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Archbold employee spotlight: Nancy Deyrup

By Archbold Biological Station

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Nancy Deyrup and husband, Dr. Mark Deyrup.

DUSTIN ANGELL PHOTO

Nancy Deyrup arrived at Archbold back in 1982 when Dr. Jim Layne was the Station Director. Layne was “all about long-term studies,” she remembers. He assured Nancy, who has a Zoology degree, there would be plenty of work for her.

Over the past 38 years, Nancy has done it all from data collection for Archbold’s Plant Ecology, Entomology, and Limnology programs to weather collection, education and photography.

Deyrup said, “At that time, there was no digital photography, so I spent plenty of time with developing solutions and Richard Archbold’s photographic enlarger.”

Archbold’s trove of weather data is thanks to people like Deyrup, who did the meticulous collection before automation. She spent time archiving barometric charts produced by beautifully crafted clockwork mechanisms, as well as measuring water levels of seasonal ponds, wells and local lakes using staff gauges. For the study of water stress on plants, Deyrup measured water depth in evaporation pans.

In 1989, Deyrup’s work took an unexpected turn. The Archbold Board of Directors decided to offer local school children the opportunity to learn about the remarkable animals, plants and habitats found in Highlands County. Nancy pioneered Archbold’s Florida Scrub Education program by creating a slide show and field trip of the Station. She initiated the popular ‘Scrub Camp’ back in 1992 that continues to this day. Deyrup and Charlotte Wilson also co-authored *Discovering Florida Scrub*, a curriculum of environmental science activities for grades 3-5.

Deyrup 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. Florida scrub hides its mysteries well from casual observers. 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 over 300 such insects on the Station) and on the diet of narrow-mouth 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.”

When asked about her least favorite job at Archbold, Deyrup shared the following:

“Younger scientists and forgetful older ones often forget that all aspects of science were slower and more laborious than today. Captions for charts were often done with a ‘lettering set’ that would draw uniform letters and numbers, but later, in a big advance, there were rub-off letters and numbers that could be carefully applied to illustrations. This was my least favorite thing to do because it was tedious, and one mistake meant a complete do-over.”

Nancy Deyrup is officially retired but has continued to volunteer in the ‘bug lab’ with her husband, Archbold Entomologist Dr. Mark Deyrup. She was instrumental in completing a major project, getting the data from tens of thousands of pinned insects in the Archbold museum collections online and available via the internet. After Dr. Mark Deyrup’s retirement, so devoted are they that the Deyrups generously funded Archbold’s Visiting Scholar Program, helping to bring talented young scientists to the Station and Ranch. Although retired she is still deeply engaged with Archbold, and reflects, “I have been happy to be part of the Archbold mission of science, conservation and education.”

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While many people contribute to part of Archbold’s mission, Nancy Deyrup has dedicated her life to all three.

For more information on Archbold’s ‘Bug Lab,’ Education Program, and Archbold’s Visiting Scholar Program, visit our website at: archbold-station.org.