

# Sawgrass Nature Trail

This 1,100-foot accessible nature trail winds through dry scrub habitat and a shady hammock oasis, and ends with a boardwalk over a basin marsh and observation platform.



How do we solve the problem of saving the land and providing facilities for public use? We carefully design the parking lots and trails so they have minimal impact on native ecosystems. The construction of public use facilities occurs in previously disturbed areas. The parking lot for the Juno Dunes west tract is located in a disturbed scrub area created by filling and leveling associated with the construction of a lift station.

## 1 A Disturbing Situation

The Palm Beach County Natural Areas System protects historic native ecosystems and their biological diversity. The natural areas are open to the public for passive, resource-based recreation, environmental education, and scientific research.

## 2 Sand Pine Portrait

The primary purpose for acquiring the Juno Dunes Natural Area was to preserve the largest tract of Atlantic Coastal Ridge scrub left in Palm Beach County. Scrub communities usually contain sand pines. The trees reach 65 feet in height and are the tallest features in the scrub. There are very few sand pines on this site. This may be due to the frequent fires that swept through the area. The trees require periodic fires to regenerate. It takes nearly 10 years for the replacement stand of sand pines to mature and begin producing new seeds. Fires occurring every several years kill the trees before they mature removing the seed sources for future generations.

## 3 Minature Trees of the Scrub

Just because this area doesn't have many sand pines does not mean it is lacking trees. You just need to know where to look for them. In the case of the scrub oaks, it is down instead of up. Three species of oaks are found at Juno Dunes - Chapman's, sand live, and myrtle. Unlike the towering live oak trees everyone is familiar with, these scrub oaks are small and compact. Their dwarfed nature is due to a combination of frequent fires and leaf burn by salt spray. A quick way to identify these oaks is to take a close look at the leaves. Chapman's oaks have small hairs along the underside of their leaves. Sand live oaks have leaves that curl under at the edges. An upsidown leaf looks like an elongated bowl. Myrtle oak leaves have the combined features of the first two trees - small hairs on the underside and curled edges.



Sand Live Oak



## 4 Shady Characters

You may notice something odd at this stop. So far your walk has been through wide open scrub land with no relief from the hot Florida sun. But now a small spot of shade appears, as if by magic. This is a patch of xeric hammock, which is considered to be an advanced successional stage of scrub. When fire is excluded from scrub for a long period of time, the low-growing scrub plants give way to taller trees such as laurel oak, live oak, and red bay. The placement of this hammock near the basin marsh protected the area from past fires that resulted in the transformation from scrub to hammock.

This shady oasis is home to the endangered four-petal pawpaw. This plant is only found in Palm Beach and Martin Counties. There are more than 200 four-petal pawpaws recorded on this site. The creamy-white flowers bloom in the spring and give way to yellow fruits, which are eaten by gopher tortoises, raccoons, and opossums.

The ground and trees of the hammock are covered by a variety of unique plants. Epiphytes (airplants) such as giant airplant and ballmoss grow among the tree limbs. These relatives of the pineapple survive by collecting rain water in leaf bases or trapping moisture on small hairs. Clumps of lichens called deer moss cover the ground. Lichens are actually two organisms (algae and fungi) working together to survive. The algae produce food and the fungi provide shelter.

## 5 Wetland Wonderland



What's a wetland doing in the middle of a desert-like scrub? This basin marsh formed in a large solution depression that was formerly a shallow lake. The water contains high concentrations of tannins, which turns it a brownish color. Water collects in the marsh during the summer and fall rainy season and gradually dries out during the winter. Historically, basin marsh was the main wetland community on the site. Most of the marshes were mosquito-ditched and the salt water intrusion converted them into mangrove-lined tidal swamps. Those marshes that remain contain water-loving plants such as sawgrass, arrowhead, coastalplain willow, and many types of ferns. The royal fern is one of many protected plant species found in the natural area. Heavy commercial exploitation has diminished the plant's population.



## 6 Elevation & Observation

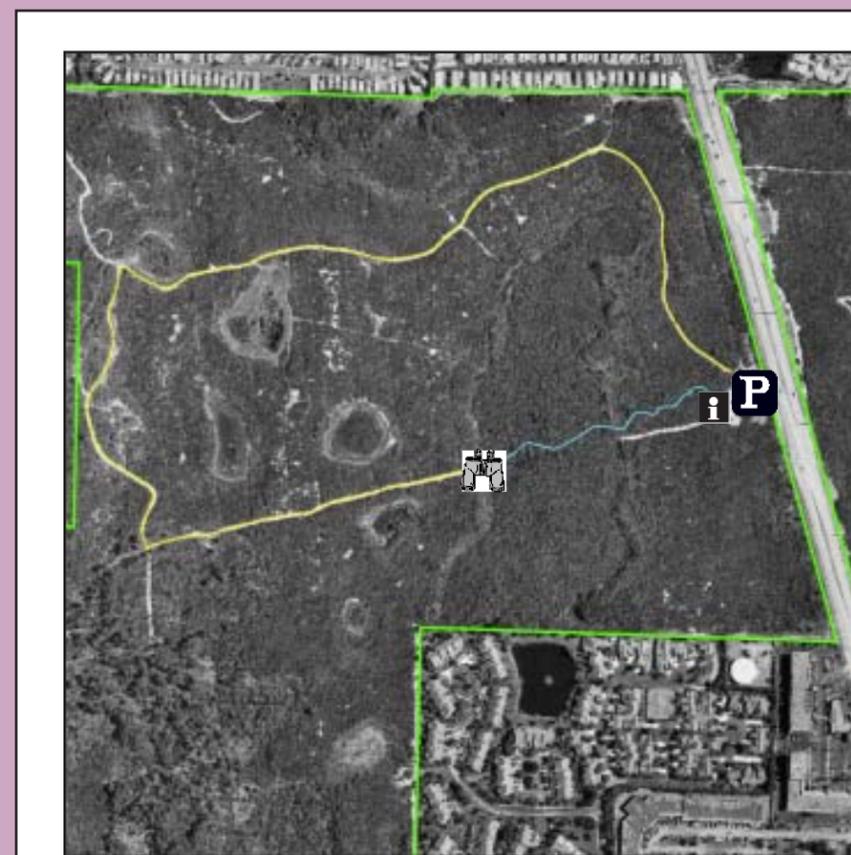
The observation platform provides a slightly elevated view of the basin marsh. To the west, stairs lead to a hiking trail. To the east, the Juno Dunes Natural Area oceanfront tract observation platform is visible. It sits atop an ancient dune ridge that is one of the highest natural features in Palm Beach County - approximately 44 feet above sea level. The trails and observation platform of the oceanfront tract can be accessed through Loggerhead Park.



