

TRAIL HOLDS INTEREST TO TOURISTS WHO LOVE
WILD LIFE AND NATURE

Bird and Animal Life of Many Varieties Abounds Along Trail
HISTORIC POINTS ALSO FOUND HERE

Royal Palm Hammock Has Interesting Story

So few persons, comparatively, have actually traveled over that part of the TAMiami TRAIL which lies in Collier County, that it is not surprising to find a general belief among the traveling public, who will soon begin using this wonderful highway, that the trip will be through a desolate area, offering no better diversion than the prospect of being able "to burn up the road" or give their car a speed test. It should, therefore, be a source of interest to know that there is much along the Trail to hold the attention of the tourist.

Probably there is no highway in this State where Bird Life is so plentiful and tame, where such a variety of wild animals may be glimpsed, and certainly no where in the United States can such a wealth of tropical growth be seen as in the impenetrable jungles which line the sides of this highway in many places.

Trail Nears Coast at Naples

As one passes from Lee County into Collier County, the Trail nears the Coast until as one approaches Naples, the Gulf of Mexico in all its splendor comes into view. Along this stretch of the TRAIL, Seabirds of almost every description may be seen. As the TRAIL swings southeastward from Naples, it traverses a flat sandy section covered with pine. This section abounds in Quail, so tame that they hardly bother to leave the roadside when a car passes. Neither is it uncommon to see a Turkey Gobbler followed by his flock, proudly strut across the road. The casual observer may glimpse a bald-headed Eagle; in fact one was observed recently perched upon the top of a tree with his wings spread in such a fashion that he might easily have been taken for the original model from which the emblem of our National Bird was made.

In the vicinity of Marco Junction and Royal Palm Hammock the country takes on more of a jungle aspect as the terrain slopes toward Black Water River. Traveling

Trail Holds Interest (Cont.)

through this section of thick undergrowth at night, one is not only thrilled but occasionally feels a creepy sensation as a pair of eyes peep out from the bushes or some wild animal slinks across the road, and the cries of hoot-owls and night-hawks blend with the crackling of twigs and the cries of animals passing through the jungle growth.

We are informed by one who passed over this part of the road early the day following the storm, that he encountered almost every form of wild animal commonly known to this part of Florida, they having evidently sought the grade to escape the water. He stated that between Carnestown and Marco Junction he saw several deer, a bear, a bobcat, raccoons, otter, possum and innumerable other small animals, to say nothing of birds. At one spot where the water was passing over a washout in the unfinished grade, the car straddled a large alligator swimming in the middle of the road.

From Royal Palm Hammock East along the Trail, alligators are as common to the accustomed eye as the logs, which they resemble, when sunning themselves on the banks of the Canal. This canal, which parallels the Trail its entire length in Collier County, also abounds in fish. One may stop at will and fish for Snook, Bass, Trout, Perch or what-have-you and not be disappointed.

Many Birds Abound Here

Along these canals both West and East of Carnestown, where the Trail passes through jungle and prairie, are literally tens of thousands of beautiful birds of every size and description. Here may be seen large wading members of the Crane family, fishing in the marshes and canal, innumerable blue and white Heron; Snake Birds picking their prey out of the Canal waters; Coots; Rail; many variety of ducks; Man O' War Birds; Storks; and even the, now almost extinct, Flamingo has been reported seen along The Trail. Ibises (commonly known as Curlew) fly about in uncountable numbers. A Kingfisher will sport back and forth along the Canal seeming to take great delight in his ability to keep pace with the fast moving car, though he actually covers most of the distance twice. Other large birds will fly along-side-of, or a little ahead of, your automobile for miles, as if trying to determine what this stranger in his wilderness might be.

Trail Holds Interest (Cont.)

Several miles East of Carnestown the Trail crosses Turner's River. Here is another amazing jungle so thick with hanging vines and underbrush as to be impassable by man except with the aid of a machete. Here are more birds, many of the smaller variety with beautiful bright colored plumage. Here are alligator pools containing alligators as large or small as you like. On past Turner's River more praries and again Turkey, Quail, Deer and other game, and so on to Dade County and toward Miami; such an abundance of bird and wild life that a naturalist could well spend many busy months and still have not tabulated all of the species and varieties available.

To the glory of the Fathers of Collier County, let it be said that in order to preserve these natural beauties they have established a strip a mile wide on either side of the Trail and extending the entire length of the Trail in Collier County as a game and bird sanctuary, making it unlawful to even discharge fire arms in this area.

Historic Points Along Route

There are also several points of historical interest along the Trail in Collier County, the most notable possibly being Royal Palm Hammock. It was here in the early '50's that a company of State and Federal soldiers, having come from Chokoloskee by boat up Black Water River, engaged in a skirmish with a band of Seminole Indians, presumably under the leadership of Chief Bowlegs. In this skirmish, Capt. Parkhill (for whom a monument stands in Tallahassee) was killed. Captain Dick Turner, a noted scout, met the troops here and guided them to the vicinity of Deep Water Lake where they fought and defeated Chief Billy Bowlegs, sacking his Indian village. Royal Palm Hammock is one of the few accessible places in the country where an abundance of Royal Palms may be found growing wild. Because of its historical interest, Royal Palms and natural beauty, it is contemplated having this spot designated a National Park.

Along the Trail are several shell mounds built by the Mound Builders of centuries ago. One of these mounds, located about seven miles West of Carnestown, and now called "The Shell Camp" has been used as a source of shell for road building and from it many articles have been recovered, by which some idea has been obtained of the manner in which these prehistoric people established a settlement on another shell mound at Turner's River,

Trail Holds Interest (Cont.)

thus giving the River its name.

Alligators Exist Here Also

In the Southeast corner of Collier County a short distance off the Trail, are the famous Roberts Lakes. In the extreme dry season of 1898, alligators estimated at ten thousand in number were gathered in these shallow lakes. Uncle Tom Roberts journeyed there from Fort Myers, cutting his own road, and with several others who had arrived there ahead of him, began shooting the alligators for their skins. It is said that the shooting caused the alligators to stampede like cattle. As evidence of the fact that alligators were plentiful at that time, Captain Storter states that during a period of six weeks of the year 1898, he purchased one hundred thousand alligator skins for shipment.

Although the Trail itself and the great magnitude of its construction are sufficient to hold the interest of one traveling over it, the country lying along this wonderful highway abounds in a wealth of natural beauty and subjects of historical interest, which will offer diversion for the most are preserved and protected and allowed to thrive and live on.