

The Traveller

"The attention of a traveller, should be particularly attuned, in the first place, to the Various works of Nature"

Newsletter of the Bartram Trail Conference
www.bartramtrail.org

Spring 2002
2:1

Biannual Meeting a Success

October's biannual meeting in Gainesville was testament to the relevance of William Bartram's *Travels* in our own time. What a variety of people he reaches! Naturalist and artist, ethnographer and archaeologist, Bartram left a legacy that continues to speak in equal measure to historians and lovers of literature, backpackers, environmental activists and garden club presidents.

The program beautifully covered the full range of Bartram's interests, with Charlotte Porter and the Florida Museum of Natural History playing gracious hosts. The setting was perfect—October just north of the Alachua Savanna. We learned about William Bartram's appetite on the trail, alligator group feeding, archaeology, and the art of natural history. We heard poetry, gawked at the "crocodiles" and browsed through some beautiful books. Edward J. Cashin spoke movingly about Bartram and the American Revolution during Friday's banquet, and we walked off the previous evening's excesses with a hike to the Great Sink on Saturday morning.

But the meeting also provided an opportunity to join with some fine people, and this recalls still one more aspect of William Bartram's legacy – he was a good friend. A few weeks ago, I received a photocopied letter, written in May 1796, from the New-York Historical Society. In this letter, Bartram described how he was in his garden when the nephew of a companion from his travels, young Lachlan McIntosh, came to visit. This sign of renewed friendship with the family stirred Bartram deeply: "I took his hand press't with a truly Fraternal salutation," he wrote (after starting with embrace) and pumped his guest for news about the other McIntoshes in Georgia. Bartram compared "this memorable interview" and the prospect of joining the elder Lachlan McIntosh to "the meeting of Friends in Paradise."

Was this reunion in the Afterlife a literary convention? Yes. A bit over the top for our times? Perhaps. But gatherings like the one in Gainesville honor Bartram's spirit by providing a forum for renewing old and forming new friendships. When we join together, as in Gainesville, we close the space between us and nurture the kinds of relationships that eighteenth-century travelers cherished. (Those letters of introduction were not idle exercises.) And this shared commitment, to continue in the enlightenment vein, advances Bartram's legacy by renewing our dedication to the land through one another.

With friendly collaboration, we help preserve reminders of the past and the remarkable landscapes that William Bartram so passionately described over two centuries ago. Thanks to the BTC Board for a wonderful meeting. And may we continue to honor William Bartram's achievement as we cultivate both new and old friendships.

Thomas Hallock, Newsletter Editor



Alligators fascinate all readers of Bartram, as evidenced by the BTC Conference's visit to the "Great Sink." Photo by Brad Sanders. Brad has made this image available on the BTC web-site, www.bartramtrail.org.