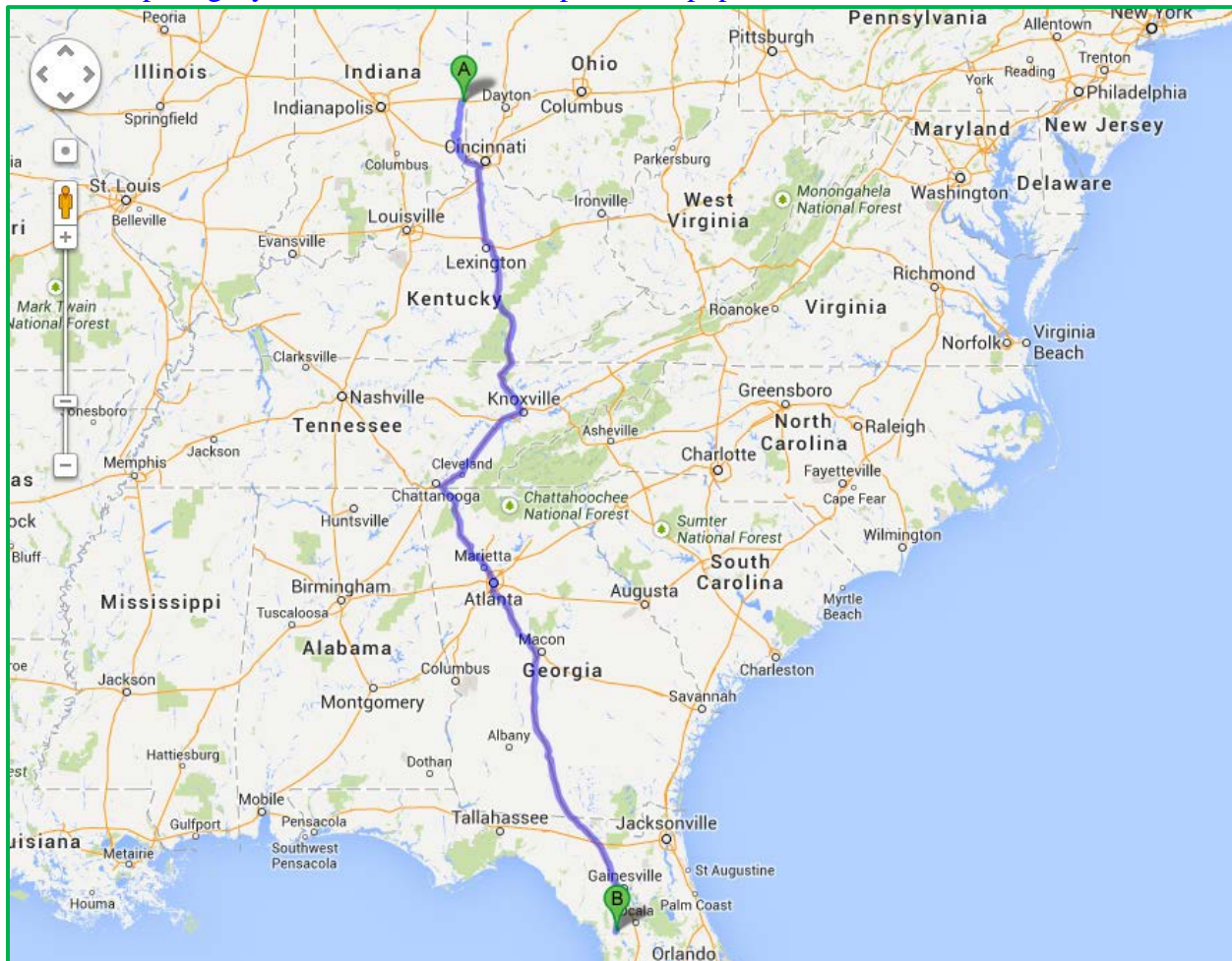


*Vicki Penziner-Matson Field Trip to the Florida Peninsula*  
*15-23 March 2014*

URL: <http://legacy.earlham.edu/~toriwe/vpm/index.php>



## **Trip Summary**

*The Vicki Penziner-Matson Fund supported this years' (2014) Spring Break, natural history field expedition to the central peninsula of Florida. Wendy Tori, Jose I. Pareja, John Iverson, Bill Buskirk, and Yoni Glogower led the trip. We visited a number of the hangouts John frequented when he was a graduate student at the University of Florida. John's knowledge and enthusiasm was great! Wendy and Bill made the birding experience surreal...and Jose and Yoni made driving around Florida enjoyable!*

