county to where this species is recorded is Manatee, over 100 miles to the north. Although easily overlooked, it has a charming reproductive structure, which in ferns is called a sporocarp, that looks like a tiny rattle with shiny yellow beadlike sporangia, albeit measuring less than 1/8 of an inch long. It just goes to show that there are still discoveries to be made, even though you may need to be on your hands and knees when making them.

[This article was previously printed in the Autumn 2005 *Friends of IRC News* (www.regionalconservation.org). Steven W. Woodmansee is Senior Biologist at The Institute for Regional Conservation and past-president of the Dade Chapter FNPS.]

GRASS-PINK, THE DECEIVER

by Roger L. Hammer

By the time you receive this newsletter, the grass-pink, *Calopogon tuberosus*, will be flowering in the open, marl prairies in Everglades National Park. If you've never seen this terrestrial