

Pondhawk Natural Area



1 Blue Lake Makeover

In 1970 a perfectly round lake was dug on IBM-owned property that became known as Blue Lake. After the County purchased Pondhawk Natural Area in 2002, plans were made to return the western shoreline of Blue Lake to a more natural state. Soil excavated from a wetland restoration project was placed along the shoreline to create room for a multiuse trail and littoral shelf for wetland plants. Spikerush, pickerelweed, and fireflag were planted to create habitat for wading birds, waterfowl, fish and insects.

2 Small Wonders

Several species of butterflies and moths are found at the Pondhawk Natural Area. One of the easiest to spot is the gulf fritillary. This bright orange insect is found throughout the Gulf of Mexico region. The caterpillars feast on passion flowers. The slightly smaller white peacock butterfly has brown and orange markings on a white background. The host plants for white peacock caterpillars include ruellia and water hyssop. Both butterflies are members of the brush-footed family. The fore legs are significantly reduced to a point where they are no longer used for walking. Instead, they are used to "taste" potential egg-laying sites.



Gulf Fritillary
Inset: White Peacock

3 An Urban Wilderness

Pondhawk Natural Area is an island of green wilderness surrounded by the hustle and bustle of the City of Boca Raton. This "urban edge effect" - where development (homes/businesses) meets trees - can adversely impact an ecosystem. The introduction of invasive exotic vegetation from yard waste, pets wandering the woods preying on wildlife, and the creation of undesignated trails or "party spots" are just a few of the challenges land managers face when protecting natural areas in urban settings.

4 The King of the Forest

The scrubby flatwoods and mesic flatwoods plant communities together cover 36 acres (roughly 46%) of the natural area. This community is dominated by South Florida slash pines. Slash pines can grow over 100 feet tall and are the tallest trees found at Pondhawk. They are the source of "Dade Pine" timber used by settlers to build homes during the early development of Palm Beach County. The slash pine is Florida's most widespread pine tree. Slash pines can be found from the panhandle to the lower keys.



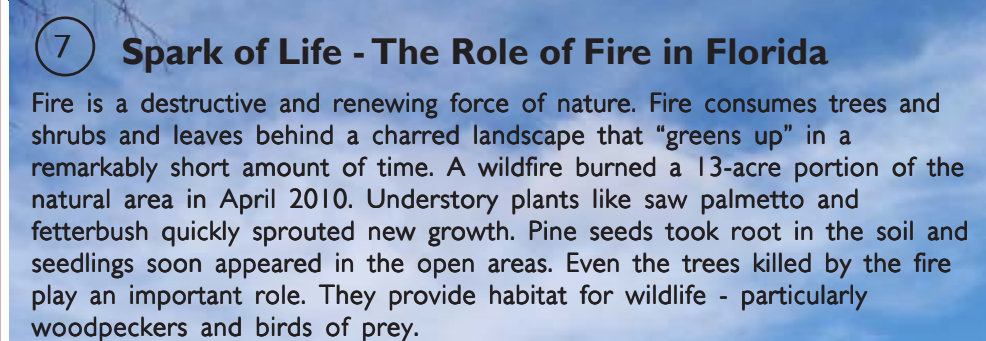
5 The Endangered Scrub

The scrub community covers more than 8 acres (roughly 11%) of the natural area. Except for a few small areas in neighboring states, scrub is a plant community unique to Florida. The slightly higher elevation and sandy soils of scrub make it an ideal place to develop because it rarely floods. Only a few pockets of scrub habitat remain in Palm Beach County - many of them protected by County natural areas. Sand pines are the most numerous pines present in scrub habitat. They have shorter needles, smaller cones, and a shorter life expectancy than most pines.



6 Airplants in Abundance

The natural area is home to several species of epiphytes or airplants. These plants do not need soil to survive and are typically found far above the ground, attached to rough-barked trees. Although airplants appear to be parasitic, they only use trees as a place to grow. Spanish moss is probably the best-known airplant. Early settlers used the springy plant as mattress stuffing. The large red flower stalks of the common wild pine are easy to spot among the trees. This airplant, and several others, are threatened by the Mexican bromeliad weevil. Efforts are underway to stop the spread of the weevil and to increase decimated airplant populations.



