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Artists, clockwise from top left, Kathleen Konicek-Moran, Leo Hernandez, Susan Cumins, and Jeanie Duck along with two watercolors of native plants that are part of the exhibit.

PORTRAITS OF THE EVERGLADES

A new exhibition at the national park depicts paintings of plants discovered in the Everglades by late 19th and early 20th century botanical explorers. Page 10



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INSIDE

Coral Gables

The museum hosts a dog costume contest in conjunction with Halloween on the Mile.

Page 3

Miami Stories

The city says almost all residents now have trash containers and service.

Page 9

Police Report

Find out what crimes have been reported to authorities in areas near you.

Page 14

PORTRAITS FROM THE EVERGLADES

A new exhibition at the national park depicts paintings of plants discovered in the Everglades by late 19th and early 20th century botanical explorers.

BY LIDIA DINKOVA
Special to the Miami Herald

When Kathleen Konicek-Moran set out to find a specific plant that grows in Everglades National Park, she stumbled upon the difficulties of threading through the park's thick terrain.

"It's quite an adventure to go out into that place," she said. "The Everglades is one of the last frontiers in the U.S."

Konicek-Moran's adventure prompted her to think about the challenges early 20th century botanical explorers must have had roaming through the park to discover new plants. She turned that thought into an art exhibit at Everglades National Park, "Botanical Exploration in the Everglades," which includes 27 paintings of plants discovered in the Everglades by late 19th and early 20th century botanical explorers.

"It's this whole idea of discovery and how it works and the whole idea of naming plants and who gets to name them," said Konicek-Moran. "When you discover a plant you get to name it. They usually name it for someone else. They could name it for a friend who deserves it."

The plant she was looking for is called *Mrs. Britton's Shadow Witch*. When botanist Oakes Ames discovered it, he named the orchid for his friend, Elizabeth Britton, who, with her husband, founded the New York Botanical Garden. *Mrs. Britton's Shadow Witch*, however, is the plant's common name. Each plant also has a scientific name - in this case, "*Ponthieva brittoniae* Ames."

Newly discovered plants are named as follows: The first name is the name of the genus the plant belongs to, the second name is a specific epithet for the plant, and the third is the name of the person for whom the plant is named.

The exhibit is a collaboration between the Tropical Botanic Artists, a collective of South Florida watercolorists,



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ON DISPLAY: Leo Hernandez, an artist from Kendall, and Kathleen Konicek-Moran, artist and curator of the exhibit of botanical art, set up one of the watercolors that are part of the exhibit.

and Everglades National Park. The exhibit blends creativity with science.

Traditionally in botanical art, artists depict a plant as true-to-life as possible. Artists use watercolors and have to follow certain rules, such as painting only the plant and leaving the rest of the canvas blank, and having the light source coming from the upper left of the painting toward the lower right. Precision is key. Artists often use magnifying glasses and thin paint brushes to draw the smallest details on the plant.

"Sometimes I have to put my nose up to the paper," said Coral Gables resident Jeanie Duck, 68, who drew two paintings for the exhibit, *Chapman's Sensitive Plant* and *Little Floating Bladderwort*.

For her painting of *Little Floating Bladderwort*, Duck drew an actual-size sketch of the plant on the upper left corner of the painting, and painted an enlarged watercolor of the plant on the rest of the canvas to show its details.

"It has these carnivorous bladders on its roots that eat mosquito larvae," said Duck of the plant, which floats atop shallow water. "You've got to love a plant that eats mosquito larvae."



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DELICATE WORK: Kathleen Konicek-Moran talks about her watercolor of a Simpson's Prickly-Apple, that is part of the display at Everglades National Park.

The exhibit includes paintings that abide by the strict rules of botanical art, such as the three sketches of Lichens that Konicek-Moran did for a textbook years ago.

Her sketches of the Lichens, or plants that are a combination of fungus and algae, aim to depict these plants as true to life as possible, so scientists can better understand the plant.

Across from these sketches is her painting of *Simpson's Prickly Apple*, a cactus that only blooms at night a handful of times annually. It's set against trees and a sunset, complete with a moth fluttering next to the cactus' six-inch blooming flower. In traditional botanical art, only the plant would be depicted.

"I tried to move it from just illustration into artistry," she said. "I am trying to present my botanical accuracy in an artistic manner."

