

Acreage Pines Natural Area

Birds of a Feather

Where there are wetlands, there are wading birds. Florida is home to more large wading birds than any other state - nearly 20 species. The great egret is a tall (3-1/2 foot) white bird with a yellow bill and black legs. During the breeding season these birds have long, lacy, white plumes on their backs. The endangered wood stork wades slowly in shallow waters, groping for fish, frogs, snakes, and baby alligators. Its grayish bare head and neck distinguish the wood stork from fellow wading birds. The little blue heron is another common wetland bird. It feeds on fish, large insects and frogs. Don't let the name fool you - this bird isn't always blue. Immature little blue herons are actually all white.



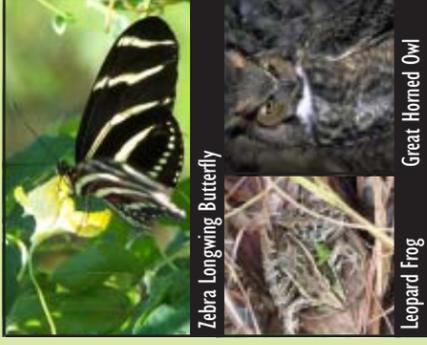
Wood Stork

Great Egret

Little Blue Heron

All Creatures Great and Small

The Acreage Pines Natural Area is home to animals of all shapes and sizes. With a wingspan of more than 4 1/2 feet, the great horned owl is one of the largest birds of prey found in the natural area. Delicately fringed, soft feathers ensure that the great horned owl makes little noise as it flies through the woods. The "horns" are actually tufts of feathers at the corners of the head. One of the smallest creatures found in the natural area is the zebra longwing butterfly. This bold-colored black and yellow insect is Florida's state butterfly. They roost in groups, often returning to the same spot each night. The caterpillars feed on passionflowers, which contain a toxin. This toxin remains in the butterflies system and makes it extremely unappetizing to predators. The leopard frog is a common sight in the natural area's wetlands. The narrow head, pointed snout, and brown spots help to identify this amphibian. Its call is a guttural trill heard during the wee hours of the night.



Zebra Longwing Butterfly

Leopard Frog

Great Horned Owl



King of the Woods

The undisputed heavyweight champion of the flatwoods forest is the slash pine. Florida's most widespread pine tree, the slash pine has 8-inch needles, 6-inch egg-shaped cones, and can grow to more than 100 feet tall. All that wood did not go unnoticed by the area's pioneer settlers. Commonly called Dade County pine, it was an important building material during the early development of Palm Beach County. Slash pines provide food and shelter for many animals, including raccoons, owls, and woodpeckers.



Battling Florida's Silent Green Invasion

South Florida is under attack from invasive non-native plants introduced from Asia, South America, and Australia. These trees, shrubs, and vines grow rapidly, produce thousands (sometimes millions) of seeds, and have no native pests or diseases that could slow their spread across the landscape. Melaleuca, a 50-foot tree native to Australia, invades wet pine flatwoods, cypress swamps, and low wet areas. Easily identified by its white, papery bark, melaleuca covered more than 18 acres of the natural area. Efforts to restore Acreage Pines Natural Area included removing all the melaleuca and other invasive exotic plants. The remains of dead melaleuca can be seen from the boardwalk.



