

SPRING FIELD TRIP TO THE FLORIDA — ALABAMA BORDER

APRIL 29 - MAY 2, 2016

BY
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To first-time visitors, the Panhandle of Florida is a world apart. More species of carnivorous plants are found there than anywhere else in the country: 30 species of nitrogen-hungry flesh-eaters gape at the sky. Exotic wetland floras are juxtaposed abruptly against pure-white sand dunes and beaches.

Please plan to participate in one or all of the three days and nights of photography and collecting we have planned, one week before Mother's Day. Kind permission has been extended to SLS members and friends by land managers in the area to explore, all day and into the night, the flora and lepidopteran fauna so unique to these areas.



Fig. 1. The Perdido River forms the border between Florida and Alabama.



Fig. 2. Shifting-sand wonderland of the Perdido River.

Monday, May 2, All Day: Return to favorite areas by participants who can stay on.

Car pooling: For scheduled outings, we will meet at the parking lot of the Hampton Inn Atmore [Tel.: (251) 368-9090], where J. Douglass can be reached beginning Thursday, April 28.

Addresses of our destinations: Splinter Hill Bog Preserve, County Rd. 47, Bay Minette, AL 36507; Rainwater Perdido River Preserve, 5955 Hurst Hammock Rd., Pensacola, FL 32526. Detailed maps and directions to these preserves are accessible on-line.

Updates: For emerging/late - breaking details about where and when we will meet, or any schedule changes, participants are asked to check the SLS website (southernlepsoc.org, under "Spring 2016 Field trip") beginning at noon on Friday, April 29, 2016.

We will embark on our explorations from the town of **Atmore**, Alabama. Atmore lies on the Florida line, at the headwaters of the Perdido River, and is close to a legendary carnivorous-plant site, Splinter Hill. The Perdido River (Fig. 1) is the highest - quality free - flowing blackwater river remaining in the southern Coastal Plain. It is 30- to 100-yards wide and offers exceptional recreational opportunities. The river's upper reaches represent a beautiful example of a 'shifting sand' riparian system (Fig. 2). A good set of canoe-trail maps, with descriptions of access points, is available on-line (www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/guide/designated_paddle/perdido_guide.pdf).

Scheduled activities [Please note that all times given are in CDT (Central time).]:

Friday, April 29, 1-10 PM CDT: Register in the Lobby of the Hampton Inn in Atmore. Exploration of surrounding habitats is unstructured.

Saturday, April 30, 7-9 AM: Registration. At **9:00 AM** we will depart from the parking lot at the Hampton Inn on an all-day trip to Splinter Hill and upper Perdido River sites. We can expect to see insectivorous plants numbering in the tens of thousands of individuals.

Sunday, May 1, 9:00 AM: Depart from parking lot at Hampton Inn on all-day trip to Rainwater Perdido River Preserve, coastal dunes, estuarine marshes.

Flora: More species of carnivorous plants are found in the wetlands of Florida than anywhere else in the country. These include 6 species of *Sarracenia*: the white-top (*S. leucophylla*) (Fig. 3), yellow (*S. flava*) (Fig. 4), parrot (*S. psittacina*), hooded (*S. minor*), sweet (*S. rubra*), and purple (*S. purpurea*) pitcher plants. The physiology of these extraordinary plants, and the complexity of commensal relationships within their gruesome 'stomachs', has been the subject of years of fascinating research. Other insect - trapping plants in the western Panhandle include species of butterworts (*Pinguicula*), sundews (*Drosera*), bladderworts (*Utricularia*), and the Venus' flytrap (*Dionaea*, naturalized in North Florida).



Fig. 3. White-top pitcher plants, *Sarracenia leucophylla*.



Fig. 4. Yellow pitcher plants, *Sarracenia flava*.

Moths: Numerous species of butterflies and moths are expected to be on the wing at the time of the trip. The area's diurnal and nocturnal lepidopteran faunas are poorly known, and participants are encouraged to bring MV and blacklighting gear (new moon is May 6). A special area of interest in our observations will be the larvae and adults of carnivorous-plant-feeding moths, some of which are obligate pitcher-plant and obligate sundew-leaf feeders. These include, on *Sarracenia*: the noctuids *Exyra fax* (Epauletted Pitcher - plant Moth, Fig. 5), *E. ridingsii* (Fig. 6), *E. semicrocea* (Pitcher-plant Mining Moth, Figs. 7 & 8), and *Papaipema appassionata* (Pitcher-plant Borer Moth, Fig. 9), and the tortricids *Choristoneura parallela* (Parallel-banded Leafroller Moth, Fig. 10) and *Endothenia hebesana* (Verbena Bud Moth). On *Drosera*, we hope to find the pterophorid *Buckleria parvulus* (Sundew Plume Moth, Fig. 11).



Fig. 5. *Exyra fax*.



Fig. 6. *Exyra ridingsii*.



Fig. 7. *Exyra semicrocea*.



Fig. 8. *Exyra semicrocea* larva.

Motels in Atmore, Alabama (area code 251): Fairfield Inn & Suites, 368-1188; Greenlawn Motel, 368-3138; Hampton Inn, 368-9090; Holiday Inn Express, 368-1585; Muskogee Inn, 368-8182; Quality Inn, 368-9999; Wind Creek Casino & Hotel, 368-8007.

Contact: If you are able to participate in any or all of the weekend's events, please contact the Coordinator, John Douglass (jfdouglass7@gmail.com; (419) 389-9902 [24 hrs.]). Our explorations will certainly be fun, and of course: the more the merrier.

Photo credits: Fig. 1, J. Arthur Conway; 2, www.PaddleFlorida.net; 3, Barry Rice; 4, Julie Tew; 5 & 6, Jim Vargo; 7 & 8, H. von Schmeling; 9, Cindy Mead; 10, Carol Wolf; 11, Debbie Matthews.



Fig. 9. *Papaipema appassionata*.



Fig. 10. *Choristoneura parallela*.



Fig. 11. *Buckleria parvulus*.
