Early visitors to Florida did not visit--let alone write--about the scrub. Most wrote about the land in terms of fertility, and the “sand hills” or “sand ridges” seemed barren and most unpromising for agriculture. Even John James Audubon observed scrub jays in a cage in New Orleans rather then in their native habitat.

However, no writer loved the scrub more than Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. Her second novel, South Moon Under, and her Pulitzer-prize winning children's book, The Yearling, are set in an area she called the “Big Scrub,” which is now the Ocala National Forest. Keeping the detailed notebooks of a journalist, she lived with a family in the scrub to understand their lifestyle and the scrub habitat. In honor of her award-winning book set in the scrub, two trails are the namesakes of the book and its main character: “The Yearling Trail” and “Jody’s Trace.”


In November 1831, John James Audubon had already published the first folio of *Birds of America* and the first volume of *The Ornithological Biography* (with assistance from his wife, Lucy Bakewell Audubon, and William MacGillivray), and he traveled to Florida seeking new birds. Arriving in St. Augustine, he visited two plantations to the south and then Spring Gardens. In February, 1832, he voyaged to Jacksonville to explore the St. Johns River to the mouth of Lake George, walking from there back to St. Augustine. The remainder of his Florida sojourn is by U.S. Revenue Cutter, along the east coast, through the Florida Keys, to Cape Sable, and the Dry Tortugas. He probably never visited a scrub habitat or saw the scrub jay in its natural environment; in fact, his painting and essay about the scrub jay were published before his visit to Florida. He writes of “observing a pair of these birds in confinement, in the city of New Orleans.”


A research associate at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson and at the Fairchild Tropical Garden in Miami, Daniel F. Austin is also adjunct professor in the Department of Plant Sciences at the University of Arizona in Tucson; research associate in the Department of Biological Sciences of Florida International University in Miami; research associate at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix; professor emeritus at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. He attended Washington University and Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis, receiving his M.A. degree in 1969 and his Ph.D. in 1970. For 31 years, he taught in the Florida State University System. His 324 publications include 8 books and 45 book chapters. He details historical accounts, uses, and common names for yucca and prickly pear.

After Florida became a British colony in 1763, William traveled to Florida with his father, John Bartram, Royal Botanist to King George III. Between 1773-1777, William returns to Florida on his own, collecting notes and specimens for a patron in England. Although he travels no farther south than Volusia County on the east coast and Levy County on the west coast, he describes the gopher tortoise he observes in the “sandy hills” or “sand hills.” He also passes through scrub in Alachua County, where he describes pawpaw, the scrub jay, and the six-lined racerunner. Elsewhere, he details the gopher tortoise, yucca, and palmetto.

Cabeza de Vaca, Álvar Núñez, the prickly pear fruit in *Cabeza de Vaca’s Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America*. Translated and edited by Cyclone Covey, with an Epilogue by William T. Polkington. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983: 80, 82-83.

Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca was one of four survivors of the failed expedition of Pámfilo de Narváez, who sailed to Florida in 1527. The soldiers disembarked from their ships at Sarasota or Tampa Bay and marched north to explore. Ultimately, they constructed barges to sail the Gulf. The four live with the Native Americans in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and northern Mexico, eventually arriving in Mexico City after traveling 6,000 miles in eight years. Written in 1542 as an official report to the king of Spain, *La Relación* “possesses most of the attributes of a good novel.” His keen observations, including those of the “fruit of the prickly pear cactus,” make his work valuable to archaeologists, anthropologists, botanists, cartographers, climatologists, historians, and zoologists.


A graduate research professor of zoology at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Carr was a naturalist, writer, conservationist, and world authority on sea turtles. He wrote on many aspects of natural history, but he was fascinated with the wildlife and ecosystems in Florida, where he lived for more than half a century. His home on Wewa Pond and the rest of the property in Alachua County is just north of Marion County boundary, and west of I-75. It was listed in 2001 for considered in the Florida Forever program. The Office of Greenways and Trails purchased the contiguous Price Scrub in Marion County.