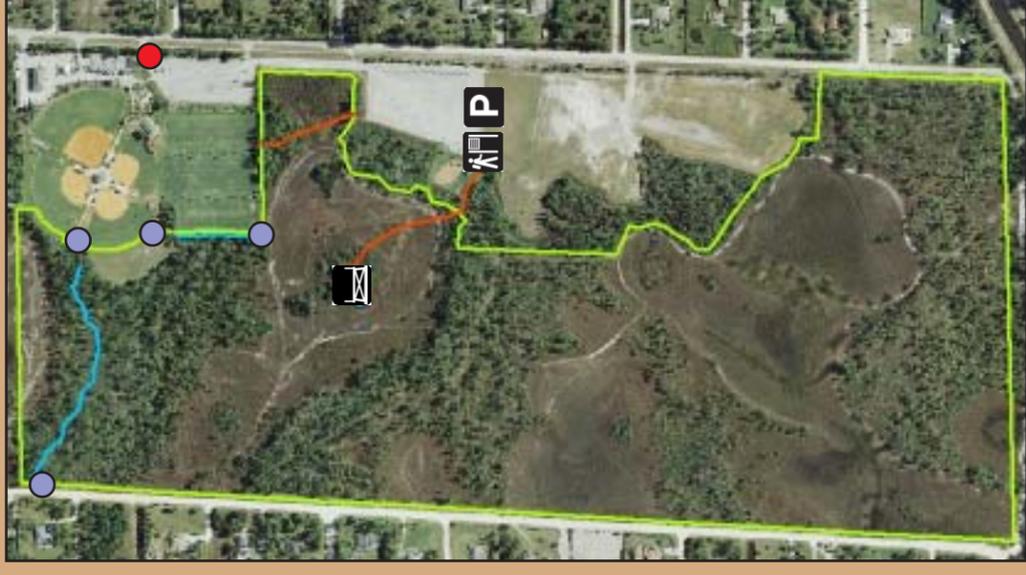
The Waterworld of Acreage Pines

Wet prairies cover more than 30% of Acreage Pines. These seasonal wetlands build up water during the rainy season (June through November) and gradually dry up during the winter. Plants found in this habitat include spikerush, wax myrtle, and wiregrass. Two of the more colorful plants found in wet prairies are pink sundew and St. John's-wort. Pink sundew is a small carnivorous plant that blankets muddy open areas. Sticky hairs on the leaves trap insects, which are slowly digested by the plant. The yellow flowers of St. John's-wort are easy to spot in the wetland. The flowers bloom from early spring through fall. St. John's-wort is found in all types of wet habitats, including wet pinelands, streambanks, and ponds.



The Benefits of Fire

Pine flatwoods cover more than 50% of Acreage Pines. Dominated by slash pines, they are fire-dependent habitats. Periodic fires reduce hardwood competition, improve wildlife habitat, and remove dead vegetation. The Department utilizes prescribed burns to maintain a healthy forest ecosystem. Staff use drip torches to light fires that are carefully monitored to prevent the flames from spreading outside the burn area. Plants such as gallberry and saw palmetto burn quickly and intensely, but their roots remain alive. Days after a fire, fresh green shoots appear in the charred landscape. Look for black burn scars on tree trunks - signs that a fire swept through the area.



Natural Area Boundary

Hiking Trail

Nature Trail

Parking Entrance

Maze Gate

Parking

Observation Platform

Information Kiosk

Please use the designated nature and hiking trails as you explore the natural area. Do not feed the animals. Potato chips and crackers are not what nature intended as a healthy diet for wildlife. When wild animals depend on handouts as their main food source, they may lose their fear of humans and become aggressive and dangerous. Help us keep your natural areas clean. Please dispose of your trash responsibly.

Restoring the Natural Area

Development, introduction of invasive nonnative plants, and changes in drainage heavily impacted Acreage Pines Natural Area. During the 1960s lands west of the natural area were being developed as the Village of Royal Palm Beach and the Acreage. Canals constructed in the 1970s altered the water flow through Acreage Pines. Melaleuca and Australian pine trees gained a foothold in disturbed areas and expanded throughout the site. Restoration efforts focused on removing invasive nonnative vegetation and restoring the wetlands to historic water levels.



BEFORE

AFTER



Preserving Palm Beach County's Good Nature

Welcome to one of Palm Beach County's natural treasures! The Acreage Pines Natural Area protects environmentally sensitive pine forest and wetland habitat. The natural area also provides recreational opportunities for residents and visitors who want to explore the good nature of Palm Beach County.

Palm Beach County originally acquired 116 acres of the site in March 2001 with funds from the 1999 Conservation Lands Bond Issue Referendum. State Preservation 2000 matching funds in the amount of \$441,100 were provided by Florida Communities Trust for the acquisition of the site. The natural area was expanded an additional 8 acres in 2010.

This 124-acre natural area is part of a system of natural areas, protected to maintain the diversity of biological communities and species in Palm Beach County. The natural areas are open to the public for educational use and passive recreational activities such as hiking, nature photography, and bird watching.

The Acreage Pines Natural Area is home to hundreds of plant and animal species. One of the many birds found among the slash pines is the great horned owl. This large bird of prey can reach a length of two feet and have a 4 1/2 foot wingspan. Owls fly silently; the leading edge of their wing feathers are fringed. This breaks down turbulence and reduces the sound of the air rushing over the wing surface. Great horned owls do make some noise - listen for 3 to 8 deep hoots, with the 2nd and 3rd rapid and doubled.

Rules and Regulations

Prohibited on the Site:

- Pets
- Smoking
- Hunting
- Motor vehicles
- Feeding wildlife
- Alcoholic beverages
- Discharging firearms
- Collecting plants or animals

The natural area is open from sunrise to sunset, seven days a week, including holidays.

There are no toilets or drinking water at this site.

In an emergency, call 911. For non-emergency issues contact the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office at 561-688-3000.



This natural area is located within the Northeast Everglades Natural Area (NENA). NENA stretches from Southern Boulevard in Palm Beach County northward to Bridge Road in Martin County and from Lake Okeechobee to the Atlantic Ocean. NENA contains approximately 165,000 acres of conservation lands that provide a wide range of nature-based outdoor recreational opportunities to residents and visitors. For more information about NENA, visit www.pbcgov.com/erm/nena.



Connect with the Department of Environmental Resources Management and download our natural areas mobile map.



Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners

In accordance with the provisions of ADA, this brochure may be requested in an alternate format.

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