

# CEDAR POINT

## Environmental Park



photos by Tina Powell

Cedar Point is one of the last remaining large tracts of undeveloped land on Lemon Bay in Charlotte County. With 115 acres pine flatwoods cover over 60 % of the park, Cedar Point also has scrub, scrubby flatwoods, mangrove swamps, salt marshes, and wetlands.

Many species of animals inhabit pine flatwoods at Cedar Point, including bobcat, grey fox, yellow rat snake, pileated woodpecker, and bald eagle. The scrub and scrubby flatwoods are very dry areas slightly higher in elevation than pine flatwoods. Scrub habitats in our area are found near the coast and original creek waterways, and are in fact the remains of prehistoric dunes. The dominant plants found in scrub are dwarfed, tangled-looking oak trees (sand live oak, myrtle oak, and Chapman's oak) rusty lyonia, pawpaw, gopher apple, with scattered slash pine and saw palmetto.

Mangrove swamps are tidal wetlands that inhabit low energy shorelines in the coastal areas of southwest Florida. Mangrove trees are specially adapted to salt- and brackish-water environments. The species found in our area are red mangrove, black mangrove, white mangrove, and buttonwood. Mangroves provide habitat and nursery grounds for many species of fish and invertebrates. They also provide nesting site for wading birds including anhinga, black-crowned night heron and the great blue heron.

Salt marshes are tidal wetlands characterized by expanses of grasses, rushes, and sedges. Typical plant species found in our area include smooth cordgrass, black rush, salt meadow cordgrass, salt grass, and sea oxeye daisy. Salt marshes are very ecologically productive and serve as nursery grounds for fish, crabs, and shellfish.

Situated on Lemon Bay, a long narrow estuary, Cedar Point is a great place to see wading birds in the mangrove fringes, watch for dolphins near the adjacent seagrasses and explore the pine flatwoods to find bald eagles, gopher tortoises, as well as a myriad of native plants.