*Below is a quick summary in the form of numbers for our trip, following that we share a brief account of our adventure.*

- 1 A special number for many of us because there were many firsts for a lot of us***
- 3 The number of vans***
- 4 The number of cooking groups in our trip***
- 6 The number of states we crossed***
- 7 The number of states participants come from and the number of turtle species we captured***
- 8 The number of backgrounds Freshman, Sophomore, Juniors and Seniors, Professors, Emeriti Faculty, Librarians, and Alumni***
- 9 The number of different countries participants came from and the number of days we traveled***
- 10.5 The number of hours some people napped on our way down to Florida ☺***
- 21 The number of new people each one of us got to know better***
- 22 The number of people that formed our group***
- 27 The number of meals we had together***
- 32 The number of minutes that it took us to pack things away upon our return to EC***
- 77 The number of turtles captured (a total of seven species)***
- 103 The number of bird species we collectively saw and documented***

### ***The beginning...***

*We took off at 4:05 am and everyone was on time and ready to go. We introduced each other and jumped on the vans –John led, Yoni followed and Wendy's and Jose's van with Bill's car brought in the rear of the caravan...After crossing 6 states, 10.5 hours of napping by some of us, and a day's travel from Richmond to just across the Florida border, we arrived at our first-night's campsite - Jennings. After pitching our tents and setting up camp we spent the last minutes of twilight and early evening enjoying the night sky and the company of each other! Yes, we left Indiana and last time we checked the radar it was cold, and almost snowing. The mild-temperatures and exotic vegetation hinted to us that we'd moved biogeographically. The presence of citrus trees, "Spanish Moss", green tree frogs, Mediterranean gecko ,and live oaks trees in our way down to Florida confirmed it.*

### ***Volunteering for research...***

*The following morning we woke up in Florida. We packed up our camp and left the campground. We needed to meet with Peter Meylan, a colleague of John's now at Eckerd College who is conducting a long-term study of the turtles in **Rainbow Springs State Park, before 10:00am.** Upon arrival we helped set up the processing stations and put our gear on to join those from Eckerd College, snorkeling up the river flowing out of the springs, collecting turtles and watching all the amazing fish and vegetation in the "warm" crystal clear waters of the spring.*

*For a number of our students this was their first time snorkeling , and for most of us this was the first time capturing turtles and observing the Florida diversity under water. Upon finishing our collection, we helped Peter and his team identifying, aging, measuring, and sexing the collected turtles. The forest around our processing center was filled with wintering birds and early arrivals including warblers and vireos, among other usual suspects. The perfect day – warmth, swimming, crystal clear waters and learning about nature with true naturalists. Late afternoon we set up our camp site in the same park and were treated to burritos and Julie’s Birthday Cake!.*

### ***The rains...***

*The following morning, we were rained on. Spring showers bring spring flowers. We had a relaxed start that day. Some of us had a nice warm breakfast, others read a book or hiked despite the rain, others slept a little longer, and some explored the indoor recreation area. After a few hours we decided that the 20 minute window according to our radars would suffice to put the tents down and drive to our next destination. So we did. We traveled to Lake Louisa State Park where we spent one night close to a Lake full of Osprey nests. After some more rain, wind and wet tents were set-up (and most of us drilling holes in the ground to set-up the tent stakes) we went to buy food and explore the new park. After a wet day we were treated to some chicken curry by our second cooking group. It was delicious! That night on our way back to camp, the rain stopped and the road at night become alive full of frog species from spadefoot toads, to southern toads, to leopard frogs.] There were so many! We will never forget John’s happiness and our student efforts to save the frogs from traffic. The next morning we did a bird walk on the trails and roads and were rewarded with incredible views of Ospreys and red shouldered hawks. A number of the student ventured out on their own to make their own discoveries!*

