

On April 4th the Ormond Scenic Loop and Trial held its first trail hike of 2010 along Coquina Road south of the Fairchild Oak. John Kunzer, Environmental Specialist with Tomoka Basin State Parks, was our guide.

Coquina Road traverses a ridge along an outcropping of coquina rock and falls off in elevation to the east to the point that there are wetlands that stay wet even when the surrounding area is dry, giving the area a somewhat different ecology. The photograph shows coquina along the road; the view is more or less northward; the right side of the photo is eastward.) Although our focus was botanical, John provided a wealth of information about the natural history of the area and issues the parks confront with respect to invasive species of plant (e.g.: Boston Fern) and animal (feral hogs).



Unlike our previous walks, a significant portion of this hike was off-trail, wet, and GPS-guided. John showed us two species of endangered fern, *Pecluma pilodon* var. *bourgeauana* and *Pecluma plumula*. John is an expert in grasses and we enjoyed looking closely at different types of sedge that at quick glance we might have thought were the same. These included *Carex godfreyi* (Godfrey's sedge), *Carex gholsonii* (Gholson's sedge), *Carex bromoides* (brome-like sedge), *Carex dasycarpa* (sandywoods sedge), and *Carex paeninsulae* (Peninsula sedge). John also knew the location of an endangered species of "air plant," *Tillandsia utriculata* (giant airplant).

During our walk we saw two species of snake, black racer and yellow rat snake. In the photo below, the white arrow points to the snake lying along the edge of the roots of an upturned tree, about eye level with John.



We also caught a fleeting glimpse of a bobcat. Coyote scat was in evidence, something of a surprise to the hikers other than John since we weren't aware there were coyotes in the area. John also advised that bear come through the park but no bears reside there.

Hikers were enthusiastic about the 3 hour trip. The hikes are a great opportunity to find about the biology of the Ormond Scenic Loop and Trail corridor at more than a casual level and we've been fortunate to have folks like John Kunzer who are willing to volunteer their time and share their expertise to lead us.

Text and photographs by Rob Bird, OSLT Board Member & Organizations and Group Outreach Coordinator