Appendix 1
Hazards of the Wild -- BSC 3402L

Before you go out into the field, we thought you should be reminded of a few things. These include the "mothering" type of comments: take some water along, let someone know where you are going, wear clean underwear in case you end up in the emergency room, beware of sunburn (use a sun block!), look both ways when crossing the street, etc. There are a few more things neophytes and even those with some experience in the wild really should consider.

Security

Unfortunately, the worst danger in the wild is man himself. Some common sense is called for when working in the field. Many ecologists have had their cars broken into while they were working in remote areas. Violent crime is less common but can be much more serious. We strongly urge you to not work alone if you are working in a remote location. Take a friend along and take advantage of the extra help.

Ticks and Chiggers

One of the joys of doing research in the field is the insect community that greets you. Mosquitoes and biting flies are already well known by most of you. Mosquitoes can transmit equine encephalitis, which has become more common in Florida, but the two most annoying bugs around here are probably ticks and chiggers.

Ticks are lovely little parasites that jump onto you, search around for a nice cozy spot, stick a mouth part into your body, and suck out blood for a while. When they get their fill (this can be a long time), they jump off and use the blood to provision eggs. These cute little buggers can be almost microscopic (as in "seed ticks"), but swell up like little grapes when they start pumping in blood. The bite of ticks is usually completely painless. If not for the fact that they can carry diseases such as Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain spotted fever, they would just be a disgusting little curiosity.

Chiggers (also called red bugs) are little pests that jump onto you, insert their mouthpieces, and suck out your bodily fluids. They particularly prefer places where clothes fit tightly to the body, such as waistbands. The bites hurt for at least several days and are very itchy and annoying. The best treatment is not to scratch and to use some sort of hydrocortisone cream. I know of no diseases carried by chiggers.

The best option is to not get bitten. Cover up as much of your skin as possible by wearing long-sleeved shirts and tucking your pants into boots or your socks. Some people use sulfur powder in their socks and shoes or on their clothes to discourage the beasts further (if you do this, wash those clothes separately from others or you will smell like rotten eggs for a long time). Sulfur powder can be found in most grocery-store pharmacies as "flowers of sulfur." Unless the bugs are really desperate, standard insect repellents sprayed heavily on socks, shoes, arms, etc. seem to discourage most chiggers and ticks.

If you do get the beasts on you, it is best to get them off quickly. When you get home, search yourself for ticks. With an appropriate partner, mutual tick searches can be quite entertaining. Take a good bath, scrubbing well. If you do find a tick, do not just pull it off, as this squeezes the blood in the tick back into you and can leave the mouth parts in your skin. Douse the bastard in alcohol, then remove when dead, or pull it out with forceps by grabbing its mouth parts.
Above all, everyone in this area should read up a little about Lyme disease. It is becoming more common in this area (as it is in virtually all areas). If can be extremely debilitating if not diagnosed early. The symptoms of Lyme disease are extremely varied but often include flu-like symptoms and a circular rash.

**Snakes**

The best thing to do in these areas is to assume that all snakes are dangerous. Try to make lots of noise; let them know you are around, and they will probably slither away. **Do not try to pick them up.** While snakes may be very interesting foragers, they apparently prefer to do so in peace: so leave them alone!

**Poisonous Plants**

A number of poisonous plants are common in our area. The most common is the ever-popular poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*). Contact with any part of these weedy, woody vines results a few hours later in severe skin irritation and blistering in most people. Usually, the three smooth, usually pointed leaflets, each 5-10 cm long, make the plant easy to recognize. The small clustered fruits are white. However, this plant can vary somewhat in appearance.

The poison on this species and on poison sumac is contained in an oil, so it can also float on the surface of water and in even in the air when the plant is burned. Again, the best defense is to avoid the plant, and the second defense (because it is an oil) is a very good shower with lots of soap and scrubbing.