

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

81ST ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE FLORIDA ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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For over a century, Florida entomologists have made outstanding contributions to entomology as a discipline as well as the livelihood of all citizens of Florida through industry, teaching, research, and service. The Pioneer Lecture Award was begun three years ago as a way of recognizing individuals who were Pioneers of Florida entomology. J. R. Watson was the recipient of the first Pioneer Award. He was a hard-working natural historian despite his responsibilities in economic entomology and administration. As I understand it, his work on thrips was a spare-time interest; yet, he described 101 species. He collected and preserved many thrips, and Dr. Laurence Mound, this year's Pioneer Lecturer, has spent much of the last two weeks sorting and cataloguing the type specimens in the Watson collection housed at the Florida State Collection of Arthropods. Dr. Knipling was the recipient of the second Pioneer Award for eradicating the screwworm from the USA. We are meeting on Sanibel island where the screwworm fly was successfully eradicated in their first experimental trial. This year's Pioneer Awardee is Wilmon Newell. We could not invite someone who knew the man, because the events took place over 50 years ago. He planned and coordinated the first eradication of the Mediterranean fruit fly. He had outstanding abilities as a scientist and administrator, and was honest and dignified in dealing with the politics surrounding the effort. We can only wonder about the impacts on Florida if he had not succeeded.

The Florida Entomological Society has a core membership of entomologists from Florida. This membership is composed of student and professional entomologists with diverse interests and backgrounds. But, our membership is also composed of many scientists from outside Florida. We have a large number of papers in our program authored by scientists from across the USA and other countries. One of the most enjoyable aspects of this meeting is the wide diversity in entomological subjects of the papers. I thank John Sivinski, the symposium organizers, and all the paper presenters for such an outstanding program.

The Florida Entomological Society publishes the *Florida Entomologist*. It is a very high quality journal with scientists from all over the world publishing research papers. A couple of times this year I was called and told that an administrator had questioned the scientific worthiness of publishing in the Journal. One administrator asked where it was "ranked". Finally I went to the University of Florida library to see where it is ranked, and found that it ranked very well with a high impact factor and citation half-life. The journal is roughly equivalent to many well-known international journals such as *Journal of the Australian Entomological Society*, *Canadian Entomologist*, *Entomophaga*, *European Journal of Entomology*, and *Journal of Insect Behavior*. The journal is rated much higher than regional journals such as *The Journal of Entomological Science*, *Southwest Entomologist*, *Pan-Pacific Entomologist*, *Great Lakes Entomologist*, and *The Journal of the Kansas Entomological Society*. The Society voted a few years ago not to change the name of the *Florida Entomologist*. And probably this is a correct decision as it has a proud legacy and is the journal of the Florida Entomological Society. The Society has every reason to be proud of the quality of the journal that it publishes.

The *Florida Entomologist* is accessible and searchable without cost to all Web users. In fact, it was the first entomology journal to put new issues on line. This year the Society decided to put all back issues on line. This was paid for by industry and the University of Florida. Included on the home page of our new web site is a search engine that finds any article. Our objectives as stated in our by-laws are to promote entomology as a science and a profession, to encourage research relative to insects and related arthropods in Florida, to distribute and publicize knowledge pertaining to insects and related arthropods, and to publish the *Florida Entomologist*. Publishing scientific journals has turned into business, and we are making profits on the *Florida Entomologist*. However, the Society is clearly focused on its mission. Unlike most Societies, the Florida Entomological Society is grass-roots and relies most heavily on the intellectual and technical contributions of the members. The Florida Entomological Society is proving to be highly adaptable in a time of rapid change. I encourage the Society to focus on its objectives, rely on volunteers wherever possible, and provide efficient, good service to its members as well as the public in general. No one can predict the future, and who knows the fate of many professional societies. However, I think that our approach is best. The Florida Entomological Society regular membership grew 10% this year, student membership grew 30%, sustaining membership grew 22%, and subscription/institutional membership grew 6%. Despite improving membership service, the Society made several business-related changes to reduce the cost of operating the Society. The Society is in excellent financial condition.

The Florida Entomological Society developed an excellent web site this year. Teresa DuChene our Business Manager is now mailing forms to members asking for new information needed to improve the Society's database. Please return it immediately or e-mail Teresa the information. It will help the Society to improve service and operate more efficiently.

I have owned a butterfly net from my earliest recollections, and I know many of you have carried a butterfly net on occasion. The general public may still view entomologists as eccentric and maybe a little crazy. I think entomologists may be fairly accused of doing a poor job informing the public about entomological issues. I have never encouraged as your President the Society to engage in politics, but we do need to educate the public so informed decisions can be made. The web site is already a great link with public and private institutions providing excellent entomological information over the Web. Our Web site is a great start, but it is just the beginning. Please contribute your knowledge and creativity to improve it for the purpose of informing the public about entomology.

The Florida Entomological Society has a proud legacy and is a great scientific society. I am humbled to be the President. I implore you to take an active part in selecting your leadership for future's sake. And lastly, serving the Society is vital to its future.