

OUTDOORS

Camping here is a whole new animal

By DAVID DORSEY
News-Press staff writer

BY THE TIME the cool, November air arrives, so do newcomers and natives at area campgrounds, basking in the climate and relaxing ambience.

Andrea Gately will tell you. She's an assistant manager at Earth Outfitters, which supplies outdoor enthusiasts with the necessary gear.

The cooler and drier the air, the better the business — and the camping.

She said she goes camping about four times a year, and that she enjoys the different climate and atmosphere from the more traditional mountain campgrounds in the Appalachian and Rocky Mountains.

"There's another set of wildlife out there," Gately said. "It's a whole different set of problems. It's like nothing you've ever seen in the mountains."

"I don't like it any more, and I don't like it any less than the mountains. It's just a different experience," she said. "You see different wildlife, different birds and different plants that you won't see elsewhere. What you see out there is what you'd see watching the Discovery channel."

Gately recommends camping in

the Everglades at Seminole State Park about 17 miles south of Naples.

And in Lee County, there's Koreshan State Park in Estero with 60 campsites, said park manager Larry Fooks.

The park is also a state historic site.

In 1894, a religious visionary named Cyrus R. Teed brought his followers from Chicago to Estero to construct a "New Jerusalem," according to the park guide.

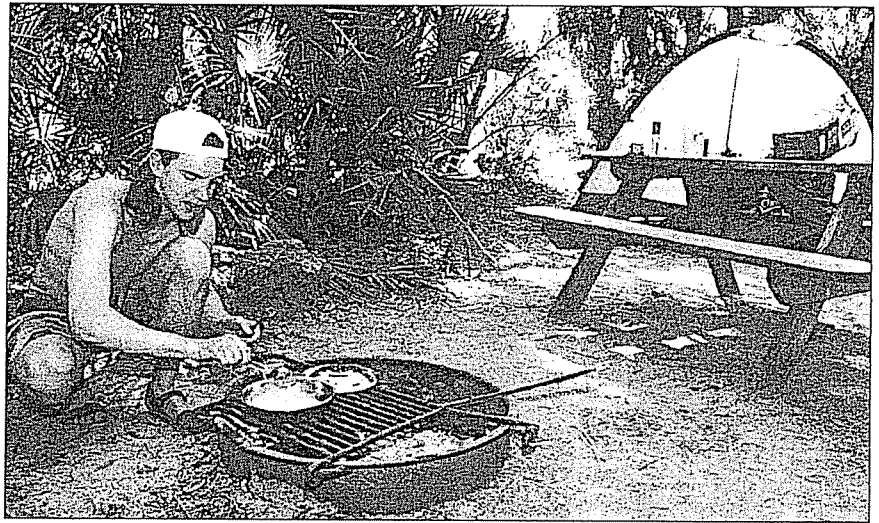
Teed believed the earth to be a hollow sphere filled with all life, planets, the moon and the stars.

Teed died in 1908, and membership in his religion began to decline.

The remains of his settlement — 12 buildings — are at the park, which also features fishing, nature study and boating and guided walks by park rangers.

During the peak season, Christmas to May, campers may stay no longer than 14 days at the park.

In March, campgrounds begin



News-Press file photo

BACK TO NATURE: A camper enjoys the surroundings at the Koreshan State Historic site campground area.

to fill, including at Koreshan. Fooks said that on some nights, every campsite is taken.

In the summer, when the mosquitoes arrive, campsite population gets cut in half to about 47 percent capacity.

Collier-

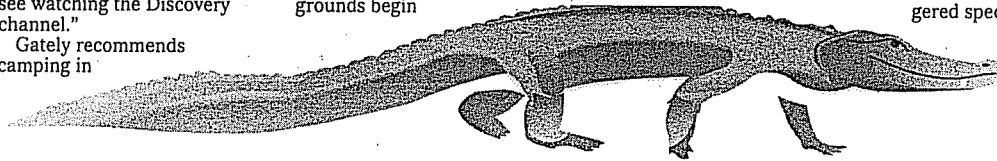
Seminole Park sits on the western edge of the Everglades, where the Florida royal palm and the tropical hardwood hammock grow.

Those who are in the right place at the right time might see some of the many endangered species who make

their home there: brown pelicans, wood storks,

bald eagles, red-cockaded woodpeckers, crocodiles, manatees, mangrove fox squirrels, black bears and panthers have been spotted on the grounds.

To the north of Fort Myers, at Cayo Costa State Park, a small island off the Lee County coast, campers can explore miles of beaches and wooded areas that feature pines, oak palm hammocks and mangrove swamps.



Regional campgrounds

Lee County

■ **KORESHAN STATE PARK:** South of Fort Myers on U.S. 41; P.O. Box 7, Estero, 33928; 992-0311. On the banks of the Estero River.

■ **CAYO COSTA STATE PARK:** On Cayo Costa Island; P.O. Box 1150, Boca Grande 33921; (941) 964-0375. Accessible by private boat or passenger ferry services. Primitive camping; cabins available.

Charlotte County

Meade to Charlotte Harbor. Most canoeists begin at the city park in Zolfo Springs, which has a campground. Outfitters offer day trips and camping trips up to 8 days. A number of fish camps, boat ramps, commercial campgrounds and public parks are along the river.

Collier County

■ **BIG CYPRESS SWAMP:** Interstate 75 and U.S. 41 cross the preserve; (941) 695-4111. Headquarters is on Tamiami

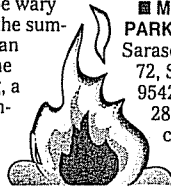
private campground is near headquarters.

■ **COLLIER-SEMINOLE STATE PARK:** On U.S. 41, 17 miles south of Naples. Route 4, Box 848, Naples 33961; (941) 394-3397. Campers should be wary of fierce mosquitoes in the summer and should call for an update before visiting the park. Primitive camping, a 6.5-mile nature trail, fishing and canoeing.

Sarasota County

between Venice and Sarasota; 1843 S. Tamiami Trail, Osprey 34229; (941) 483-5956. The park offers fishing and canoeing in the tidal creek and swimming in the freshwater lake.

■ **MYAKKA RIVER STATE PARK:** 12 miles east of Sarasota on SR 72; 13207 SR 72, Sarasota, FL 34241-9542; (941) 361-6511. The 28,875-acre park offers camping, backpacking, fishing, canoeing and nature study. Cabins



ESSENTIALS

- Tent
- Stove
- Sharp knife
- Flashlight and/or lantern
- Cooler
- Sleeping bag
- Insect repellent and sun-screen
- First aid kit