7 Spark of Life - The Role of Fire in Florida

Fire is a destructive and renewing force of nature. Fire consumes trees and shrubs and leaves behind a charred landscape that "greens up" in a remarkably short amount of time. A wildfire burned a 13-acre portion of the natural area in April 2010. Understory plants like saw palmetto and fetterbush quickly sprouted new growth. Pine seeds took root in the soil and seedlings soon appeared in the open areas. Even the trees killed by the fire play an important role. They provide habitat for wildlife - particularly woodpeckers and birds of prey.

Pondhawk Trail System



Pondhawk Natural Area is located south of Yamato Road, east of Military Trail, and north of Spanish River Boulevard, in the City of Boca Raton. This 79-acre natural area protects Florida scrub, scrubby flatwoods, mesic flatwoods, hydric hammock, and basin marsh communities. Public use facilities include an accessible nature trail, information kiosk, observation platform, and hiking trails. There is no drinking water on the site.

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.

- Parking at Spanish River Library
- Information
- Observation Platform








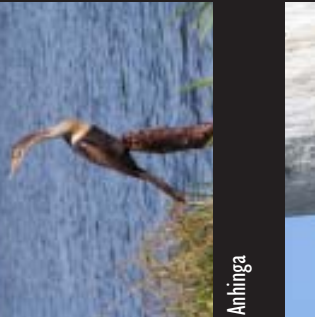



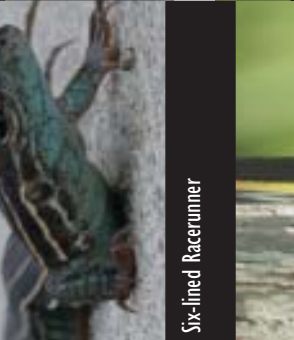

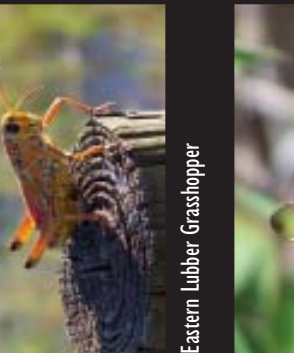









- Multiuse Trail 0.25 miles
- Accessible Trail 0.71 miles
- North Hiking Trail 0.53 miles
- South Hiking Trail 0.80 miles

8 Restoring a Wetland Wonderland



This 8-acre wetland was created on the site of what was once a wide shallow channel of water known as a slough. Canal construction in the early-to-mid 1900s drastically lowered the water table. The slough was drained and became infested with Brazilian pepper, an invasive exotic plant. The County took the first step to restore the drained slough by removing the Brazilian pepper in 2006. An estimated 50,000 cubic yards of soil was removed to create the two wetland areas. The excavated soil was placed along the shoreline of Blue Lake to create a 12-foot-wide multiuse trail and wetland habitat for plants and animals. This wetland attracts an abundance of wildlife, including mottled duck, great blue heron, little blue heron, tri-colored heron, and many species of dragonflies and other insects.

Pondhawk Natural Area Photo Album

Mammals	Reptiles	Birds	Insects	Plants
 Eastern Cottontail	 Gopher Tortoise	 Mottled Duck	 Eastern Pondhawk	 Ballmoss
 Virginia Opossum	 Racer	 Anhinga	 Great Southern White	 Fetterbush
 Eastern Gray Squirrel	 Six-lined Racerunner	 Pileated Woodpecker	 Eastern Lubber Grasshopper	 Saw Palmetto
 Raccoon	 Green Anole	 Tricolored Heron	 Halloween Pennant	 Muscadine
		 Photo by Ruth Pannunzio		 East Coast Dune Sunflower
				 Pond Apple

Welcome to one of Palm Beach County's natural treasures! The Pondhawk Natural Area preserves and protects pine flatwoods and scrub habitats. Scrub is one of Florida's most endangered natural communities. Scrub communities formed on old dunes, which became inland ridges as the sea level fell. Because lands with scrub vegetation are typically high and dry, they were the first areas developed. It is estimated that less than 2% of Palm Beach County's original scrub remains.

