

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2015

The Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail holds guided walks once or twice a year along the beautiful trails on or near the Loop corridor. On Saturday, November 7, we went on our 13th walk led once again by biologist Dr. Don Spence who has done us this service many times in the past. Having grown up in the area and turned his love for it into a professional specialty, Don has a great knowledge of the plants, animals, and natural history of east Volusia County.

This walk took us north along the trail from Smith Landing on Highbridge Road. Over the last few years the scenes along the trail have changed because of salt marsh restoration projects along the Intracoastal Waterway visible west of the trail.



For historical background, decades ago the sinuous waterway that separated the barrier island from the mainland was dredged and straightened to make it navigable. Spoil from the dredging was deposited along the banks of the waterway destroying the marsh ecosystem already in place. Much of this dense and seemingly old vegetation we have taken as original along John Anderson Road was not there before the waterway was dredged.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection together with the St John's River Water Management District and the Floridan Resource and Development Council have directed a project to restore the original salt marsh to some 9 acres of the salt marsh overall in North Peninsula State Park. The project was funded in part by NOAA's Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership and the St Johns River Water Management District. The DEP directs restoration elsewhere in Florida as well.

On our walk we saw various phases of the salt marsh restoration. Restored marsh can enhance species diversity and fish and shellfish populations at the same time it controls mosquitoes. Plants along our walk included abundant seaside goldenrod, a variety of milkweed native to, but unusual in this place, and a small bay tree that for now has escaped the laurel wilt fungus that has nearly wiped out bay trees in most of the southeast. We encountered a gopher tortoise with an old wound now healed and saw a number of gopher tortoise burrows.



Look for the OSLT's spring trail walk announcement sometime in March or April 2016.