Blue Heron Nature Trail

1. A Plant with Teeth
This low-growing member of the palm family often appears like it is “lying down on the job.” The trunk sprawls across the ground, sending 3-foot-tall fan-shaped leaves skyward. Rows of razor-sharp, curved spines line the leaf stalks. Early settlers compared these spines to the teeth of a saw blade, thus giving the plant its name. Saw palmetto produce greenish-white flowers in the spring which attract bees, wasps, and flies. Saw palmetto honey is described as full-bodied, citrusy and herbal, with woody overtones. The flowers develop into oblong, black fruits which provide food for raccoons, oppossums, and other wildlife.

2. From Death Comes Life
A dead pine tree (snag) mars the beauty of the flatwoods forest. It may have been struck by lightning or attacked by disease or insects. Its naked limbs offer no shade or color. It is lifeless - or is it? Dead trees are important to the health of the forest. Songbirds and predatory birds such as ospreys, hawks, and owls use them as nesting areas and look out for perches. The bare limbs offer unobstructed viewing of the surrounding area, allowing the sharp-eyed birds of prey to easily see small mammals moving along the ground. Woodpeckers, and the insects they eat, make their homes inside the dead trees. The branches and pieces of bark that fall onto the ground decay and provide nutrients that other plants use to help them grow. This is recycling at its best!

3. A Summert ime Wetland Wonderland
The wet prairie is characterized as a wet, treeless plain on sandy substrate, without a definite water flow, and with a sparse-to-dense ground cover of grasses and herbs. Water is present 50 to 100 days each year. Plants that thrive in this area include beargrass, machaena, and spikerush. Wet prairies are ideal habitats for several species of wading birds, including herons, egrets, and wood storks.

4. Pine Flatwoods Plants
One of the more noticeable plants along the nature trail is the St. John’s-wort. This shrub rarely grows taller than 3 feet. It has small, needlelike leaves and five-petaled yellow flowers that bloom April through September. It is commonly found in wet pineyards, hammocks, and prairies. More than 15 species of this small shrub grow throughout the state. They are quite similar in appearance and difficult to tell apart. Other plant species found here include American beautyberry (look for the bush with bright purple berries), fetterbush, wild pennyroyal, and coastalplain staggerbush.

5. Pine Tree Paradise
The pine forests of the Royal Palm Beach Pines Natural Area depend on fire to maintain their health and viability. Periodic fires reduce hardwood competition, improve wildlife habitat, and remove excess underbrush and dead vegetation. The thick bark of mature slash pines protects the trees from the worst of the fire, but the flames leave behind black fire scars. Plants such as gallberry, saw palmetto, and wiregrass burn quickly and intensely, but their roots remain alive. Days after a fire, fresh green shoots make an appearance in the charred landscape. The natural area is divided into management units, which are prescribed burned periodically to maintain the community and to reduce the possibility of destructive wildfires.

This 825-foot accessible nature trail winds through pine flatwoods to a boardwalk overlooking a wet prairie. Keep a sharp eye out for Florida sandhill cranes and eastern lubber grasshoppers! The Royal Palm Beach Pines Natural Area is located east of E Road, north of North Road, south of 40th Street, and west of the Saratoga Pines development in the Village of Royal Palm Beach. This 733-acre natural area protects one of the best remaining examples of pine flatwoods and wet prairie habitat in Palm Beach County. Public use facilities include an information kiosk, an accessible nature trail with boardwalk and observation platform, and hiking trails. The equestrian trail is accessed through the north entrance or through a southern equestrian-only entrance.

Parking Information Observation Platform Equestrian Entrance

Royal Palm Beach Pines Trail System

North Entrance

40th Street N.

40th Street N.

To Crestwood Park

East Entrance

Royal

West Entrance

To Town Center

The Royal Palm Beach Pines Natural Area is under the jurisdiction of 825 feet. Equestrian Permit $5 per day. Equestrian permits are available at the office of Environmental Resources Management or by calling 561-233-2400. The permit must be displayed in the window of the equestrian rider’s vehicle. Riders are responsible for their own safety. The trail is a shared use trail and may be used by equestrians, hikers, and mountain bikers.

1. Equestrian use of this site is by permit only. All riders must comply with these rules, the natural area rules posted on the welcome sign, and any specific permit conditions.
2. Lock the gate immediately after entering or leaving. Do not give the combination to other people.
3. Stay on the designated riding trail. Lanes adjacent to the trail are environmentally sensitive and can be easily damaged.
4. Horses are not permitted in the eastern part of the site or on the hiking trails. Riders have the right of way on the section of trail shared with hikers and if maintenance vehicles are present on the equestrian trail.
5. Accompany your horseback-riding guests (maximum of two guests per permit) at all times.
6. Carry your permit card and proof of a negative Coggins test and present them upon request.
7. Do not tie or hitch horses to trees or shrubs, or allow horses to graze on or otherwise damage vegetation.
8. Horses must be under control at all times. No galloping, running, or racing. Ride at your own risk. For your protection, a riding helmet is recommended.
9. All horses must walk when approaching or passing others. If riding abreast, one horse must yield to a passing horse. Horses known to kick must wear red ribbons on their tails.

To request an equestrian permit, contact the Department of Environmental Resources Management at 561-233-2400.
**Royal Palm Beach Pines Photo Album**

**Plants**
- Guayablito Sedgebush
- Longflower Neognatia
- Salvinia
- Tamarisk
- Rangoon Creeper
- Swamp Thistle
- Texas Haircactus
- Tarflower

**Insects**
- Black Swallowtail
- Gulf Fritillary
- Monarch
- Red Admiral
- Red-tailed Blue
- Skipper

**Birds**
- Eastern Phoebe (male)
- Green Heron
- Northern Cardinal (female)
- Pileated Woodpecker
- Scarlet Skimmer
- Six-lined Racerunner

**Reptiles**
- Alligator
- Coastal Plain Stagbush
- Eastern Lubber Grasshopper - adult
- Green Anole
- Northern Racerunner (male)

**Mammals**
- Bobcat
- Eastern Gray Squirrel
- Grey Squirrel
- Key Deer
- Striped Skunk

Welcome to one of Palm Beach County’s natural treasures. The Royal Palm Beach Pines Natural Area is a place of beauty and serenity, offering a sanctuary for an array of plant and animal species. The area’s diverse ecosystem supports a wide range of flora and fauna, making it an ideal destination for nature lovers and outdoor enthusiasts. Whether you’re a nature photographer, an avid birdwatcher, or simply seeking a peaceful connection with the natural world, the Royal Palm Beach Pines Natural Area invites you to explore and appreciate its wonders.

**Rules and Regulations**
- Pets or domestic animals are not allowed.
- Smoking is prohibited.
- Collecting plants or animals is strictly prohibited.
- All items taken in must be taken out.
- No fires are allowed.
- This area is closed to motor vehicles.
- No overnight camping or solicitation.
- No hunting is allowed.

For more information or to plan your visit, visit the Palm Beach County website or contact the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office at 561-688-3000.