# Juno Dunes West Tract Trail System



The Juno Dunes Natural Area is located on U.S. Highway 1, north and south of Donald Ross Road, in Juno Beach and unincorporated Palm Beach County. This 576-acre natural area is the only remaining example of the Florida scrub ecosystem in Palm Beach County that extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the Intracoastal Waterway. The 46-acre oceanfront tract is accessible through Loggerhead Park (#1). The western section of the natural area is accessible from public use facilities located on the west side of U.S. Highway 1 just north of Donald Ross Road (#2).



- P** Parking
- i** Information
- 👁️** Observation Platform
- Natural Area Boundary
- Sawgrass Nature Trail 0.21 miles
- Scrub Oak Hiking Trail 1.3 miles  
(Portions of this trail may be under water during wet periods)

0 0.25 Miles

Please use the designated nature and hiking trails as you explore the natural area. Do not feed the animals. When wild animals become dependent on handouts, they may lose their natural fear of humans and become aggressive and dangerous. Please dispose of your trash responsibly.

Largeflower False Rosemary  
(*Conradina grandiflora*)



Beggaricks  
(*Bidens alba*)



Ballmoss  
(*Tillandsia recurvata*)



Silk Bay  
(*Persea borbonia* var. *humilis*)



Fetterbush  
(*Lyonia lucida*)



## Plants



American Kestrel  
(*Falco sparverius*)



Brown Pelican  
(*Pelicanus occidentalis*)

## Birds

Crada  
(*Tibicen* sp.)



Great Blue Heron  
(*Ardea herodias*)



Florida Scrub-jay  
(*Aphelocoma coerulescens*)

Eastern Lubber Grasshopper  
(*Romalea microptera*)



Great southern White  
(*Asca monuste*)



## Insects

Halloween Pennant  
(*Celithemis opalina*)



# Juno Dunes West Photo Album



Bobcat  
(*Lynx rufus*)



Common Raccoon  
(*Procyon lotor*)

## Mammals

Gopher Tortoise  
(*Gopherus polyphemus*)



Coathwip  
(*Masticophis flagellum*)



## Reptiles

Osprey  
(*Pandion haliaetus*)



Little Blue Heron  
(*Egretta caerulea*)

Oak Toad  
(*Bufo quercicus*)



Six-lined Racerunner  
(*Cnemidophorus sexlineatus*)



Welcome to one of Palm Beach County's natural treasures! The Juno Dunes Natural Area west tract is a mosaic of sand ridges covered with dwarf oak scrub, interspersed with large areas of tidal swamp and smaller areas of pine flatwoods, maritime hammock, and basin marsh.

The earliest accounts of the natural area come from U.S. Army Topological Engineer reports made during the Second Seminole Indian War in the 1840s. During the late 1800s, the short-lived Celestial Railroad ran through the eastern portion of the natural area on its way from Jupiter to Lake Worth.

Major changes took place in the natural area during the 1960s. In response to a mosquito population explosion, the County's mosquito control department dug ditches throughout the area. Wetland water levels dropped, saltwater replaced freshwater, and the sawgrass marshes evolved into mangrove swamps.

In 1992, Palm Beach County purchased 148 acres from Juno Associates, Ltd. In 1995 the County purchased 334 acres from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Additional land purchases and lease agreements increased the size of the site to 576 acres by 1999.

This natural area is part of a countywide 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 and passive recreational use such as hiking, bird watching, and nature photography.



The Juno Dunes west tract contains many types of habitats, so the plant life is quite varied. Common plants include sand live oak, saw palmetto, silk bay, giant leather fern, and gopher apple.



## Rules & Regulations

### Prohibited on the Site:

- Smoking
- Hunting
- Firearms
- Feeding wildlife
- Alcoholic beverages
- Pets or domestic animals
- Bicycles or motor vehicles
- 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 toilets or drinking water at this site.

In an emergency, call 911 or the Juno Beach Police Department at 561-746-6201.



### Board of County Commissioners

- Tony Maslotti, Chairman
- Addie L. Greene, Vice Chairperson
- Karen T. Marcus
- Jeff Koons
- Warren H. Newell
- Mary McCarty
- Burt Aaronson

### County Administrator

Robert Weisman

### Board of County Commissioners Environmental Resources Management

- Palm Beach County
- 3323 Belvedere Road, Bldg. 502
- West Palm Beach, FL 33406-1548
- Phone: 561-233-2400
- www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/erm

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

## Juno Dunes Natural Area Trail Guide (west tract)



### A Florida Conservation and Recreation Lands Program Project