### ***The Atlantic...***

*We worked our way east to the Atlantic coast at the Canaveral National Seashore/ Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. Here we discovered new habitats (mangrove swamps, inland waterways, beach communities, etc.) and their associated fauna (lots of herons, egrets, shorebirds, roseate spoonbill, alligators, etc.). This place was a paradise for “birder watchers” Bill, Wendy and students were enjoying and identifying birds left and right!!! After a few hours on the beach (with Royal terns and Brown Pelicans passing by), swimming, and collecting some shells, we headed inland for the night. Swimming and seeing the Atlantic ocean was a first for some of us. The following morning we visited Blue Springs State Park. We spent some time watching, swimming, and enchanted by the Manatees - for many of us this was a first. Some of us even got the chance to see a red-shoulder hawk feasting on a yellow rat snake, as well as a pair of southern racers (snakes) mating. At night we got to enjoy some talents from the group and some amazing s’mores.*

### ***Fire Ecology and wood peckers...***

*The next few days were spent in the Ocala National Forest in the center of the Florida Peninsula. There we camped at Alexander Springs State Park. We canoed the Juniper Spring Run and visited the mature Longleaf Pine habitats. We saw a number of Swallow-tailed Kites (arguably the most elegant of North American birds!). We heard about fire ecology and the importance of this in the history and current management of these forests. We rolled dead logs in areas recently burned and found a number of lizards and a scarlet king snake (false coral snake). We also saw Bachman's sparrows, Pine warblers and the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker, one of their most famous associate species due to its obligatory relationship to the longleaf pine*

*and in its way to becoming endangered due to habitat destruction. We also learned more about the conservation management strategies for this area.*

### ***Along the boardwalk and swimming with Manatees...***

*Our last night in Florida was spent at Manatee Springs State Park where we joined a second group of researchers in their long-term turtle project. Some of us went on a night walk that evening, others hung out playing cards, while others enjoyed a nice stride to the boardwalk running from inside the park to the edge of the main river – what a wonderful path. A group of us was also able to swim with four manatees as well. (Dan Greene (EC '04, a current doctoral student at the University of Florida joined us for snorkeling. He had been a participant on Vicki Penziner-Matson Field Trips in the past and it was clear that those experiences played a part in his dedication and future trajectories as a field biologist.*

### ***Heading back home...***

*We woke up to our last morning in Florida. It was warm, in our campsite we saw evidence of armadillos and raccoons all over the place. We were glad that we had stored our food and gear in the vans!. After taking down camp and packing the vans we started driving back to Georgia. We spent the night in High Falls State Park, just a few miles off Interstate 75. We managed to include a group hike down their waterfall trail and ended our night with a campfire where we remembered all the amazing adventures we have shared during the last days.*

*Again, the Spring Break natural history field trip was a great success and an amazing experience to share with such a wonderful group. The travel and experience produced not only a great respite from the hard work on campus, it provided experiences and inspiration that will affect all of the participants in their future studies, teaching and enjoyment of nature.*

*Safe travels to all... and don't hesitate to walk out into the woods when you get the chance...*

*Wendy Tori, Jose I. Pareja, Bill Buskirk, John Iverson, and Yoni Glogower*

### **Natural History Detail.**

#### ***Amphibian and Reptiles***

*American Alligator*

*Loggerhead musk turtle*

*Common musk turtle*

*Florida softshell turtle*

*Gopher tortoise*

*Striped mud turtle*

*Florida redbelly turtle*

*Florida peninsular cooter*

*Suwannee cooter*

*Yellow bellied slider*

*Red-eared slider*

*Green anole*

*Brown anole*

*Southeastern five-lined skink*

*Mediterranean gecko*

*Eastern fence lizard*

*Southern toad*

*Southern Racer*

*Yellow rat snake*

*Scarlet kingsnake*

*Southern water snake*

*Brown water snake*

*Redback Salamander*

*Gray Tree frogs*

*Southern Cricket Frog*

*Green Treefrog*

*Southern leopard frog*

*Spadefoot toad*

*Spring Peeper*

*River frog*

**Mammals**

*Nine-banded armadillo, Gray Squirrel, Raccoon, Eastern spotted skunk, River otter, Manatee, White-tailed deer*

**Plants****Trees**

*Slash pine  
Longleaf pine  
Sand pine  
Southern red oak  
Turkey oak  
Live oak  
Water oak  
Red maple  
Redbud  
Bald cypress*

