



## **SIGN UP NOW.... 2007 Little Pine Island Field Trips**

### **Hiking the High Marsh & Lengthening Shadows Afternoon Amble**

Sponsored by  
**Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park**

**Dates: Hiking the High Marsh Sunday Mornings on January 21 & January 28, February 4 & February 18, March 4 & March 11, April 1 & April 15**

**Time: 8:30 am to approximately 10:30 am**

**Dates: Lengthening Shadows Afternoon Amble Thursday Afternoons on January 25, February 22, March 22, and April 5**

**Time: 3:00 pm to approximately 5:00 pm**

**Location:** Little Pine Island is located at 4950 Pine Island Road (State Road 78) between Matlacha and Pine Island in Lee County, Florida. The entrance is one mile west of the outskirts of Matlacha. Meet in front of the fence near the Mariner Properties trailer.

**Registration Procedure:** Field trips are FREE of charge. **Advance registration is required.** Early registration is advised as space is limited. Larger group tours may be arranged on weekdays. Field trips are subject to cancellation due to weather, low registration, and guide availability. **For reservations and information, call DEP at 941- 575- 5861. Please see the back of flyer for information concerning trail conditions, directions, public access, and other hikes.**

**Field Trip:** Predominantly salt marsh, Little Pine Island lies hidden beyond the mangrove shoreline of Matlacha Pass Aquatic Preserve. A broad expanse of grasses, sedges, and rushes, it is interspersed with salt flats, maritime meadows, coastal hammock, and stands of slash pines. Salt marshes export tons of organic biomass to estuaries annually, support a diversity of wildlife, serve as nurseries for juvenile fish, and provide critical rest stops and breeding areas for migratory birds. This 4700 acre site, which is a part of the Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park, is also a Mitigation Bank and a partnership between the DEP and Mariner Properties Development, Inc. Areas of Little Pine Island once heavily infested with the exotic, invasive pest plant melaleuca, are now thriving wetlands of native grasses and shrubs having undergone extensive exotic removal and hydrological restoration by Mariner. Hikers will learn about the Little Pine Island wetland restoration, "the land and sea connection", estuaries, salt marsh food webs, and the importance of this ecosystem to fisheries and bird populations. Join the Little Pine Island Trail Guides for a Sunday morning hike or a Thursday afternoon amble through the restored area to the salt flats, hammock, and mangroves, and return through a sea of softly, waving grasses in the cool of the morning or the early evening.

***And don't forget....***

- **Pack binoculars and field guides; Wear sturdy hiking shoes or boots.**
- **This two mile hike is moderately rigorous; Wet, muddy conditions after rain.**
- **Bring water, sunglasses, sunscreen, insect repellent and a hat; No Shade.**

***Trail Advisory, Directions, Public Access, and Area Hikes continued on back...***

## **Little Pine Island Trail Advisory (January 2007)**

The trail is currently dry. Conditions will change if winter rains occur, and parts of the trail may be wet or muddy. Heavy rains will leave deep standing water in some areas. Wear sturdy shoes or boots. Bring a bottle of water and have a cold or a hot drink (depending on the weather) waiting for you on your return. Wear sunglasses, sunscreen, and a hat as shade is scarce. Bring binoculars and field guides. There are no restroom facilities on site. Public restrooms are located about 1.5 miles from the site at Matlacha Community Park.

**Degree of difficulty: Moderate; Difficult when areas have deep standing water**

**Length of guided walks: Approximately two miles**

**Length of tour: Approximately 2 to 2.5 hours (From 8:30 am to 10:30 am / 11:00 am)**

## **Directions to Little Pine Island**

**Little Pine Island** is a part of the Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park. It is located on Pine Island Road (State Road 78). If driving west towards Pine Island from Ft. Myers or Cape Coral, the distance is 1.0 mile past the Sandy Hook Crab House in Matlacha to the Preserve entrance. Turn north (right) into the Preserve. A Mariner Properties Development / DEP Wetland Restoration sign is visible before the entrance, and telephone wires cross the road at this point. Park in front of the security fence near the trailer. For those coming from Pine Island, the distance is slightly less than 2.0 miles from the four-way stop. Turn north (left) into the entrance.

**Charlotte County residents** may travel south on Burnt Store Road (County Road 765) and turn west (right) on to Pine Island Road towards Matlacha. Travel time from the U.S. 41 / Burnt Store Road intersection is approximately 30 minutes.

**From Ft. Myers:** (Using the Bell Tower Shopping Center as a reference point in Ft. Myers) From the intersection of Daniels Road and US 41 (Cleveland Avenue), take US 41 (Cleveland Avenue) north and turn west (left) onto College Parkway. Turn north (right) onto Summerlin and follow it (keeping in left lanes) to the intersection of Summerlin and Colonial Blvd. Turn west (left) and drive across the Caloosahatchee River via Mid-Point Bridge and Veterans Memorial Parkway. Keep in right lanes to pay toll (\$ 1.00). Continue driving west on Veterans Parkway through Cape Coral until it ends at the intersection with Pine Island Road (State Road 78). Turn west (left) onto Pine Island Road and drive through Matlacha. The entrance to Little Pine Island is one mile past Matlacha from the Sandy Hook Restaurant. The distance from the Bell Tower to Little Pine Island is approximately 20 miles and the driving time is approximately 40 minutes.

**Public Access: No self-guided walks are currently permitted. Open Public Access is temporarily closed unless accompanied by a DEP or Mariner guide.**

Exotic removal and heavy equipment operations are ongoing seven days a week. Upon completion of this major wetland restoration during the next two years, a series of trails will be created throughout Little Pine Island for the benefit and enjoyment of the public. *We thank you for your patience. It is greatly appreciated.*

**Alternative hikes include the following:** Alternative hikes in Lee County include a 1.12 mile loop trail in the Pine Island Flatwoods Preserve (dawn to dusk) on the west side of Stringfellow Road, St. James City and the Calusa Heritage Trail, Pineland. Call the Randell Research Center at 239-283-2062 for hours of operation. In Charlotte County, the Old Datsun Trail, a 1.75 mile loop trail in the Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park (dawn to dusk), runs through pine flatwoods and oak/cabbage palm hammocks. The Old Datsun Trail is located just beyond the entrance to the Preserve field office, 12301 Burnt Store Road (County Road 765), Punta Gorda. More trails are located at the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC), 10941 Burnt Store Road just north of the Preserve office. CHEC is one mile south of the US 41 / Burnt Store Road Intersection. Call CHEC at 941-575-5435 for hours of operation.

**For more information about Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park, visit the website at [www.floridastateparks.org/charlotteharbor/](http://www.floridastateparks.org/charlotteharbor/).**

