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Deyrups celebrate 40 years at Archbold

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Dr. Mark and Nancy Deyrup

COURTESY/DUSTIN ANGELL/ARCHBOLD BIOLOGICAL STATION

Aug. 30, 2022 marked Dr. Mark and Nancy Deyrup's 40th anniversary at Archbold Biological Station. Dr. Deyrup was hired as the Station's first entomologist in 1982 by then Station Director Dr. Jim Layne. Nancy, who has a zoology degree, was assured by Layne that there would also be plenty of work for her as he was committed to long-term studies. Over the past 40 years, Mark and Nancy have made many contributions to the Station's legacy.

Dr. Mark Deyrup is a dedicated and hyper-curious scientist, with many interests in the fields of entomology and ecology. He spent his career studying the insect community of the Florida scrub, has discovered new species, and published numerous scientific journal articles. In 2017, Deyrup published his book, “Ants of Florida, Identification and Natural History,” which summarized his vast knowledge of the more than 200 species of ants known from Florida. Dr. Deyrup once shared, “If there were a zoo for Florida ants, here are a few species that might be on display, with the appropriate signs by their exhibits. It would be a miniature zoo, as the animals are only 2-4 millimeters, or 1/8th-1/4th of an inch, in length.”

“Dr. Deyrup’s accomplishments are too numerous to list in this article,” said Dr. Zach Forsburg, Archbold communications coordinator. Forsburg continued, “Yet, Dr. Deyrup is the most down-to-earth scientist I’ve ever met, pun intended since he is often seen walking around looking at the ground for insects. He is a walking encyclopedia, always willing to share his knowledge with anyone with questions.”

Mark has greatly contributed to the Station’s natural history collection over the years, which now includes more than a quarter million pinned insect specimens, many of which have now been digitized thanks to Nancy Deyrup.

Nancy Deyrup has done it all, from data collection for Archbold’s Plant Ecology, Entomology, and Limnology programs to weather collection, education, and photography. Archbold’s trove of weather data is thanks to people like Nancy who did the meticulous collection before automation. Dustin Angell, Archbold’s current director of education, explained, “In 1989, the Archbold Board of Directors decided to offer local school children the opportunity to learn about science and the remarkable animals, plants, and habitats found in Highlands County. Nancy pioneered Archbold’s

Florida Scrub Education program by implementing a curriculum which includes field trip of the Station and still serves the elementary school children of Highlands County. She also initiated the popular 'Scrub Camp' back in 1992 that continues to this day."

Deyrup and Charlotte Wilson co-authored "Discovering Florida Scrub," a curriculum of environmental science activities for grades 3-5, again still in use to this date.

Nancy shared, "It was so inspiring to introduce Highlands County children to the natural history of the Florida scrub they had been traversing their entire lives. The education program gave me an unexpected new area of personal fulfillment. And, our own three children had the benefit of Florida scrub immersion. All three went on to careers in biology." As adults, the Deyrup children have worked on the Station as well: Deyrup reports, "Our son Leif visited the Station and helped write papers on insects that visit palmetto flowers (there are more than 300 such insects on the Station) and on the diet of Narrowmouth Toads (they eat almost nothing but ants captured at night). Our son Stephen brings college classes to study the chemical ecology of local plants and animals."

Mark and Nancy are both officially retired, though they are enduring fixtures at the Station. Nancy continues to volunteer in the 'bug lab' and was instrumental in completing a major project, getting the data from tens of thousands of pinned insects in the Archbold natural history collection online and available via the Internet. Mark, now Emeritus Entomologist, continues searching for new patterns and species in the hidden world of Florida scrub ecology. The Station celebrated Mark and Nancy, along with Archbold Emeritus Librarian Fred Lohrer, for their momentous anniversaries in June with a small cake and ice cream social for staff.

Hilary Swain, Archbold executive director, added, "The Deyrups have also generously funded Archbold's Visiting Scholar Program, helping to bring talented early career scientists to the Station and Ranch. The Deyrups have contributed to our mission in so many ways over the years, and we are so grateful that the Deyrups who have continued to dedicate their lives to Archbold."

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