*Sweetbay  
Southern magnolia  
Bradford pear  
Sour orange  
White mangrove  
Southern red cedar  
Saw-palmetto  
Royal Palm  
Sweet gum Tree  
Red mangrove*

**Wildflowers and other small plants**

*Tropical sage  
Gaillardia  
Lupine  
Florida violet  
Phlox  
Celestial lily  
Coral bean*

*Quaker lady  
Spanish moss  
Southern needleleaf bromeliad  
Deer moss  
Resurrection fern  
Prickly pear cactus*

**Birds**

*Canada goose  
Wood Duck  
Mallard  
Blue-winged teal  
Northern shoveler  
Lesser scaup  
Red-breasted merganser  
Wild turkey  
Pied-billed grebe  
Double-crested cormorant  
Anhinga  
Brown Pelican  
Great blue heron  
Little blue heron  
Great egret  
Snowy egret  
Tricolored heron  
Reddish egret  
Cattle egret*

*White ibis  
Glossy ibis  
Roseate spoonbill  
Black vulture  
Turkey vulture  
Osprey  
Swallow-tailed kite  
Bald eagle  
Northern harrier  
Cooper's hawk  
Red-shouldered hawk  
Short-tailed hawk  
Red-tailed hawk  
Common gallinule  
American coot  
Sandhill crane  
Greater yellowlegs  
Willet  
Lesser yellowlegs*

*Ruddy turnstone  
Sanderling  
Bonaparte's gull  
Laughing gull  
Ring-billed gull  
Common tern  
Forster's tern  
Royal tern  
Sandwich tern  
Black skimmer  
Rock pigeon  
Mourning dove  
Barred owl  
Chuck-will's-widow  
Whip-poor-will  
Chimney swift  
Ruby-throated  
hummingbird  
Belted kingfisher*

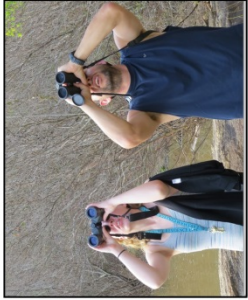
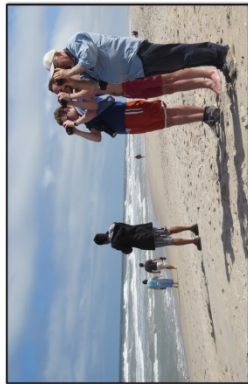
*Red-bellied woodpecker*  
*Yellow-bellied sapsucker*  
*Downy woodpecker*  
*Red-cockaded woodpecker*  
*Pileated woodpecker*  
*American Kestrel*  
*Eastern phoebe*  
*Loggerhead shrike*  
*White-eyed vireo*  
*Yellow-throated vireo*  
*Red-eyed vireo*  
*Blue jay*  
*Florida scrub jay*  
*American crow*  
*Fish crow*  
*Tree swallow*

*Cliff swallow*  
*Carolina chickadee*  
*Tufted titmouse*  
*Carolina wren*  
*Ruby-crowned kinglet*  
*Blue-grey gnatcatcher*  
*Eastern bluebird*  
*Hermit thrush*  
*American robin*  
*Grey catbird*  
*Northern mockingbird*  
*Brown thrasher*  
*European starling*  
*Northern parula*  
*Yellow-rumped wabler*  
*Yellow-throated wabler*

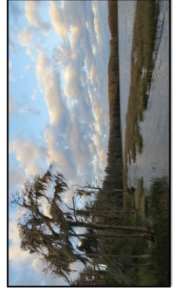
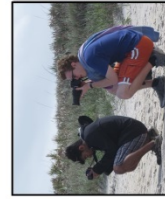
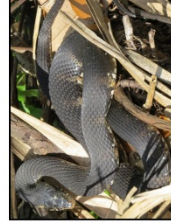
*Pine wabler*  
*Palm wabler*  
*Black and white wabler*  
*Louisiana waterthrush*  
*Bachman's sparrow*  
*Chipping sparrow*  
*Song sparrow*  
*White-throated sparrow*  
*Northern Cardinal*  
*Red-winged blackbird*  
*Eastern Meadowlark*  
*Common grackle*  
*Boat-tailed grackle*  
*Brown-headed cowbird*  
*House sparrow*



# Vicki Penziner-Matson Spring Break Natural History Expedition



Vicki Penziner-Matson was a Biology major at Earlham with strong interests in natural history and photography. Vicki died in her senior year. Her love for the outdoors was great, and her parents and friends honored her by setting up the Vicki Penziner-Matson endowed fund with the college, the income to be used for natural history field trips that are open to all in the Earlham community.