“These life histories were compiled and transcribed by the staff of the Folklore Project of the Federal Writers’ Project for the U.S. Works Progress (later Work Projects) Administration (WPA) from 1936-1940. The Library of Congress collection includes 2,900 documents representing the work of over 300 writers from 24 states. Typically 2,000-15,000 words in length, the documents consist of drafts and revisions, varying in form from narrative to dialogue to report to case history. The histories describe the informant's family education, income, occupation, political views, religion and mores, medical needs, diet and miscellaneous observations. Pseudonyms are often substituted for individuals and places named in the narrative texts.”

“The Florida Squatters” begins: “Where the lower end of the Florida Ridge Section slopes rapidly to meet the sombre Everglades, there is a region where squatters, both native Floridians and emigrants from other States, have settled with their families.” A general description of the lifestyle and location is followed by individual interviews.


In 1696, Jonathan Dickinson, a young Quaker merchant, his wife, infant son, and about twenty others struggle to the mainland of Florida after their ship, the barkentine Reformation, is wrecked off Jupiter Island. Hostile Native Americans capture them, and they suffer torture and starvation before they are released to travel 230 miles to St. Augustine. Later, he writes this “American epic” published by the Quakers in 1699. He describes palmettos, and how the Indians ate the berries, and the silk-grass/yucca used to make their clothing.


Although most well-known as the “savior” of the Everglades, Douglas was always a writer. Many of her poems were composed to introduce a subject for her daily column in The Miami Herald. Her short stories were published and won awards. The Everglades: River of Grass, published in 1947, became a best-seller, and she led the effort to create Everglades National Park. Her poem epitomizes the buzzard, a frequent sight in the scrub. Her description of the mockingbird might as well be a poem, while her words about the towhee are more prosaic.

As part of the Federal Writers Project of the Works Project Administration, under Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “New Deal” legislation, writers compiled and wrote a guidebooks for each state to encourage tourism as a form of economic development. The main highways formed the route of each “tour,” and cities and other attractions were described as “way points.” The “cochineal insect,” which lives on the prickly pear cactus, is noted in “Tour 1,” which begins in Jacksonville and travels along U.S. 1 to Key West, under the history of New Smyrna, founded by British citizen Andrew Turnbull; the British used the red dye for the wool coats of the military. Thus the “red coats” owe their color to an insect of the scrub. The unique ridge landscape is noted north of Avon Park, and south of Sebring along U.S. Highway 27.


Unlike most folk songs which are anonymous, F. B. Harris incorporated his name into the final verse of the song “Aaron Hart” about a young boy lost in the scrub. The song focuses on the boy and those who search for him, and the scrub serves only as “the valley of the shadow of death.” The notes for the song identify the dangers of the scrub: “At that time wolves, bears, and panthers were plentiful. Wolves caught calves in hearing distance of the settlers’ homes. This condition heightened the anxiety which the neighborhood felt for the lost child. The ballad tells the story of his rescue.”


Born in Eatonville, just outside Orlando, Zora Neale Hurston grew up listening to folk tales told on the front porch of the general store. She graduated from Howard University and studied anthropology at Barnard College with Franz Boas. She returned to Florida to collect folk stories. She incorporates the stories into a narrative featuring herself in Mules and Men, which is published in 1935. The year before, her first novel, Jonah’s Gourd Vine, based on her father’s life, is published as a Book-of-the-Month Club Selection. She published another collection of folklore as well as three novels, an autobiography, and numerous short stories. She also worked for the Florida Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration, and some of the folk stories she collected were published in Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State. She published an autobiography, Dust Tracks on a Road, in 1942. She describes a pine tree in her autobiography, and tells the origins of woodpeckers and gopher tortoises in Mules and Men.

Most remember Johnson, a native Floridian, for his poem “Lift Every Voice and Sing” (popularly known as the “Negro National Anthem”) which his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson, set to music for a celebration of Abraham Lincoln’s birthday in 1900 in Jacksonville. The poem was published in the same collection as “Brer Rabbit, You’s de Cutes’ of ‘Em All.” Johnson published books of poems, fiction, essay, and autobiography as well as editing collections of “Negro” poetry and spirituals. In the African storytelling tradition of calling all creatures “brother” or “Brer,” the poem lists many mammals that inhabit the scrub, including the wolf, fox, terrapin (tortoise), possum, lion (panther), and bear. As usual, the rabbit wins the contest by using his brains against the others creatures’ brawn.


