



Southern woods

By Damon DeBusk

The flashlight's beam guides my way into a pitch-black forest,
Exposing stumps and logs, it floats over the winding terrain.
I notice the scent of pine needles meshed with decaying leaves,
A familiar, earthy smell that welcomes me back to Southern Woods.

Snapping twigs and sloshing puddles assail the stillness.
Anxious anticipation builds with a heightening of my senses.
I stop to listen to wild boars skirmishing briefly nearby.
The battle fades; then I'm moving again with a quickened pace.

A red ribbon on a limb confirms I've reached my destination.
An awkward climb up a rickety ladder, its icy rungs biting.
Sitting alone, the silence thickens and sounds intensify.
My cough is like a shout, and my coat zipper becomes a chainsaw.

The wind signals its approach, humming through the treetops.
Acorns and pinecones brush past on their way to the ground.
Crows caw tentatively to one another. The tree creaks softly.
A wave of light drifts to the forest floor; morning is coming.



Larry Lynch



William Weber



Image provided by VISIT FLORIDA

From murky shadows, images emerge slowly; outlines take shape.
An icy chill passes through me as morning dew begins to fall.
The woods are waking up and filling with the sounds of day.
Leaves from nearly bare trees float silently to the ground.

Forest creatures mill around the feeder, rummaging for corn,
Nuggets that seem to shimmer like gold on the dark rutted soil.
Behind dense hedgerows comes the rustling of something large.
My pulse quickens with anticipation, and then fades again.

From nowhere, a doe and button buck appear in their gray coats.
Warily they pillage the ground, each taking a turn on watch.
In unison, their heads rise and ears point up like antennas,
And in a few bounds, they vanish instantly into Southern Woods.

A dark figure quickly emerges from an opening in the briars,
With a fluid grace that does not match his stature and girth.
The old boar glides silently underneath the feeder and stops.
To harvest or simply watch is all that's left to be decided.



William Weber

*Ocala National Forest (top)
wild pig (above),
Grey squirrel and barred owl
(opposite page).*