## THANK YOU NOTES

*Andrew: I am Andrew Hood a junior bio major from Ohio. One of my favorite parts was becoming comfortable snorkeling and getting the opportunity to catch turtles for research as well as getting to see manatees. Finally I wanted to thank you all for providing funds for such a great group of people to go to FL.*

**Andrew Hood '15, Biology major, Ohio US**

*Kasun: The trip helped me to experience the ecology of Florida and get to know more about unique nature in northern Florida. Most of the activities we did in this trip were new to me and helped me to increase many team-work skills. During this trip I was able to help a research team that work with turtles, expand my knowledge on bird and herp faunas, swim with manatee, canoe down a swamp and take many pictures of wildlife. I would like to thank the donors for giving me this great opportunity to expand my knowledge in the ecology, conservation and natural history of northern Florida.*

**Kasun Bodawatta '15, Biology major, Sri Lanka.**

*Abby: I was excited to go somewhere I had never been before to explore the natural history, especially somewhere warm for spring break. I've also been on one other Penziner-Matson trip to Point Pelee with Wendy and Bill during my sophomore year and loved it so I was excited to go on a longer one. I loved it [even more]. The natural springs and catching turtles was one of my favorite things. Being surrounded by professors who are so passionate about ecology and the great group of Earlham people in such a unique and beautiful place my senior year was great. Thanks for such an awesome opportunity! The snorkeling... Its something I have never done before but it's become something I would love to do again in the future. Exploring Florida's crystal clear spring environment and spending time with my classmates who are eager to learn and explore is a great feeling. I feel so fortunate to have this opportunity to get together with success.*

**Abby '14, Environmental Studies Major, Michigan, US**

*Liyuan: During the trip I experienced the exploration of nature with a [group of] enthusiastic and knowledgeable biologists (Wendy, John and Bill). This kind of trip is the one I have dreamed for so long since I was a child. It can come true because we have the support of our donors. I appreciate from my heart this opportunity.*

**Liyuan '17, Biology, China.**

*Kate: This trip was a wonderful experience and had a lot of firsts for me. I wouldn't have had such spring without you! Swimming in the Atlantic Ocean on the sunny day, eating lunch in the canoe next to an alligator, seeing a scorpion, holding a tiny scarlet king snake! All those things and many more made this spring break an incredible opportunity to learn and see things that I have never seen in my life.*

**Ekaterina Korobkina '16, Biochemistry major, Russia.**

*Sonia: In retrospect, this trip added a lot to my personal growth. I really appreciate all the opportunities to observe and interact with organisms around us. I loved the group and its flexible nature. I am taking back precious memories for sure.*

**Sonia Sandeep Kabra '16, Biochemistry major, India**



*Tugi: The canoeing trip excited me the most because it was challenging and fun. We got to see a lot of turtles and alligators basking in the sun. The entire trip has been a remarkable experience that has had a strong impression on my mind.*

***Tuguldur Baigalmaa, '17, Computer Science major, Mongolia***

*Yosuke: Thank you for letting me have this wonderful trip. Florida's nature was really awesome for me. I have a lot of first experience in my life. For example, canoeing, snorkeling in springs, and also swimming with manatees. [It was special to me] because it brought me back to when I was a kid who loves nature. Again, I really appreciate [for] giving me the chance to do it. I will never forget these experiences.*

***Yosuke Hatakeyama, '17, Politics and Photography major, Japan.***

*Charlie: I think that this opportunity is a unique and incredible experience. It is open to all students as well as professors so it is an opportunity for students who are not usually exposed to natural history to have a chance to be in a relaxed and fun learning environment. Even for science majors (like myself), it is a great chance to apply your knowledge from the class to the world around you. Being able to interact with current professors as well as professors that have left Earlham provides a large pool of knowledge and experience. Thank you for the opportunity.*

***Charles Boyd '14, Biology, Illinois, US***

*Ram: I [have not] dreamt of going to Florida in my life, let alone being closely attached to the nature. Everything I did here was new, exciting, fascinating and life changing. Your support is indeed a life changing experience for a guy like me for whom traveling is something that is confined within a dream. Thank you so much.*

