

Bottomland Hardwood Forest

Slight elevation change is all that is needed for diverse vegetation to grow in the rich alluvial river soil. Oaks, pines, red maple, and sweetgum all grow in this closed-canopy forest.

Scrubby Flatwoods

Scrubby flatwoods have an open canopy of widely spaced pine trees and a low, shrubby understory dominated by scrub oaks and saw palmetto, often interspersed with areas of barren white sand and wiregrass.

Refuge forests, such as this one, are undergoing continuous management and restoration. The Refuge Forester has a number of ways to promote species diversity. This part of the Refuge has been thinned twice, burned every 2-3 years, strip mowed, selectively treated with herbicide, disked for planting, and planted with longleaf pine and wiregrass. Flatwoods habitats, and the wildlife that live here, are critically dependent on fires every two to four years.

Cypress Pond

Acidic groundwater swamps are often found in Florida's flatwoods. Plant species richness is lower in these ponds than in the nearby river swamps.

Source: Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI)



photo: Larry Woodward

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RIVER TRAIL & TRAM RIDGE LOOP Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge





photo: Russ Hall

A panoramic view of the Suwannee from the River Trail.

The Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1979 to protect the water quality of the Suwannee River estuary and provide habitat for wildlife. The area within the Refuge is one of the largest undeveloped delta-estuarine systems in the United States and is a haven for fish and wildlife.

Gulf Sturgeon are seen in the Suwannee and in few other rivers. It is an ancient fish that may reach eight feet in length and weigh 200 pounds. They are found in the Suwannee in spring and summer and may be seen making spectacular jumps out of the water.

Floodplain Swamp

The lower Suwannee River is tidally influenced, and the regularity and degree of the twice-daily flooding greatly affects the vegetation; bald cypress and tupelo dominate the swamp. Trees often develop unique characteristics to allow periodic submergence, including cypress knees and fluted trunks, but cannot survive continuous inundation. Rich organic debris makes its way downriver during these cycles, providing a vital source of nutrients to the estuary.



These forests were logged many times in the past. Can you see the stumps of trees like this one? Some may have been 16' in diameter.

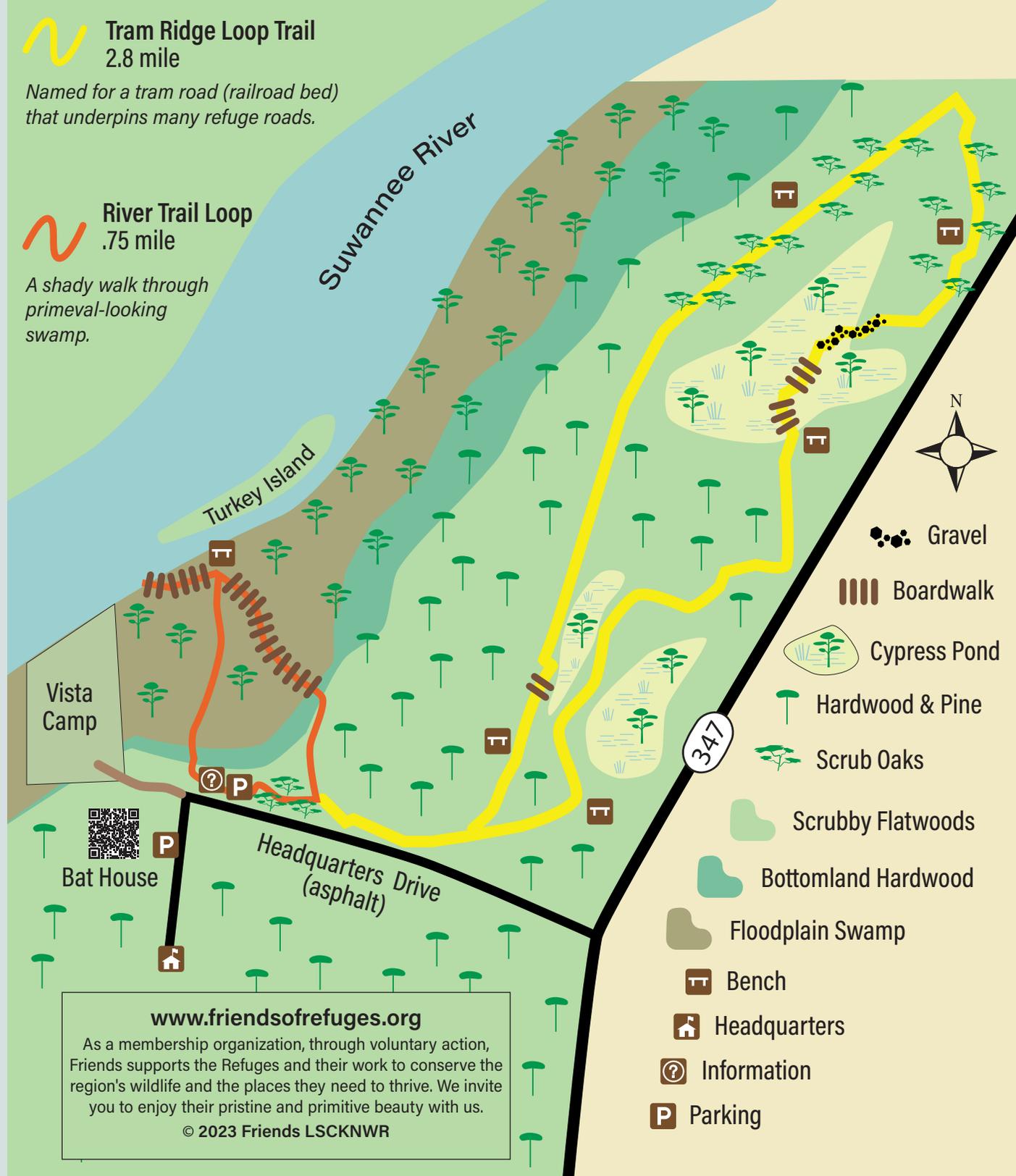
Cypress distribution is probably just as wide today as it was pre-European settlement, but the trees are younger and smaller now.

Tram Ridge Loop Trail 2.8 mile

Named for a tram road (railroad bed) that underpins many refuge roads.

River Trail Loop .75 mile

A shady walk through primeval-looking swamp.



www.friendsofrefuges.org
As a membership organization, through voluntary action, Friends supports the Refuges and their work to conserve the region's wildlife and the places they need to thrive. We invite you to enjoy their pristine and primitive beauty with us.
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