

Deer Prairie Creek Preserve



Bird watching is a popular pastime at Deer Prairie Creek Preserve, where visitors can spy Bachman's sparrows (above), or the Florida scrub-jay (below).



The Florida scrub-jay is a sociable bird that can be seen at Deer Prairie Creek Preserve and other protected lands in Sarasota County including Shamrock Park, Manasota Scrub Preserve, Lemon Bay Preserve and Oscar Scherer State Park. For the continued well-being of this protected bird, please remember: feeding the Florida scrub-jay is a federal offense!

Acknowledgments

Deer Prairie Creek Preserve was purchased jointly by Sarasota County and the Southwest Florida Water Management District with funding from Sarasota County's Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection Program (ESLPP) and the state's Florida Forever Program.

Cover photo: Pine lily (*Lilium catesbaei*)

Photos of Bachman's sparrow and common tickseed courtesy of S. Freedman.

This 6,400 acre preserve is named after Deer Prairie Creek, a tributary of the Myakka River that flows through the property. In combination with other protected lands to the north, this preserve provides complete protection of the creek in Sarasota County and nearly six miles of the Myakka River's east bank.

While exploring the preserve's network of trails, visitors may see diverse natural communities, including pine flatwoods, prairie hammock and seasonal wetlands. Unique scenic opportunities also exist along the trails that follow the banks of the Myakka River and Deer Prairie Creek. Visitors can observe wildlife and wildflowers, along with wading birds and alligators along the river and creek, and gopher tortoises, scrub-jays and quail in other areas.

The preserve has more than 60 miles of hiking trails. The hiking trails are unpaved, but accessible for most visitors. All trail intersections are marked with numbered trail markers. Please be aware that certain trails may be shared by hikers, bicyclists and equestrian users. A separate equestrian trail map shows the two equestrian loop trails. Some trails may flood after heavy rainfall. Several trails cross creeks and ditches that may be wet year round. Some trails can be quite long, so bring water, sunscreen, a rain jacket and sturdy shoes.

Please help us protect your preserve. All plants, animals and artifacts are protected.

Enjoy your visit!



Deer Prairie Creek begins as a chain of wetlands in Manatee County, becomes a slough that flows through the T. Mabry Carlton, Jr. Memorial Reserve, and flows into the Myakka River. In addition to providing aquatic habitat, the creek cuts through a higher-elevation ridge that provides scrub habitat critical to the threatened Florida scrub-jay.



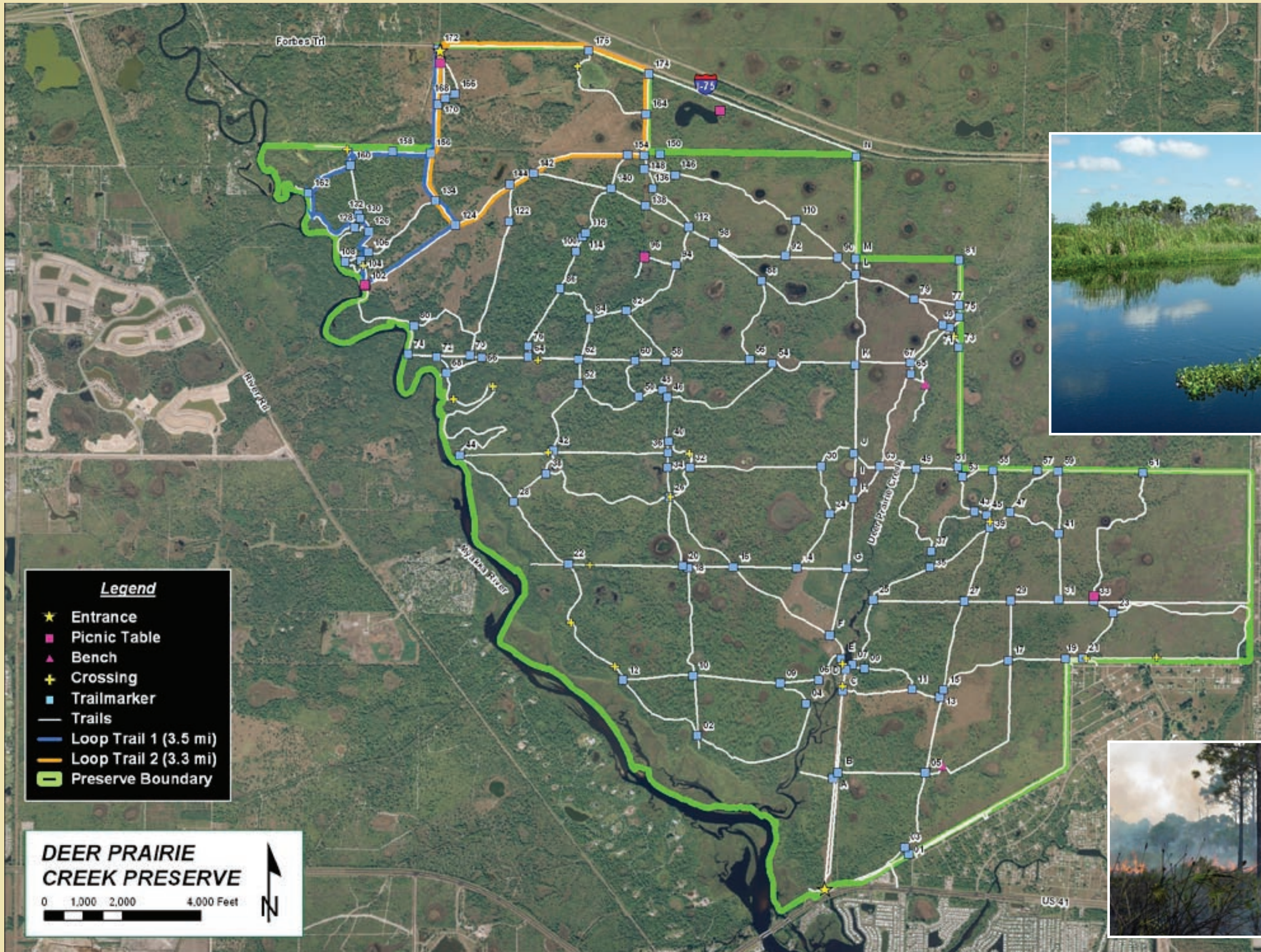
This preserve protects nearly six miles of the Myakka River and much of Deer Prairie Creek, providing vital habitat to alligators and other wildlife.



Located throughout the preserve, depression marshes provide essential habitat for wading and migrating birds and a water source for wildlife while improving water quality.



The preserve contains pine (or mesic) flatwoods, a nearly level landscape with a tree canopy of widely scattered pines. They contain an understory of shrubs such as saw palmetto and fetterbrush and a groundcover of grasses and wildflowers.



- Legend**
- ★ Entrance
 - Picnic Table
 - ▲ Bench
 - ✦ Crossing
 - Trailmarker
 - Trails
 - Loop Trail 1 (3.5 mi)
 - Loop Trail 2 (3.3 mi)
 - Preserve Boundary

DEER PRAIRIE CREEK PRESERVE

0 1,000 2,000 4,000 Feet

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Myakka River at Trailmarker 162



Deer Prairie Creek (ponded area at dam)

Deer Prairie Creek (north of dam)



Prescribed fire: A critical tool for ensuring a healthy ecosystem and reducing the risk of wildfires. Prescribed burns in the preserve's mesic flatwoods reduce overgrown vegetation, promote plant diversity and sustain the area's gopher tortoise population.