THE GREEN SWAMP AND ATLANTIC COAST TRIP

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The Orlando Airport terminal building was almost deserted when I arrived early on the morning of April 27th. Outside the birds nesting in the eves and nearby trees were chirping noisily, signaling the coming of dawn while the airport gradually came awake and crowded with passengers scheduled for early morning departures. The sun was barely over the horizon when Bob Hanrahan picked me up and we were on our way on a three day whirlwind tour of east coast CP habitats including the Green Swamp.

Heading North on Interstate 95, it was not long before we began to spot the bright yellow flowers of *Sarracenia minor* along the roadside. By the time we reached the Georgia border north of Jacksonville, the plants were a common sight. Along some of the lesser traveled roads we discovered two of the local Pinguiculas. *P. caerulea* was found in the greatest numbers along with fewer specimens of *P. lutea*. Both were in flower and displaying a good number of ripe seed capsules. *Drosera capillaris* was also here in great numbers as was *Utricularia subulata*.

Just a little farther north we began to encounter *Sarracenia psittacina* along with *S. minor* and many hybrids between the two. Indeed the hybridization and backcrossings were so common that pure plants of either species were difficult to find in some locations. This is a particularly variable and occasionally very attractive hybrid displaying a wide range of forms and coloration. Only a few specimens of *S. psittacina* here showed the large well-developed hoods so common in the Gulf coast.

Our next stop was the Okefenokee Swamp area. Just outside the park boundaries we found several large specimens of *S. minor* with traps of perhaps 60cm as well as a number of *Utricularia* species including *U. subulata, fibrosa* and *cornuta*. All were in full flower. Within the park itself we discovered the gigantic "Okee" form of *Sarracenia minor* with pitchers of perhaps 90cm. These plants are found growing partly submerged in roadside streams, the roots deeply buried in floating mats of sphagnum moss. At this point the plant appears to be well-established and secure in this protected area. Would-be collectors should note that the park in well-policed and the areas so suitable for this plant also are popular with water moccasins and alligators. The diminuative butterwort, *Pinguicula pumila* was also discovered in the park.

Just a bit farther north we encountered our first specimens of *Sarracenia flava*, the large traps easily seen from the car growing in a low wet depression near a power substation. A few plants of *S. minor* [the smaller type] were found here, but the majority of specimens were the typical yellow-green / purple throat form of *S. flava*. Large, well-developed specimens of *Drosera capillaris* were common here as well as large numbers of *Pinguicula caerulea*. Indeed, the violet flowers of the latter species were seen almost constantly along the roadside ditches and depressions throughout our trip. [FIG. 1].

After spending the night in Charleston, South Carolina, we renewed our journey north until we reached the Francis Marion National Forest. Though a number of roadside locations previously found to support Sarracenias had been destroyed by the four-laning of highway 17, others a bit off the main road proved to be perfect habitats for these plants. The Nature Conservancy has purchased one of these locations, a large parcel of land supporting extensive colonies of *S. minor* and *S. flava*. Many of the latter species displayed the attractive reddish lids and light to moderate venation not seen in plants of this species growing in the Gulf coast. Another interesting find was a small colony of hybrids between this red-topped form of *S. flava* and



FIG. 1: *Sarracenia minor* growing along with *Pinguicula caerulea* along the roadside near Jacksonville, Fla.



FIG. 2: *Drosera brevifolia* in the field near Georgetown South Carolina.



FIG. 3: All that remains of the once extensive stand of *Sarracenia flava* just off highway 211 in the Green Swamp. Some yellow flowers of a few surviving plants may be seen in the distance.



FIG. 4: Some extensive colonies of *S. flava* about a mile off highway 211 in cleared areas.

S. minor. One of these plants was flowering and was pollinated to assure a new crop of seedlings for the next spring.

Near Georgetown, SC, we spotted the dark red flowers of *S. purpurea.* These plants were growing on an embankment beside the road in rather dry conditions but appeared to be healthy. *Drosera capillaris* was evident in great numbers but closer inspection of these plants revealed that a number of specimens were, in fact, *D. brevifolia.* These plants were much larger than those observed in other locations but identification seemed positive based on the glandular flower scapes and proportionately large white flowers. The largest specimens were probably 3.5 cm across with 7-8 cm scapes.

At last reaching the Green Swamp area in the early afternoon, we stopped and explored a roadside sphagnum bog along highway 130. An incredible number of thorny vines made movement difficult here. No steps could be taken without some article of clothing or even flesh snagging on the sharp thorns. Not far into this area we located large groups of *Sarracenia rubra* growing in coarse sphagnum and mud. *S. flava* was also in this bog but in smaller numbers. *Drosera intermedia* was seen for the first time on this trip in large numbers growing in the sphagnum and wetter spots.

Further exploration of this area revealed *Dionaea muscipula* in low wet areas where the soil is mostly sandy clay. The flytraps were rather plentiful and in the course of our explorations were revealed to grow in a variety of conditions from wet roadside ditches in full sun to pine savannahs and scrub often almost buried under pine needles, tall grasses, fallen leaves and other debris. In some spots *Dionaea* was almost as plentiful as *Drosera capillaris.*

One of the highlights of the trip was the discovery of one of the last remaining colonies of *Drosera filiformis* v. *filiformis* in the Carolinas. There were perhaps two or three dozen plants in this location along with some small seedlings growing in the damp soil above the high water line. No plants were found in the wettest spots in this location.

Both *Sarracenia purpurea* and *S. minor* were seen along the roadsides in small numbers. *Drosera intermedia* appeared to be the most common sundew in many locations, far surpassing *D. capillaris* in numbers in these spots.

But our enthusiasm was rather short-lived as we drove out highway 211 into the heart of the Green Swamp and found much of the land to be cleared for what appeared to be forestry. Huge, deep ditches had been cut through the area lowering the water table and drying up many habitats [FIG. 3] We were horrified at the sight of thousands of pitcher plants uprooted and scattered about the soil. It was my impression that this area was supposedly protected and indeed re-read CPN [Vol. VI, No. 3, p. 48] Don Schnell wrote: "On 8 July, 1977, it was announced that the Federal Paper Board Co. would donate 13,850 acres of the Green Swamp to the Nature Conservancy for permanent preservation...The land will be treated as a natural area and recreational development will not occur. This very generous parcel includes many fine CP areas that have been little tampered with due to drainage problems the company encountered. Green Swamp trekkers will appreciate that such areas as the well-known, large spring-fed bog of Sarracenias along and east of NC 211 will now be preserved.

Since returning, I have discussed this with Don Schnell and he has assured me that the areas of devastation are not part of this parcel of land and that the protected areas have relatively little frontage on highway 211, many requiring a helicopter to view.

We followed some dirt roads deeper into the region and the sights were the same wherever we went. That thousands of Sarracenias have been able to survive the initial clearing is remarkable testimony to their strength and endurance but their ultimate survival in this area is certainly questionable. It was evident to both Bob and I that the extensive commercial exploitation of the swamp has not truly made much of a dent in the *Sarracenia* populations. The number of plants we saw were amazing. But this forestry project appears destined to spare nothing. [FIG. 4.]

(To be continued)



Drosera brevifolia in the field near Georgetown, South Carolina. Please see article beginning on page 66 for more details. Photo by Jim Miller