

## I

## Taking Biochemistry to Heart



Limestone Pathways at Rock Springs

*I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars,  
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and the  
egg of the wren,  
And the tree-toad is a chef-d'oeuvre for the highest,  
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of heaven,  
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery,  
And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses any statue,  
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels.*

*I find I incorporate gneiss, coal, long-threaded moss, fruits, grains,  
esculent roots,  
And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over,  
And have distanced what is behind me for good reasons,  
But call any thing back again when I desire it....*

Whitman: "Song of Myself" 31

*My assumption is that we are here on this planet as a fundamental consequence of organic chemistry.*

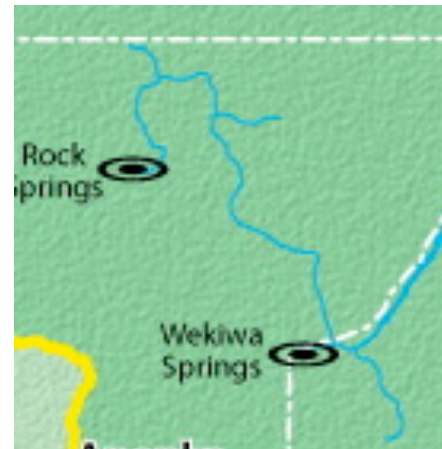
Dr. John D. Sutherland  
Leader in RNA research

# Rock Springs Run

In Florida's hydrology, it's either sink or spring. If you run a line from the country town of Mt. Plymouth directly south to the burgeoning city of Apopka, about halfway in between, in one corner of a forty-acre plot the city now owns, you will find Apopka Blue Sink. This is a deep dry cavern that goes straight down into the Florida aquifer and connects more or less directly a mile east to one of central Florida's most popular swimming places.

Rock Springs sits on the western edge of ten square miles of swamp, pouring out of one large cave and a dozen small boils, forty million gallons a day; that makes for a powerful run to a great natural outdoor pool for close to 300,000 swimmers and tubers each year. Orange County owns and operates this two hundred and forty acre site, known as Kelly Park. From the south end of the park you can hike out on a network of trails all the way to Wekiwa Springs, six miles away as the swallowtail flies.

Otherwise, Kelly park features picnic and camping facilities, but has no provisions for boats or canoes. However, a quarter mile down the road you can launch or rent at Kings Landing for a superb and brisk ride of nine to ten miles. The run goes at first directly north, passing Sulphur Spring (hidden back off in the woods), then east for a mile or so, and finally south until you reach the Upper Wekiwa, just a half mile above the Wekiwa Marina. On the map it has the shape of a question mark, tilting slightly to the west. On the water, just answers.



Courtesy of the St. Johns River Water Management District by permission

At the beginning of this adventure you will see a few docks and home sites, but after that the run is wild, splitting the Wekiwa Springs State Park from the Rock Springs Run State Reserve. For the first third of the trip the run is narrow and shady while the floodplain is two to three miles wide. After that you encounter some high ground on both sides, the floodplain narrows, the run turns east and slightly south and the channel opens to a flats, two hundred feet wide for better than a mile.

Here the run moves through a fording area where four native mounds are located, perhaps seasonal sites for hunting on this narrow piece of upland in the middle of the swamp. More recently, in the last century, the Wilson Cypress Co. built a temporary railroad grade all the way down from the St. Johns River near Deland to the high ground directly east of Rock Springs and then turned east three miles across the swamp to Buffalo Landing in the middle of the Upper

Wekiva River. While they were harvesting giant cypress trees from these swamps, the Apopka Sportsmen's Club used a cabin at the ford called Camp Cozy for their annual hunts.

The last third of the run is like the first, a tight narrow channel through a broad swamp that is largely inaccessible. Four more Timucuan mounds have been found in this stretch and two more opposite the point directly south where the run flows into the Wekiva.

One doesn't find many alternate routes in this territory. Rock Springs Run is mostly about maneuvering. In all of Wekiva it has some of the swiftest, deepest, and most challenging bends around all kinds of snags. One way downstream to the marina takes me four or five hours. If you plan to paddle back to King's Landing, be prepared to double your time and effort in return.

