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English

Panther Walk Preserve

Address/Location: 2845 60th Ave. NE, across the street and slightly west of the Estates Elementary School (on 60th Ave NE), west of Everglades Blvd., north of Golden Gate Parkway, in the Golden Gate Estates.



Manager Contact Information
E-mail: conservationcollier@colliercountyfl.gov
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Preserve Size: 71.4 acres

Date Acquired: Acquisition started in June 2007 with two parcels, and two additional parcels were donated in 2014. Acquisition is on-going within the project area.

Cost of Acquisition: $1,602,900

Public Access Status: This preserve is open to the public year-round. If you go, be prepared with long pants, long-sleeved shirt, hat and sturdy shoes. The primitive trail can be accessed from either 60th Ave NE or 62nd Ave NE and is approximately half a mile in length. Trails are flagged with pink tape.

Trail Map



Available Printed Materials: **<u>Panther Walk Preserve Final Management Plan</u>**

Public Access Facilities: This preserve has no facilities and only roadside parking, which is best off 62nd Ave NE.



The roughly half-mile trail winds through a seasonally flooded cypress strand forest. If you hike it during rainy season, it's a beautiful walk but be prepared to get wet!



Plants and Wildlife: Situated within the Horsepen Strand, a two mile long wetland slough feature within the North Golden Gate Estates, this preserve is a beautiful example of a cypress strand swamp. The Florida natural Areas Inventory and the Florida Department of Natural Resources (1990) classifies strand swamps as imperiled globally and statewide due to rarity or other factors making them vulnerable to extinction.

While the strand forest is dominated by cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), it also contains a mixture of temperate and tropical tree species including red maple (*Ace rubrum*), swamp laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*), pond apple (*Annona glabra*), strangler fig (*Ficus aurea*), swamp bay (*Persea palustris*), coastal plain willow (*Salix caroliniana*) and sweetbay (*Magnolia virginiana*).

Midstory vegetation includes wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifica*), myrsine (*Rapanea punctata*) and buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*).

Listed plant species within the preserve include locally common but nationally and globally rare bromeliads such as the common wild pine (*Tillandsia fasciculata*) and the inflated wild pine (*Tillandsia balbisiana*). Sixty-four (64) plant species have been documented within the preserve, with 61 (96%) being native species.



Bird species recorded include American Robin, black and white warblers, palm warblers, red shouldered hawk, red bellied woodpecker, downy woodpecker, tree swallow, gray catbird, turkey vulture, blue-gray gnatcatcher, northern cardinal, blue jay Northern mockingbird, and swallow-tailed kite. Mammals observed utilizing the preserve include the Florida panther, Florida black bear, raccoon, Virginia opossum, white-tailed deer, and Big Cypress Fox Squirrel.







Wildlife photographed at Panther Walk Preserve courtesy of the F-Stop Foundation

Reason for Acquisition: This preserve was acquired for its high quality native habitat, its wetlands that serve to recharge the surficial aquifer, and for its connectivity with other environmentally sensitive lands within the Horsepen Strand. Conservation Collier is actively acquiring parcels within the Panther Walk Preserve project boundary from willing sellers in order to create a 426.1-acre consolidated preserve area.

Management Goals: Ten year goals for this preserve include eliminating and reducing human impacts to plants and animals, removing or controlling populations of invasive, exotic or problematic plants and animals, and facilitating recreational and educational uses compatible with conservation.



In 2009, the adjacent Estates Elementary School held a preserve naming contest. The winning name of "Panther Walk Preserve" was chosen by student Jocelyn Rosario and was approved by the County as the official preserve name. Above, Ms. Rosario receives recognition for the winning name from the Conservation Collier Land Acquisition Advisory Committee.