Susan Cumins, of Coral Gables, strove

If you go

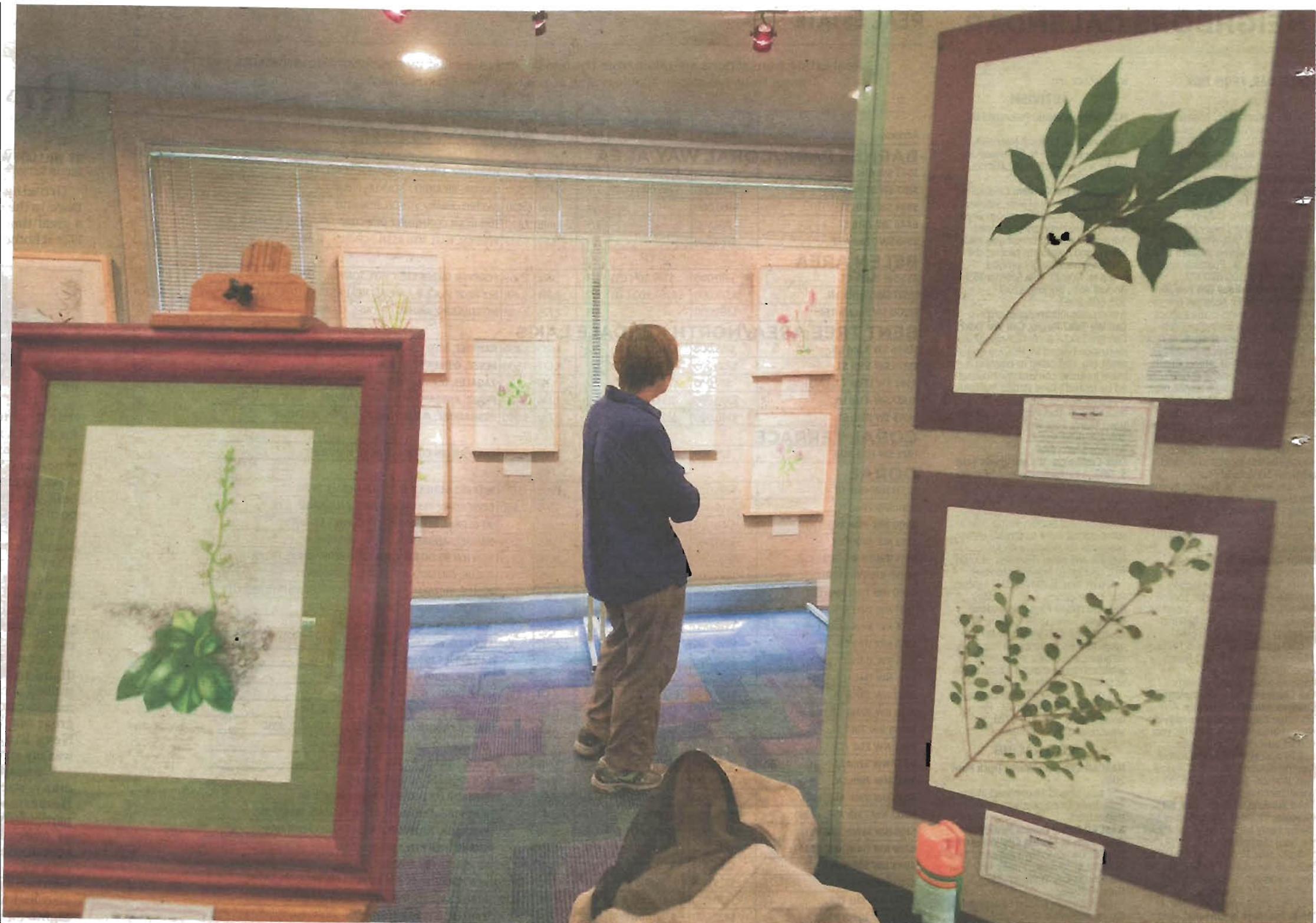
The Botanical Exploration in the Everglades art exhibit includes 27 paintings of plants discovered in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Everglades National Park; the exhibit is a collaboration between Tropical Botanic Artists and Everglades National Park and was curated by Kathleen Konicek-Moran and Jimi Sadle.

When and Where: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. until Nov. 30 at the Ernest Coe Center, 40001 State Road 9336, in Everglades National Park.

Cost: Free and open to the public.

for the same in her depiction of *Ravenel's Pipewort*.

"The way you place it on the paper makes the composition interesting.



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BEAUTY FROM THE WILD: Theresa Wistrom, from California, checks out the exhibit of botanical art at the Ernest Coe Visitor Center in Everglades National Park on Wednesday.

That's why I put the plant to the side, so I have space for this guy to lean over," said 69-year-old Cumins, pointing to a tall green stem leaning over to the side. "But then you also have to make all the details true to life."

For the exhibit, the artists, all part of the Tropical Botanic Artists collective, picked one or two plants from a list compiled by Konicek-Moran and had the option to find the plants in their natural habitat in the Everglades.

When artist Leo Hernandez set out to find the *Pineland Clustervine*, he realized that he would have to look closer to find the plant that bears three-inch flowers.

"It's like finding seashells on the beach," said West Kendall resident Her-

nandez, 68. "Once you find one, you know what you are looking for, and you start seeing them all over the place."

Hernandez, too, drew a life-size sketch of the flower placed in the lower right corner of his painting, next to an

enlarged watercolor of the plant twisting around a tree branch.

Said Konicek-Moran: "I just feel that the more information you can give about a plant, the better. And if you can do it artistically, that's great."