The first Seminole to graduate from high school and the first woman Tribal Chairman, Betty Mae Jumper spent her life working on tribal affairs and projects. With the knowledge of three languages--Creek, Mikasuki, and English--she became a translator and later founded three tribal newspapers, including the Seminole Tribune which is still published today. She has conducted storytelling workshops hosted by the state of Florida, and she was featured each May at the prestigious Florida Folk Festival in White Springs. In the legend “Crows,” the common bird of the field was created by fire, integral to many ecosystems in Florida, including the scrub.


Son of Betty Mae Jumper, a storyteller, and Mose Jumper, Sr., an alligator wrestler, Moses Jumper, Jr., is “poet laureate” and Recreation Director for the Seminole Tribe of Florida. He has served in this position since 1974 and is responsible for directing recreational activities and sports for tribal members on five reservations. The white-tailed deer is a visitor to the scrub, and its scientific name, Odocoileus virginianus seminolus, recalls the central position it once had in the Seminole culture.

Author, folklorist, and human rights activist, Stetson Kennedy was the author of eight books and various short stories. In 1937, he left the University of Florida to serve as director of folklore, oral history, and ethnic studies for the Florida Writers’ Project. He is a founding member and past president of the Florida Folklore Society. He received the Florida Folk Heritage Award, the Florida Governor’s Heartland Award and he was inducted into the Florida Artists Hall of Fame. After World War II, he exposed the Ku Klux Klan. According to Kennedy, “palmetto country” includes southern Georgia and Alabama. He describes the palmetto and tells the story about the fiddle tune. A recording of the fiddle tune can be found in the Library of Congress: http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/S?ammem/flwpabib:@filreq(@field(TITLE+@od1(Collier+in+the+Scrub))+@field(RESOURCETYPE+@od1(sound_recording)))


Born in Macon, Georgia, Sidney Lanier learned to play the violin, flute, piano, banjo, and guitar at an early age. He graduated from Oglethorpe College and had a tutorship position there. In 1861, he was summoned to enlist in the Confederate Army. He and his brother fought in many battles until he was captured near Richmond, Virginia. He developed tuberculosis during the five months he spent in prison. His first novel, based on his war experiences, was soon published. He worked as a lawyer with his father for several years, but he gave up that profession to pursue poetry and music. In 1875, the Great Atlantic Coastline Railroad Company hired him to write a travel guide, and he traveled by rail for three months. In 1876, Florida: its scenery, climate, and history. With an account of Charleston, Savannah, Augusta, and Aiken; a chapter for consumptives; various papers on fruit-culture; and a complete hand-book and guide was published. He wrote several poems about Florida, including one about Florida’s state bird, often seen in the scrub.

A graduate of West Point, George Archibald McCall helped build Fort Brooke near Tampa and the Fort King Road (from Tampa to Ocala) in 1823. At the start of the Second Seminole War, he served as an aide-de-camp to General Edmund Gaines in Florida and elsewhere. Near the end of the war, he served under Colonel John Worth in a campaign in the Big Cypress and Everglades. Her fought in the Mexican War, and in 1853, he resigned his commission because of ill health. At the start of the Civil War, he was called out of retirement. He gathered and commanded a group of volunteers, fighting as part of the Army of the Potomac until his capture, imprisonment, and exchange. His letters were published after his death. In the newly established Fort Brooke, McCall describes the gopher tortoise as a “delicacy for the table.”


Edward Payson Powell graduated from Hamilton college and Union Theological Seminary in New York. He was ordained a Congregational minister. He worked as a journalist for the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* and *The Independent* of New York, well known as favoring civil rights and protesting against slavery. He was associate editor for the *Unity* (Chicago) and the *Arena* (Boston). He also sold articles to various magazines and published several books including *How To Live in the Country*. He move to property he purchased on Lake Lucy, at the north end of the Lake Wales Ridge, also known as “the backbone of Florida.”


