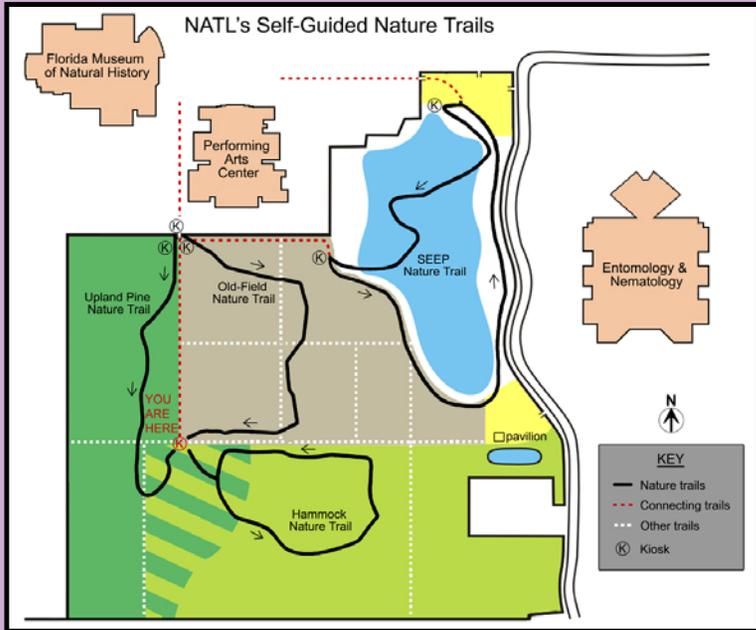


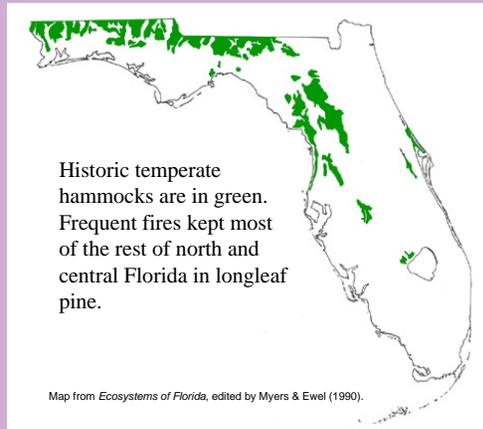
NATL's Nature Trails: Take the Hammock Trail here!

Hammocks are complex & dynamic ecosystems



What is a hammock?

In Florida, broadleaved forests are called *hammocks*, except that those in wetlands are generally called *swamps*. Common plants include laurel oak, pignut hickory, black cherry, flowering dogwood, American beautyberry, saw greenbrier, and muscadine grape. Animal species include spring peeper, broad-headed skink, Florida box turtle, pileated woodpecker, cardinal, Carolina wren, and gray squirrel. Fires kill hammock trees. Historically hammocks were rare in Florida because fires set by lightning and native Americans were frequent and spread readily across most of the upland landscape (see map at right).



Historic temperate hammocks are in green. Frequent fires kept most of the rest of north and central Florida in longleaf pine.

Map from *Ecosystems of Florida*, edited by Myers & Ewel (1990).

The Hammock Nature Trail (right) goes through areas with different histories, as shown here by trail segments of different colors.



Are all hammock forests the same?

Hammock forests in the Southeast have been compared to the beech-maple forests of the Northeast; but hammocks have a higher diversity of plants and face more dynamic threats than the forests of the Northeast. In fact, north Florida hammocks have the greatest variety of trees and shrubs per acre of all temperate forests in the United States. Hammocks are not a stable, climax forest, but instead a habitat that is always changing due to disturbances.

Walking NATL's Nature Trails

In addition to its academic roles, NATL provides the public with four self-guided nature trails (see map above). Taking all four trails and returning here is a walk of nearly two miles. Here are the roundtrip distances of each trail:

- Hammock Trail:** 0.25 miles [loop trail that returns to this kiosk]
- Old Field Trail:** 0.3 miles [take trail toward FLMNH to reach starting point]
- Upland Pine Trail:** 0.3 miles [take trail toward FLMNH to starting point]
- SEEP Trail:** 0.9 miles [take trail behind Phillips Center]

Reminders for the public:

You are welcome to use any trail in NATL's public area. Please do not wander from the trails. Take care not to disturb the points of interest along the nature trails. Please do not disturb any markers or equipment you encounter. Please do not litter: take out anything you bring in.

Reminders for students:

You are encouraged to enjoy the nature trails in the same manner as the public. Otherwise, please avoid using the nature trails as you pursue your academic projects.

Enjoy NATL!

GREEN

The trail starts and ends in an area that was once upland pine but is now protected from the fires that are restoring the ecosystem to the west.

To learn more about upland pine, take the Upland Pine Nature Trail.

BROWN

Most of the loop of the trail is in an area that was treeless when UF acquired the land in 1944. Since then it has become a hammock

To learn more about changes that occur when fields are abandoned, take the Old Field Nature Trail.

ORANGE

This part of the trail goes through the part of the public-area hammock that is oldest and has the largest trees.

Recent major disturbances of NATL's hammocks



In 2001 an outbreak of southern pine beetles required the removal of dying loblolly pines to stop the spread of the beetles.



In 2004, hurricanes Frances and Jeanne felled many hammock trees, including this large swamp chestnut oak.

NATL's most mature hammock

The hammock in the south of NATL-west shows no signs of ever being cleared or burned and contains many large trees such as this pignut hickory (right). The fires that maintained nearby upland pine did not spread into the hammock due to its moist, fire-resistant litter. The hammock's dense canopy protects the litter from drying by winds or sun.

