

Theme Speakers

Daniel F. Austin, Professor & Director of Environmental Sciences; Curator of the Herbarium, Florida Atlantic University; Fellow of the Linnean Society, London.

Daniel F Austin, professor and Director of Environmental Sciences at Florida Atlantic University, received his B.A. from Murray Sate University in 1966 and his M.A. and Ph.D from Washington University, St. Louis in 1969 and 1970 respectively. He has held the following faculty positions: Adjunct Assistant Professor of Botany, Florida International University, Miami, 1974; Adjunct Professor, University of South Florida, Tampa, 1979-1980; Adjunct Professor, Department of Botany, Arizona State University, Tempe, 1989-1990; Research Associate, Department of Biological Sciences, Florida International University, Miami, 1987-present.

Dr. Austin has collaborated with a diverse array of agencies, both national and international, and has served on committees and as an advisor for organizations such as Florida Native Plant Society, Florida Academy of Sciences, Society for Economic Botany, National Science Foundation, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, The Nature Conservancy, Office of Endangered Species of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Crops Advisory Committee on Sweet Potatoes for the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Rookery Bay National Estuarine Sanctuary, Endangered Plant Advisory Council of the Florida Department of Agriculture.

Dr. Austin has received numerous grants and awards from 1970 to present, and is the only holder of two Green Palmetto Awards from the Florida Native Plant Society. He has had six books and over 200 papers published, both scientific and popular. Special research interests are Evolution and Phylogeny of the Convolvulaceae; Ecosystem Dynamics, with emphasis on endangered and exotic organisms; and Ethnobotany.

Ernie Barnett, Director of Ecosystem Planning and Coordination
Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Ernie Barnett is the Director of Ecosystem Planning and Coordination at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. His responsibilities include coordinating the development and implementation of department-wide ecosystem management policies and strategies and coordinating the department's efforts in south Florida ecosystem restoration. Mr. Barnett has been with the department 13 years where he served previously as a shellfish biologist, aquatic preserve manager, Environmental Administrator, and Water Management Administrator. He has authored or co-authored 31 publications and agency reports on beach management, shellfish management, sea turtle nesting, natural resource damage assessment, and ecosystem management. Mr. Barnett received his B.S. in Environmental Resource Management and Planning and his M.S. in Biology from the University of West Florida.

Robert L. Bendick, Jr., Regional Director
The Nature Conservancy, Florida Chapter

Bob Bendick has been Regional Director of the Florida Chapter of The Nature Conservancy since November 1, 1995. In this role he directs the Florida operations of the Conservancy which is a national and worldwide conservation organization dedicated to the protection of habitat for plant and animal species. The Florida Chapter is one of four state programs of the Conservancy that are their own regions and are directly responsible to the home office.

Prior to coming to The Nature Conservancy, Mr. Bendick was Deputy Commissioner for Natural Resources at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation between 1990 and 1995. The Deputy Commissioner is responsible for supervision of New York State's natural resource programs. During his tenure in New York, Mr. Bendick also served as Chair of the Northern Forest Lands Council between 1991 and 1994. The Council was a broad based effort supported by the U.S. Forest Service to make recommendations about the future of 26 million acres of forest land extending across the north country of New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine.

Between 1982 and 1990, Mr. Bendick was Director of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and responsible for all natural resource and environmental programs in Rhode Island's state government.

He is the recipient of a number of environmental and conservation awards including the Chevron Conservation Award, the President's Public Service Award of The Nature Conservancy and the Environmental Leadership Award of the New England Environmental Network.

Dean H. Gjerstad, Professor of Forest Biology at Auburn University,
Co-Director, The Longleaf Alliance

Dr. Gjerstad received his B.S. in Forest Management from Iowa State University in 1966. He went on to earn a M.S. and Ph.D. in Forest Biology, also from Iowa State University. Dr. Gjerstad held multiple posts at the Auburn School of Forestry. He was the Director of the Southern Forest Nursery Cooperative (1975-82), Associate Professor (1980-88), Director of the Silviculture Herbicide Cooperative (1980-90), Acting Associate Dean, and Professor (1988-present). Dr. Gjerstad, Director of the Forest Regeneration Center (1990-present), is also co-director of The Longleaf Alliance where he has been since 1996. Dr. Gjerstad's research interests include Longleaf pine management and restoration; Establishment of longleaf pine seedlings; Plant-plant interactions; and Stress physiology.

Richard Grant Gilmore, Jr., Ph.D., Senior Scientist, Fish Ecologist
Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, Inc., Fort Pierce, Florida

Dr. Gilmore completed graduate studies at the University of West Florida and Florida Institute of Technology on behavior, neural anatomy, comparative ecology of fishes indigenous to the Gulf of Mexico and tropical western Atlantic. The majority of his professional research has been conducted in fish ecology, life histories and habitat relationships while at the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution from 1971 to present. This includes subtropical/tropical ichthyofaunas of estuarine freshwater tributaries, mangrove forests, seagrass beds, continental shelf and tropical epibathyal habitats. Mr. Gilmore maintains a joint appointment and adjunct faculty status in Dept. of Biological Science, Florida Institute of Technology; Freie Universitdt, Berlin, Germany; Florida Atlantic University, Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences, University of Miami.

Mr. Gilmore has over fifty publications in technical journals, 34 technical reports, 50 grant awards in fish biology and ecology. He has also completed extensive quantitative work in estuarine mangrove and seagrass habitats including comparative species ecology, behavior, migration, mortality and survival as well as community ecology. He conducted the first detailed long term quantitative interdisciplinary studies of estuarine and continental shelf aquatic biological communities on the Florida East Coast. His fish studies generated publications and a data base that not only promoted a basic understanding of marine/estuarine fish (organism) biology/ecology, but was also used by a variety of federal and state aquatic managerial agencies and organizations, South Atlantic Fisheries Council, National Marine Fisheries Service, EPA, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. These studies were also instrumental in designating the Indian River Lagoon Aquatic Reserve system and the Indian River Lagoon as an Estuary of National Concern by the EPA National Estuarine Program, in wetland restoration and the formation of the Oculina Reef Reserve.

Oceanic and neritic studies conducted by Dr. Gilmore include over 300 submersible dives and 28 years of ocean cruise and research experience in continental shelf and deep tropical reef ecosystems throughout the tropical western Atlantic, Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific. He has extensive experience in public program development for all media. He is a member of seven professional societies, currently President of the Florida Chapter of the American Fisheries Society.

Edgar F. Lowe, Director of the Division of Environmental Sciences
St. Johns River Water Management District

Edgar F. Lowe received a B.S. in Zoology from Ohio University, an M.A. in Biology from the University of South Florida, and a Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of Maine. He is the director of the Division of Environmental Sciences for the St. Johns River Water Management District, an agency responsible for management of the water resources of northeastern and east-central Florida. His primary professional interest is the restoration and management of aquatic and wetland ecosystems.