Pondhawk Natural Area consists of two sandy ridges bisected by a slough (swamp) that runs diagonally across the site. The slough disappeared in the mid-1900s when canals lowered the water table. In 1966 IBM purchased 550 acres (including all of the natural area) to establish a research and manufacturing facility. Much of the natural area remained untouched during this period of development. The County and the City of Boca Raton purchased Pondhawk in 2002. State Florida Forever matching funds in the amount of \$5,782,632 were provided by Florida Communities Trust for the acquisition of the site.

This 79-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 Pondhawk Natural Area is home to hundreds of plant and animal species. One of the easiest to spot is the great blue heron. This large bird can reach a height of 4 feet and have a wingspan of 6 feet. It is a patient hunter that strikes quickly. Great blue herons eat fish, snakes, lizards, and baby alligators.

Rules and Regulations

Prohibited on the Site:

- Smoking
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Feeding wildlife
- Alcoholic beverages
- Discharging firearms
- Pets or domestic animals
- Bicycles or motor vehicles
- (Bikes Allowed on Multiuse Trail)
- Collecting plants or animals

Use only existing trails. This is a "no trash" area. All items taken in must be taken out.

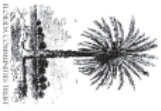
The natural area is open from sunrise to sunset, seven days a week, including holidays.

There are no restroom facilities or drinking water at this site.

In an emergency, call 911, or the Boca Raton Police Department at 561-338-1234.



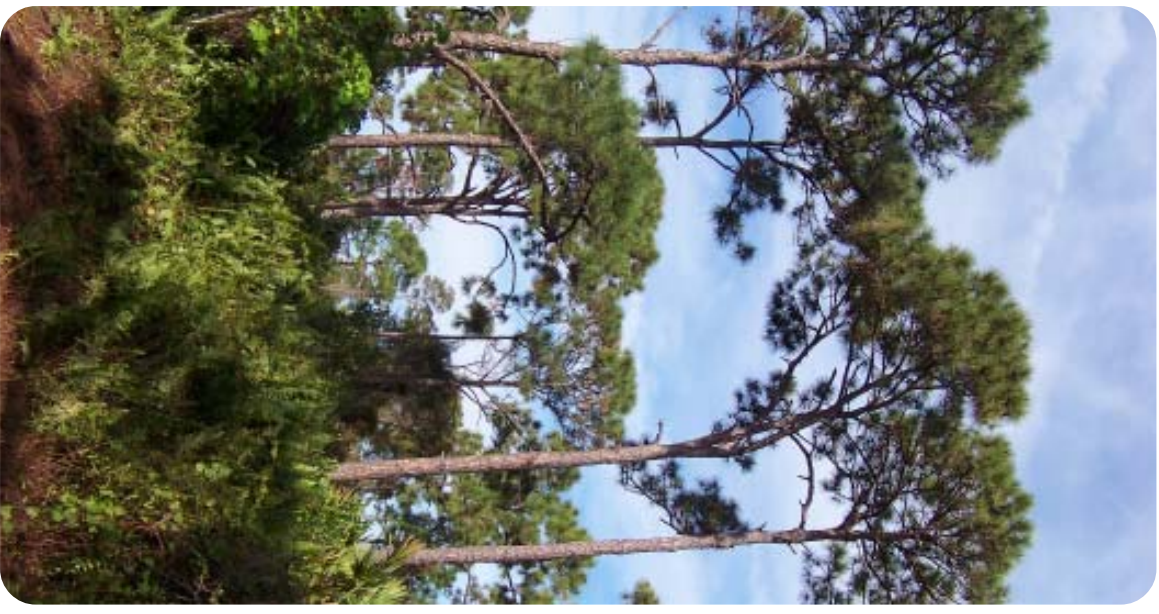
Connect with the Department of Environmental Resources Management and download our natural areas mobile maps.



Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners

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

Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management
 2300 N. Jog Road - Fourth Floor
 West Palm Beach, FL 33411-2743
 Phone: 561-233-2400
www.pbcbg.com/ferm
www.facebook.com/pbcm
 Revised May 2013



Pondhawk Natural Area Trail Guide

A Conservation and Recreational Lands Preservation 2000 Project