

Field Trip to Coastal Jewel (Skora) Property  
Paul A. Schmalzer, Ph.D.  
August 8, 2009

The Coastal Jewel (Skora) property is located east of Marie Street, west of the Florida East Coast Railroad, north of the Jordan Scrub Sanctuary, and south of the Oakmont Preserve development in the Town of Malabar. It consists of about 188 acres. The property extends from the Jordan Scrub Sanctuary to the scrub mitigation tract on the Oakmont Preserve development.

This property was added to the CARL Scrub Jay Refugia Project (now Florida Forever Brevard Coastal Scrub Ecosystem Project) in a 1995 boundary amendment. The boundary amendment included what is now the Jordan Scrub Sanctuary and adjoining properties and was supported by a unanimous vote of the Selection and Management Committee. Work done for the Scrub Conservation and Development Plan (Swain et al. 1995) was instrumental in identifying this and other important areas for scrub conservation. The Jordan Blvd. site (including Coastal Jewel) was considered an important addition to the CARL Project because it had high quality scrubby flatwoods in a mosaic with mesic flatwoods and freshwater marshes. These communities provided actual and potential habitat to species dependent on scrub and flatwoods including the Florida Scrub-Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*), gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*), and several rare plants.

Continued studies of Florida Scrub-Jay habitat and populations (e.g., Breininger et al. 2003) since then have indicated that this continues to be an important area for Scrub-Jay conservation. Surveys for rare scrub plants (Schmalzer and Foster 2005) located four Florida-listed species (*Lechea cernua*, *Lechea divaricata*, *Nolina atopocarpa*, *Pinguicula lutea*) on Jordan Scrub Sanctuary; based on the similarity in habitat, these plants would be expected to occur on the Coastal Jewel property.

The public field trip on August 8, 2009 afforded an opportunity to examine the current status of the site. The property retains the characteristics for which it was selected. Scrubby flatwoods, mesic flatwoods, and freshwater marshes comprise most of the site. Wildfires in 2008 burned much of the property. Although more extensive than would have been done under prescribed burning, the wildfires reduced fuel loads and thinned the pine canopy over much of the site. Initial management will actually be easier due to the wildfires. The flora of the site is predominately native with minor amounts of Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), Chinese tallowtree (*Sapium sebiferum*), and cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*) along edges such as Marie Street and the Florida Power and Light (FPL) easement.

Acquisition of this property will substantially increase the Jordan Scrub Sanctuary adding high quality native communities, connect conservation lands to the scrub

mitigation area on the Oakmont Preserve development, and provide increased protected and managed habitat important to the long-term survival of the Scrub-Jay population in this area.

## References

- Breining, D., B. Toland, D. Oddy, M. Legare, J. Elseroad, and G. Carter. 2003. Biological criteria for the recovery of Florida Scrub-Jay populations on public lands in Brevard County and Indian River County. Final report to Endangered Species Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Jacksonville, Florida. Dyanamac Corporation, Kennedy Space Center, Florida. 104 p.
- Schmalzer, P.A. and T.E. Foster. 2005. Multi-species scrub plant survey in Brevard County, Florida, for occurrence of Federally listed endangered or threatened scrub plant species. Final report to Brevard County Natural Resources Management Office. Dynamac Corporation, Kennedy Space Center, Florida. 79 p.
- Swain, H.M., P.A. Schmalzer, D.R. Breining, K. V. Root, S.A. Bergen, S. R. Boyle, and S. MacCaffree. 1995. Appendix B: Biological Consultant's Report. In: Scrub Conservation and Development Plan, Brevard County. Submitted to Natural Resource Management Division, Brevard County, Florida. Florida Institute of Technology, Melbourne.