# To Explore Everglades From Air

*General Science*

## National Park Service Plans Scientific Party

A BLIMP, baby sister of the big airships, will be added to the list of aircraft that have been used for purposes of scientific exploration when an official National Park Service party takes the air from Miami for a reconnaissance flight over the proposed Tropical Everglades National Park area on Tuesday, February 11. This small type of airship is regarded as especially well adapted for this particular kind of flight, for it is less likely than an airplane to get into difficulties in case of engine trouble, and is wieldier and less expensive to handle than a big dirigible.

An aerial reconnaissance will save an immense amount of time in getting an estimate of the possible adaptability of the southern Everglades to national park purposes. Miami people who know something of the region say that it is possible to see as much from the air in one day as one could from the ground in several weeks.

The exploring party will consist of Horace M. Albright, director of the U. S. National Park Service, Arno Cammerer, associate director, and a group of scientists versed in various phases of tropical botany, zoology, ornithology, etc. Their task will be to examine an area comprising approximately 2,500 square miles on the southern tip of Florida plus a number of small outlying islands. This land has been suggested as suitable for a national park. The party will make the report to the Secretary of the Interior, who may later be authorized by Congress to accept title to the land if it is offered as a gift to the United States. National parks are never created by Federal purchase, but only by the setting aside of public lands, as in the case of most of the western parks, or by the transfer of privately owned lands as a gift, as in the case of Acadia National Park and the new Great Smokies area.

The southern Everglades are of especial interest mainly because of the large elements of tropical life contained in their plant, insect, amphibian, reptile, bird and mammal populations. There are forms of life to be found here, especially on low coral-limestone ridges that rise in a sort of range, that exist abundantly across the salt-water channel of the West Indies but not to the north on the rest of the Florida mainland. Here can also be found the active geological processes of building up the land by corals, mangrove bushes and other agencies that turn water into land.

The area proposed for a new national park is almost wholly uninhabited. The Seminole Indians, who form a picturesque group in interior Florida, have their holdings to the north of this region, and their lands would not be disturbed. There may be a few of them, and possibly also a few white men and negroes, living within the area as squatters, but these could probably be compensated and removed without causing hard feelings or legal difficulties.

If the forthcoming exploration results in a recommendation of the area as coming up to national park standards, further action toward getting title to the land, preparatory to presenting it to the government, will be taken by the Floridians interested in establishing the new park.

## *In This Issue*



## *Great Smokies*

ONE hundred and fifty thousand acres of land in the heart of the Great Smoky Mountains region, forming the nucleus of the proposed new Great Smokies National Park, was formally turned over to the federal government on Thursday afternoon, Feb. 6. The deeds were delivered to the Hon. Ray Lyman Wilbur, Secretary of the Interior, by the Governors of the states of North Carolina and Tennessee in person.

The Great Smoky Mountains, which include the highest peaks in the southern Appalachians, lie along the boundary between Tennessee and North Carolina. Much of the area is still in virgin timber, its giant tulip-trees, buckeyes and hemlocks rating as the largest trees in eastern North America. Farther up the slopes of the mountains are dense forests of balsam and spruce, and where there has been cutting or fire, extensive second-growth stands of oak and pine have sprung up.

But the great glory of the vegetation of the Smokies lies in its shrubbery, especially in the great masses, often hundreds of acres in extent, known locally as "laurel slicks." These are composed mainly of rhododendrons, azalea and mountain laurel, the most beautiful of native American flowering shrubs.

The "slicks" are so called more because of their smooth and shining appearance from a distance than because of any slipperiness on close acquaintance. They are in fact dense jungles, higher than a man's head, and practically impossible to penetrate. It is often easier to tramp across their matted tops than to try to force a way between their close-set stems.



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