A graduate of the University of Wisconsin, Marjorie Kinnan became a journalist. In 1919, she married Charles Rawlings, and they lived in New York. She wrote poems as part of a daily newspaper column called “Songs of a Housewife.” In 1928, they bought an orange grove in Cross Creek, Florida, and she published her first stories about Florida. She remained at Cross Creek, and finally, in 1933, she and Charles divorced. Her book, *Cross Creek* is a collection of stories about the people, creatures, and place. Several species of ants are endemic to the scrub and pawpaw is a resident plant of the scrub.
South Moon Under begins with the sentence: “Night entered the clearing from the scrub,” but The Yearling doesn’t mention the scrub until page 2 “Where he walked now, the scrub had closed in, walling in the road with dense sand pines, each one so thin it seemed to the boy it might make kindling by itself.” By page 3, South Moon Under mentions one of the most important features of the scrub: fire. Then two-thirds of the way through the novel, the scrub burns for days until extinguished by rain. This event anticipates the Bear Hammock fire in the Ocala National Forest which traveled 20 linear miles, burning 35,000 acres in three hours before rains doused it in 1935. In “Florida Between Two Fires,” author Stephen J. Pyne praises The Yearling as “a detailed almanac of Florida history so rich it makes Thoreau’s journals look like distracted doodlings.” He notes that from her home in Cross Creek, Rawlings could probably see the smoke of the 1935 fire, “but nowhere does fire appear on the land as either native resident, farm tool, or alien terror.” (Arizona State University: Fire History of America (1960-2010), January 2011, http://firehistory.asu.edu/florida-between-two-fires.)


With a Pennsylvania Dutch and Quaker heritage, Joseph Russell Reaver appreciated folklore as integral to life in a community. Growing up in southeastern Pennsylvania, he listened to the folktales, dialect, and music of the culture. As a tenured professor at Florida State University beginning in the 1950s, he researched and wrote about the folktales and legends of Florida. He or one of his students collected the story which explains the name and origin of the epiphyte called “Spanish Moss.”


In 1757, Bernard Romans arrived in America as a junior surveyor for the British service. He became one of the pioneer cartographers of the southeast United States. Sometime before 1760, he was assigned to St. Augustine in East Florida. He began to rise through the ranks of British engineers, and in 1766, he was named deputy surveyor in Georgia. In 1767, he was appointed deputy surveyor for the entire Southern District. He mapped Pensacola Harbor, Tampa Bay, and Mobile Bay. Between 1770 and 1772, with David Tait and George Gauld, he mapped the interior of West Florida. He notes animals and plants mostly for their economic value to colonists and Native Americans.

An elder of the Seminole Tribe of Florida and fluent in Creek, English, and Mikasuki, Alice Micco Snow has worked as a translator and herbalist for the Tribe. An assistant professor of anthropology at Florida Gulf Coast University, Susan Enns Stans partners with the Seminole staff to address education issues and to teach college classes. She has also written and published articles, focusing on Florida culture and on working with the Seminoles. Snow’s remedies include St. Johnswort, prickly pear, and button snakeroot, although not necessarily the scrub species of these plants.


Born in Connecticut, Harriet Beecher Stowe attended and later taught at the Hartford Female Academy. She also taught at the Western Female Institute in Cincinnati. Most well-known as the author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe and her husband moved into a small cottage overlooking the St. Johns River in Mandarin, Florida, in 1867. Although she had promised her publisher another novel, she wrote instead a series of literary sketches which she submitted, in 1872, with the title *Palmetto Leaves*. Her descriptions of life in the second half of the nineteenth century are full of picnics, sailing excursions, river tours, and stories of events and people. During her rambles, she encountered the scrub oak, prickly pear, and ubiquitous palmetto.


Born in Salem Massachusetts in 1775, John Lee Williams graduated from Hamilton-Oneida Academy in New York and then studied law. Seeking to improve his health in 1820, he moved to Pensacola Florida, still a Spanish colony but soon to be a U.S. possession. He became a leading citizen of the new territory, and in 1823, was appointed with Dr. William H. Simmons of St. Augustine to locate a site for a new capital. His difficulties in his journey and explorations inspired him to write a book *A View of West Florida*, published in 1827, and then this volume published ten years later. Although Williams probably never visited any of the scrub habitats of Florida, he writes of the “sand ridges” and lists several inhabitants of the scrub, including the gopher tortoise, gopher snake, and scrub jay.