

2017 FALL TRAIL WALK – JOHN’S ISLAND



Twenty hikers turned out in perfect weather for the Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail's seventeenth guided trail walk Saturday, November 18th, 2017, at John's Island in Tomoka State Park. Semiannual biologist-led trail walks are part of the OSLT's invitation to the public to learn more about the natural and scenic resources of the Ormond Loop scenic byway corridor.



Biologist and plant ecologist Dr. Don Spence was our guide for a two-hour tour of John's Island, 550 acres of relatively undisturbed environmentally sensitive land east of US Highway 1 and bordered by the Tomoka River and Strickland Creek. In the mid-1980s the parcel was slated for luxury home development. Volusia County was able to acquire the island, however, and eventually it was transferred to Tomoka State Park.

Dr. Spence explained that the historic habitat of John's Island was probably coastal scrub that would have been dominated by longleaf pine and would have supported black bear, panther, bobcat and many different species of wildflowers, some that are endangered today.



On Saturday hikers saw native reptiles including a spade foot toad (above left), a green tree frog, and a large alligator in one of the island's bodies of water. Notable plants along the way included blazing star, fleabane, wood sage, and bee balm. Important native tree species observed included sabal palm, yaupon holly, hickory, southern magnolia, live oak, laurel oak, and hackberry. Exotic plants included Brazilian pepper, Chinese tallow tree, and Boston fern.

(Photos of toad and frog by Luis Villalon. Photos of participants by Rob Bird.)