Nature & History

Pumpkin Hill Creek Preserve State Park protects one of the largest contiguous areas of coastal uplands remaining in Duval County, preserving approximately 4,000 acres of upland habitat bordered by tidal marshlands along the St. Johns and Nassau rivers. These upland ecosystems are crucial in maintaining water quality and providing healthy habitat for plants and animals. The abundant plants and wildlife range from gopher tortoises, bald eagles, and white-tailed deer to pitcher plants and wildflowers.

The park contains ten distinct natural communities including scrubby flatwoods, cypress dome, sandhill, maritime hammock, mesic flatwoods, and estuarine tidal marsh. Fire management plays a vital role in maintaining the health of these communities. The park is adjacent to the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve managed by the National Park Service, which protects more than 46,000 acres of undeveloped estuarine habitat.

The Timucuan Indians called Pumpkin Hill home and were later joined by French explorer Jean Ribault in 1562. During the late 1800s, the turpentine industry was in full swing. Pine trees were tapped and terracotta cups were attached to collect the sap which was used to make turpentine and rosin. The cuts left behind were known as "cat faces." Few cat faced trees remain since many were later cut when the area was logged for timber products.

According to local history, before the land was set aside for conservation a one-room schoolhouse, an oyster processing plant, sawmills, and a private hunt club existed at different times on the property.
A visit to Pumpkin Hill Creek Preserve State Park offers a variety of fun experiences. Water activities include fishing, and canoeing or kayaking on peaceful tidal creeks. For those who like to stay a little drier, the park offers hiking, biking, and equestrian trails, birding, nature study, and picnicking.

Visitors can enjoy a total of 3.6 miles of hiking or biking trails that include short trail spurbs to wildlife viewing areas or secret fishing spots. An interpretive trail leads visitors from the main parking area to the Park Office where they can see displays comparing native and non-native plants. In addition to these short trails, visitors can experience a 11.5 mile multi-use trail that traverses between Pumpkin Hill Creek and three nearby city parks. Adventure seekers can take part in numerous geocaching opportunities found throughout the trail networks. All trails are accessible from the main parking area off Pumpkin Hill Road.

There are three access points to pristine tidal creeks adjacent to the park property. One provides a hand launch area for canoes or kayaks to access Pumpkin Hill Creek. Whether fishing from the shore or a boat, these creeks have enormous potential for catching fish such as redfish, flounder, and sea trout.

Take some time out to relax and enjoy all there is to do at Pumpkin Hill Creek Preserve State.

**Directions**

From I-95 or I-295, exit Heckscher Drive east. Turn north on New Berlin Road, then east on Cedar Point Road or 4 miles, turn north on Pumpkin Hill Road. The main trailhead will be on the left side of the road. Further up on the right will be the canoe/kayak launch area.