

*Marjory Stoneman Douglas and Marjorie Harris Carr sum up the threats of exotics in Florida*

Interviewer: Are there other key environmental problems, besides population growth that you feel that Florida will have in the future?

Marjorie Harris Carr: Well, yes, that is I would think it would be a tragedy if we did not keep and increase an awareness and appreciation of the natural heritage that we have, here in Florida. I think what I'm trying to get at that I think there our natural systems that we have here....they could be replaced by exotic collections of plants ...

Marjory Stoneman Douglas: They are.

MHC: Yes, and you'd still have greenery. I think that would be a great tragedy, and I think that would be one thing that we will have to watch, to protect these natural assemblages of plants and animals.

MSD: Well, we've got to protect it by getting rid, somehow, of the immediate plant enemies that are menacing us so much. First the melaleuca, second the Brazilian pepper and then the Australian pine. They are coming in at such a rate, particularly the melaleuca, that they are driving out native plants all the way... between here and Palm Beach you see great...

MHC: Oh it's terrible. Incredible!

MSD: It's incredible.

MHC: Nightmare

MSD: We're studying right now, the possibilities, of some way...you see you can eradicate the single tree by chopping them down and using a herbicide, but how to eradicate masses of melaleuca is a great problem, because you cut them down and they come up from the stump and the roots and also when you cut them down, the seeds which are like fine pepper, enclosed in a heavy shell ...the shells open with any disturbance to the tree, fire or chopping, and spread these peppery like seeds all over the area. So, you get thousands of more little plants coming up. You can handle that in your own back yard by ordinary grass cutting or burning, but out in the Big Cypress, where the menace is very bad. They're coming in so thickly, there

won't be any native plants left at all...and they of course can not even get a narrow snake in between the melaleuca trees, when they really get going. We are faced with these invasions of exotic plants from the...Australia most of them...brought in about seventy years ago, about 1912, I've found out, over here by Dr. Gifford and over on the west coast by Dr. Nelling. They had this bright idea of writing to Australia and getting these horrible things. In Australia they have enemies. The plant has its own plant enemies, but here they didn't. So, they took over...and are still...they're taking over worse all the time.

Interviewer: Well, is the loss of native vegetation and replacement by exotics a threat in Central and North Florida?

MSD: I think they are. I think the melaleuca...I don't know how far up the melaleuca has gone.

MHC: It got up to near Orlando, but that last frost whumped it.

MSD: Yes, I think the frost tend to destroy these things...well it came from the warm parts of Australia

MHC: Tropics.

MSD: But for South Florida, they are very, very bad.

Interviewer: So, what would be the main threat, in Central and North Florida to the native communities?

MSD (speaking to MHC): Do you have Brazilian pepper up there or is that included?

MHC; No, that won't grow up there either.

MSD: What about Australian?

MHC: It barely does. No. No.

MSD: I think it's mostly corrected by the cold weather.

MHC: The cold. Yes. Well, for example to turn all of your hardwood hammocks into planted pine trees, and we have to (undistinguishable)

MSD: Oh, like Taylor Covay.<sup>1</sup>

MHC: Yes. That's what I mean. A forest, a forest, a forest...

MSD: Commercial...for commercial purposes.

MHC: That's what's happened there, the vast destruction of...

MSD: The St. Joe Paper Company.

MHC: Well, a whole bunch of them.

MSD: Yes.

MHC: And, you know you mean you say, 'Well all right this is a form of agriculture. You clear this land this forest and plant cornfields and soybeans okay, okay. The thing is we must protect and keep some good samples of the natural area and I must say again I think it's appalling that in our national forests you're having a policy of planting of pine trees for commercial cutting and they're even planting them in rows and that, to me, is very sad.

MSD: It's tragic.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Everglades Digital Library is unable to verify the spelling of this named individual.*