



ECHOS

<http://www.friendsofsavannas.org>

Pioneer Day

Photo: Kelsey Doyfe

Photo: Paul Salzman

Photo: Cindy Christie

**MISS LUCIE'S
PIONEER DAY**
Saturday, January 30, 2021
10 am - 12 pm; 1 pm - 3pm

Tickets REQUIRED
Visit
friends-of-savannas.square.site

**Savannas Preserve
State Park**
2541 SE Walton Road, Port St Lucie

Take a step back in time during the 12th annual Pioneer Day Festival sponsored by the Friends of Savannas Preserve State Park. Visitors will experience living history as they explore how people in Florida lived circa mid-19th century. As with many of our upcoming events, this Pioneer Day is going to look a bit different than in past years. There will be self-guided programs on native plants/animals and pineapple plantation life as well as Pioneer Project Activity Bags filled with crafts for families to assemble. A maximum of 35 participants will be allowed into each of the two timeslots, 10am-12pm or the 1pm-3pm; both timeslots will have the same activities and demonstrations. Tickets cost \$2 per person, are good for one person for one timeslot, and must match the name on your reservation. Parties will be allowed entrance when the entire party is present. Tickets are non-refundable for any reason, including inclement weather. Children ages 17 and under must be accompanied by an adult at all times. Masks are required while in the event area. Visitors are expected to maintain distances of at least six feet apart.

An Insider's Guide to the Savannas by...

The Parks

This winter, the Savannas welcomes back Rod and Nancy Park for their third season as resident volunteers. The Parks are not sure what's in store for them during the continued pandemic, but they are ready for anything; in past seasons, they staffed the visitor center; represented the park at events; and built clock boxes, brochure racks and photo boards. Though Rod and Nancy call Ohio their home the rest of the year, they discov-



ered the "real" Florida when their daughter moved here to attend college. That's when the Parks bought an RV and started serving as volunteers at Jonathan Dickinson SP. Their quest for new experiences led them to the Savannas; they've been hooked ever since. Rod and Nancy feel like they are a part of the park and are glad to be members of the team dedicated to its success.

Rod and Nancy Parks at home in Ohio before their journey south.

Rod and Nancy say ...

"Our favorite Savannas Preserve experience is ... working with the public and helping educate them on what parks have to offer. Too often people don't understand how fortunate we are to have beautiful, protected places like those at Savannas Preserve. If we don't take care of what we have, it won't be around. The park is a beautiful place and we like being part of the effort to get people engaged with and connected to it."

Natural Wonders in the Preserve

GOPHER TORTOISE

The ubiquitous gopher tortoise, *Gopherus polyphemus*, is the only tortoise found east of the Mississippi River.

- **How to identify** - An adult gopher tortoise is 9-11" long with a tan, brown or gray shell; stumpy hind feet; and flattened, scaly, shovel-like forelegs.
- **Habitat**— They need the well-drained, sandy soils of Florida's longleaf pine sandhills, oak hammocks, pine flatwoods, dry prairies, and coastal dunes in order to dig their burrows and build their nests.
- **Diet**— Gopher tortoises are opportunistic grazers that feed on low growing plants, such as broadleaf grasses, legumes, wiregrass, saw palmettos, hibiscus, berries, native grapes and native flowers.
- **Interesting Fact**— During pioneer times, gopher tortoises were referred to as "Scrub Chicken" because they lived in the scrub habitat and they were so plentiful, they were everywhere like chickens.
- **Significance at the Savannas**— The gopher tortoise is a threatened species in Florida. As a keystone species, whose burrows provide protection for over 350 other species, threats to this tortoise mean threats to countless other creatures, too. Protected lands like the Savannas, which provide large parcels of undeveloped land, are vital for the continuation of the gopher tortoise's survival.



WAX MYRTLE



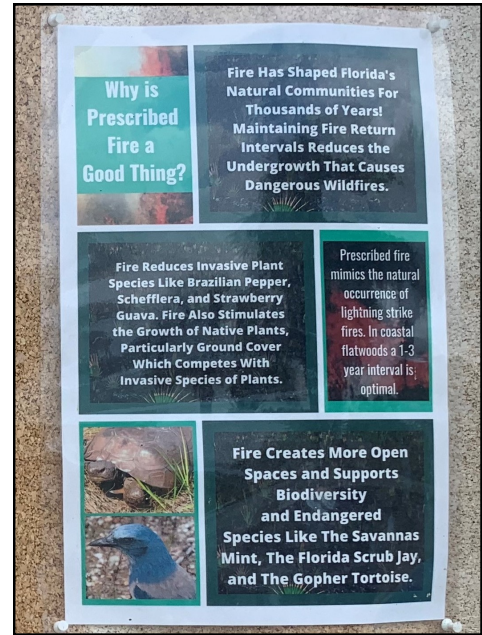
The southern wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*) is a tough, easy, fast-growing evergreen tree whose berries are highly prized by birds.

