

Cypress Creek 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 Florida sandhill crane is not strictly a wetland bird. It also roams open woods and pastures looking for seeds, tubers, and insects. This bird can often be heard before it is seen. Their loud rattling *kar-r-r-r-o-o-o* calls ring out across Cypress Creek Natural Area.



All Creatures Great and Small

The Cypress Creek Natural Area is home to animals of all shapes and sizes. The greatest of them all is the American alligator. Males can grow to 12 feet long and tip the scales at 800 pounds! They feed on fish, turtles, and birds. Females lay between 20 and 80 eggs in nests made of mounded vegetation. One of the smallest creatures found in the natural area is the great pondhawk. This bright green dragonfly is only two inches long. Its four powerful wings move independently, allowing for forward and backward flight. Young dragonflies live in ponds and streams and feed on mosquito larvae, tadpoles, and small fish. Wild turkey are often seen moving through the slash pine and saw palmetto-filled woodlands. Unlike domesticated turkeys, these birds are very mobile - they can run up to 25 mph and fly up to 55 mph. Males are bigger and more colorful than the females. They also have a black "beard" that hangs from their chest. Wild turkeys feed on the ground during the day and roost in trees at night.



The Benefits of Fire

Pine flatwoods cover more than 68% of Cypress Creek. 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.



Restoring the Wetlands

Development, mining, and agriculture heavily impacted Cypress Creek Natural Area. The historic Rood Settlement and Old Indiantown Road changed the landscape. Drainage ditches constructed in the 1950s altered the water flow through the property. Melaleuca and Australian-pine trees gained a foothold in disturbed areas and expanded throughout the site. Restoration efforts focused on removing invasive nonnative vegetation, planting native vegetation and restoring the wetlands to historic water levels. Palm Beach County partnered with the South Florida Water Management District and the Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative on this restoration effort.



By The Numbers:

- 2,000 acres treated for invasive nonnative vegetation
- 5 miles of ditches backfilled and plugged
- 3 culverts cleaned
- 1 cattle-dipping vat removed



King of the Swamp

The undisputed heavyweight champion of the swamp is the pond-cypress. This tree can grow to over 100 feet tall. The trunk is enlarged at the base and sometimes has short rounded "knees". The pond-cypress is the dominant plant of the dome swamp community. Dome swamps are shallow, usually circular, forested depressions that contain water during the summer and fall and dry up during the winter and spring. The trees in the middle and deepest part of the swamp are the tallest. The trees become progressively smaller away from the center of the swamp. This gives the swamps a domed appearance. Other plants found in the dome swamp include sweetbay, pond apple, poison ivy, ferns, and airplants.

Cypress Creek Natural Area Photo Album

Plants



Slash Pine



Golden Polypody Fern



Gallberry



American Beautyberry



Giant Wild Pine



Pickersweed



Goldenrod

Insects



Zebra Butterfly



Halloween Pennant



Gulf Fritillary



Pileated Woodpecker



Cooper's Hawk



Osprey



Hooded Merganser



Racer



Gopher Tortoise



Green Anole



Bobcat



North American River Otter



Raccoon

Birds

Reptiles

Mammals

Welcome to one of Palm Beach County's natural treasures! The Cypress Creek 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 367 acres of the site in December 1995 with funds from the 1991 Environmentally Sensitive Lands Bond Referendum. The natural area was expanded with additional purchases and donations in 2003 and 2009. Funding for these purchases came from the 1999 Lands for Conservation Purposes Bond Issue Referendum, the Recreational and Cultural Facilities Bond Referendum, Palm Beach County Solid Waste Authority, and proceeds from a public improvement revenue note. State Florida Forever matching funds in the amount of \$24,258,764 were provided by Florida Communities Trust for the acquisition of the site.

This 2,083-acre natural area is part of a system of natural conservation areas that are 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 Cypress Creek 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 (NEMA). NEMA stretches from Southern Boulevard in Palm Beach County northward to Bridge Road in Martin County and from Lake Okechobee to the Atlantic Ocean. NEMA contains approximately 165,000 acres of conservation lands that provide a wide range of nature-based outdoor recreational opportunities to residents and visitors. NEMA's Historic Jupiter - Indiantown Trail is being built in phases along an old road used from 1900 to the late 1950s for travel between Jupiter and Indiantown. Phase I of this multiuse trail for hikers, cyclists and equestrians extends two miles from Gulfstream Citrus Road northwest through Cypress Creek Natural Area to Mack Dairy Road. For more information about this and other NEMA trails, visit discover.pbcbgov.org/em.



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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Preserving Palm Beach County's Good Nature