***Ram Itani '17, Physics and Chemistry major, Nepal.***

*Katie: This was my first time in Florida, and I loved the chance to see so many different animals and beautiful places, surrounded by other people who share my excitement about nature. I especially enjoyed swimming with the manatee, canoeing, and the sense of community within the group.*

***Katie Bolan '16, Physics, Neuroscience, and Math major, Wisconsin, US.***

*During this trip to Florida, there were a good few things that I did for the first time. I can now proudly tell various friends that I can identify toads from frogs while still in a car at night. I can boast that a manatee, which is a lovely animal, came to me and touched me on the hand. I can now identify a vulture and an osprey in the air from far away. I really enjoyed these learning and life experiences. The people are also lovely, and I hope to be able to have more experiences like this in the future. It's certainly going to stick in my memories for a long time.*

***Miyoshi Gonzalez '16. North Carolina, United States of America.***

*Thank you so so much for the opportunities you have provide to us this year! I have learnt a lot of new things and had such a great and unforgettable experience with this Vicki Penziner-Matson trip.*

***Rudhian Chlissma Putra '15, International Studies Major, Aceh, Indonesia***

*Thank you for this amazing experience and opportunity! I learned so much about the natural history of Florida and about myself over the course of this trip! I had never been snorkeling or worked in a true research setting, so catching the turtles and processing them with other*

researchers was incredible for me! I have always been split between gearing my major either towards ecology or pre-med, and this trip really reminded me of how much I love working with nature.

**Kelly Mayhew '17, Biology, Dayton, Ohio**

My name is Qianyi, I'm a junior Environmental science major with Biology emphasis. This is the most fabulous trip I have ever had at Earlham. Growing up in a large city in China, I never travel to such places in the wild. I know this would be an adventure for me even before the trip started. But the trip still surprised me in many aspects. It's the first time I travel with so many awesome college peers and professors, and get to know more about them. It's the first time I snorkeling in real rivers and lakes which I never imagined the scenes under water could look like dreams. It's the first time I swim with an adorable manatee and take pictures with it under water. It's the first time I canoeing in a river and become a brave explorer. It's the first time I cook delicious food for so many people and got praises for it. It's the first time I roast marshmallows in a bonfire, and now I know how delicious they are. All the first-times happened only in 8 days. I felt great happiness and enjoyment in nature, and in such a spring. Also I discovered a new me, now I realize that I can do more things than I imagined. Thank you our generous donors, it is you who made all the dream-like things became true. I will cherish all the memories from this trip, and carry on the love and bless from you.

**Qianyi '15, Environmental Science, China**

Dear Donors,

Thank you your help and support to this Florida trip. This trip was so meaningful and beneficial. As a business student, I learned not only the natural historical side of Florida, but also the social-economical side of Florida. The experience in this trip inspired me to think about the environment as a whole in order to have a better future, the human society has to work tightly with the natural environment. There were also many "first times" for me in this trip (first time seeing a manatee, first time being so close to an alligator, first time snorkeling in the river etc.). I enjoyed this trip a lot; the professors and organizers were fantastic in organizing this trip, introducing their knowledge to the students, showing their enthusiasm towards the environment and wild life, and inspiring the students to think deeper and more. Most importantly, I would like to thank all of you for your support. Without your support, we would not have this great opportunity to explore Florida and all of the natural creatures there. Thank you so much! I hope you enjoy reading our little "thank you" notes and feel excited as how we feel!

Yours,

**Tina Fu, Psychology/Business Major, Class of 2017, China**

Dear Family/Friends of Vicki,

Participating in the natural history trip to Florida this spring break was a phenomenal experience. From watching a red-shouldered hawk tussle-with a yellow rat snake to snorkeling with manatees and catching turtles to learning the calls and distinguishing features of countless birds (swallow tailed kites, royal terns, and even a early-migrant ruby-throated hummingbird) I learned a lot and enjoyed myself thoroughly. Thank you so much for providing Earlham students with this opportunity, your and Vicki's gifts have inspired me and countless others.

Sincerely,

**Keith Runyan - Junior Neuroscience Major at Earlham College, California, US.**

Document compiled by: Jose I. Pareja and Wendy P. Tori