- **Height**—Wax myrtles grow 15-25' high and spread 20-25' wide.
- **Shape**— In the wild, these densely leaved and multi-stemmed trees form an irregular, open and rounded shape.
- **Leaves**— Wax myrtle's flat, olive green leaves give off a spicy, peppery scent when crushed.
- **Flowers**— Slim, cylindrical flowers give way to small, bluish-white, waxy fruit that mature in clusters and last through winter.
- **Habitat**— The wax myrtle can grow in a variety of habitats, from wet swamplands to dry, pine flatwoods. This native is so adaptable that it can grow in bogs, prairies, woodlands, and along the coast.
- **Interesting Fact**—During pioneer times, candles were made by melting the waxy coating off of wax myrtle berries and dipping a string/wick repeatedly into the melted wax until a candle-shape formed.
- **Significance at the Savannas**— Wax myrtles are an important source of food and shelter a variety of wildlife. The nutrient dense berries are especially important for the many birds that overwinter in the Savannas prior to their migration back north. In winter, Tree Swallows converge on these bushes in the hundreds to thousands.



PARK HIGHLIGHTS

FLCC AmeriCorps Members, Sarah and Annie, have been hard at work creating Interpretive Flyers throughout the park. Their work can currently be seen at the Walton Road Canoe Launch Information Kiosk, as well as at the Hawk's Bluff Trail-head kiosk. As the 2020 term comes to an end, we wish Sarah well in her new role as Park Ranger at Hillsborough River State Park - congratulations! We are excited to welcome Annie back for the 2021 season; her fellow AmeriCorps member will be announced shortly.



Become a Member of the Friends of Savannas

Friends of Savannas is a volunteer-based, nonprofit corporation created to enhance, support, and educate while also protecting the natural and cultural resources of the Savannas Preserve State Park.

By becoming a member, you will play a critical role in preserving the largest freshwater marsh system on the southeast coast of Florida.

Membership benefits include:

- * 10 FREE entries to Savannas Preserve State Park
- * 10% discount in the Friends' Gift Store
- * Invitations to Member-Only events

Visit us online or at the Park during business hours to learn more!



FRIENDS HIGHLIGHTS

2020 has been a year like no other, especially for those already challenged. Our lives became less settled, seeming to evaporate overnight. Yet here we are, anticipating 2021. Much like nature, adaptability contributed towards our resilience. Likewise, relationships with family, friends, neighbors (and our pets) helped us to better endure the chaos and added stress.

The silver lining to these last ten months includes a better awareness of connectedness and shared responsibility for each other. It is both your support and membership that makes us stronger and inspires us. To everyone who donated to the Friends CSO and/or visited the park, thank you: to the volunteers who helped the Shade House and Can-Do Teams, CSO members, the Board, and the Committees. Thank you.

We promise to put your time & donations to work so that the Savannas Preserve can continue to be a part of the lives of our families and community. Please stay safe, be healthy.

Diana Gregory/CSO President

SAVANNAS PRESERVE TRAILS

Land Trails

Hawk's Bluff Area



A 1 mile loop through the scrublands of the Atlantic Coastal Ridge.

Education Center Area



The Glass Lizard Trail is a paved 1/4 mile walk through pine flatwoods to the marsh's edge while the Gopher Tortoise Trail is a 1 mile walk through pine flatwoods.

Miller Property Area



Two miles of trails through hardwood hammocks and dry prairie in southern Fort Pierce.

Walton Road North End



Over 9 miles of trails through pine flatwoods just west of the Canoe Launch. The Yellow loop has two bridges over the basin marsh whereas the entire length of the White trail from Jensen Beach Blvd past the Education Center on Walton Rd to Easy Street is 11 miles.

Kayaking

The water levels in the park's fresh water basin marsh varies depending on rainfall, sometimes drying up during prolonged dry spells.



Maintain Social Distancing

If you visit us, please remember to check the Safety Updates webpage and practice social distancing during your visit. <https://www.floridastateparks.org/learn/safety-updates>

- 👉 The Park is open to the public Thursday-Monday, 8am to sundown
- 👉 Restroom availability is limited and all other park facilities are closed
- 👉 Park entrance fees can be paid online or with exact cash on site - \$3 per car, \$2 per person or bicyclist
- 👉 For a park map, visit the park's website at: <https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/savannas-preserve-state-park>