

HABITAT MATCHING AT BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL PRESERVE

Big Cypress National Preserve in southern Florida is made up of five unique habitats. Each one is home to a diverse array of wildlife, from Florida Panthers to West Indian Manatees. Learn about the different habitats that make Big Cypress special, then complete the activity on page 2, matching each animal to the habitat it lives in.

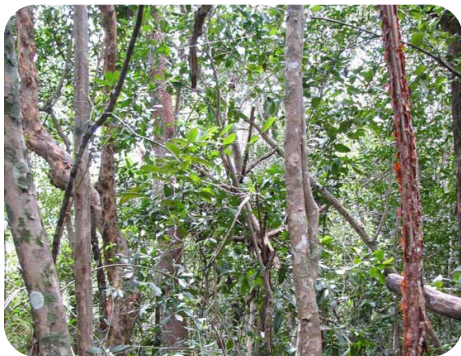
CYPRESS SWAMPS

The bald cypress trees for which the preserve is named grow in solution holes, water-filled depressions in limestone created by the acidic byproducts of decomposition. Decomposition is a process that happens when vegetation decays and dies. Cypress trees are the most flood tolerant of all Florida tree species. Other plants that grow in these swamps include ferns, spikerush, marsh fleabane, and airplants that grow on the trunks of cypress trees.



PINELANDS

Pinelands are dominated by slash pines, which are very sturdy and fire tolerant. In fact, their name comes from their history of being “slashed,” or harvested, for building materials. Pinelands are maintained through controlled burns. Without these burns, the pines would be overshadowed by less fire tolerant hardwood hammocks. Fire is also important to the life cycle of the pines. When their seed cones are exposed to heat, the cones open and release seeds. Pinelands grow on nearly level land or on porous limestone and include, saw palmettos, wildflowers, and ferns.



HARDWOOD HAMMOCKS

Hardwood Hammocks are closed canopy forests composed of broad-leaved evergreens. They are tall, dense, shady, and cool.



PRAIRIES

Prairies are made up of low growing plants such as grasses. Their proximity to hammocks and low density make them attractive to many animals.



ESTUARIES

Estuaries are ideal environments for marine species to mate and raise their young. Plants in the area include marsh grasses and mangroves.

DID YOU KNOW? The National Park Trust purchased 100 acres of privately-held land from 18 separate owners that are now a part of the Preserve.

MATCH THE ANIMAL TO ITS HABITAT

Using the word bank below and the information under each photo, match the animal with its Big Cypress habitat.

CYPRUS SWAMPS
PINELANDS
HARDWOOD HAMMOCKS
PRAIRIES
ESTUARIES



I'm an **AMERICAN ALLIGATOR**. I'm a great swimmer, but I can weigh up to 1,000 pounds, making it hard to walk on land.

I LIVE IN _____.



I'm a **FLORIDA PANTHER**. I like to climb tall trees, stalk my prey from above, and nap in the shade.

I LIVE IN _____.



I'm a **RED COCKADED WOODPECKER**. I make my home in mature trees, but I'm endangered because humans like to use those trees in construction.

I LIVE IN _____.



I'm a **WEST INDIAN MANATEE**. I'm a marine animal and I spend eight hours a day eating. I need a safe space for my calf to grow.

I LIVE IN _____.



I'm a **MARSH RABBIT**. Unlike other rabbits, I walk to get around instead of hopping, and I can swim too! I like to eat grasses.

I LIVE IN _____.

MATCH THE ANIMAL TO ITS HABITAT



I'm a **FOX SQUIRREL**. I like to spend time jumping from tree to tree. Scientists track me because I'm so hard to catch!

I LIVE IN _____.



I'm a **FLORIDA BLACK BEAR**. I'm an omnivore and I come down from the trees to search for nuts and berries, or to hunt for small mammals.

I LIVE IN _____.



I'm a **BOBCAT**. I'm much smaller than a panther, but I'm still a skilled hunter. I like eating small mammals that live in low grass.

I LIVE IN _____.

Match the animal with its Big Cypress habitat.

- CYPRUS SWAMPS**
- PINELANDS**
- HARDWOOD HAMMOCKS**
- PRAIRIES**
- ESTUARIES**



I'm a **RIVER OTTER**. I like to stay in the water, but close to Cypress trees so that I can make my den under their roots.

I LIVE IN _____.

- Alligator - Cypress Swamps
- Panther - Hardwood Hammocks
- Woodpecker - Pinelands
- Manatee - Estuaries
- Rabbit - Prairies
- Fox Squirrel - Pinelands
- Florida Black Bear - Hardwood Hammocks
- River Otter - Cypress Swamps
- Bobcat - Prairies

ANSWER KEY