

## Forests

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The term "forest", as most people think of it, does not really fit Canaveral National Seashore (CANA); however, there are conspicuous areas of big trees. These are called hammocks, which are basically islands of trees surrounded by marsh or scrub. At CANA's location along the "frost line", hammock overstory consists of temperate species, while the understory is primarily subtropical. Predominate overstory trees are live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) and cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*). Other common trees are southern red cedar (*Juniperus silicicola*), redbay (*Persea borbonia*), southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*) and pignut (*Carya glabra*). Typical understory trees and shrubs include nakedwood (*Myrsianthes fragrans*), marlberry (*Ardesia escallanioides*), white stopper (*Eugenia axillaris*) and yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*). A keen observer can find several species of rare orchids, bromeliads and ferns growing on the limbs of the overstory trees, particularly large live oaks.

Two other tree communities are common in the park - oak scrub and pine flatwoods. Oak scrub has much smaller trees than the hammocks, generally being 10 feet or less in height. It is comprised of several live oak species, including myrtle oak (*Quercus myrtifolia*), chapman's oak (*Q. chapmanii*), sand live oak (*Q. geminata*) and some live oak (*Q. virginiana*). These are called live oaks because they retain green leaves throughout the winter. Several federally-listed animals and species of concern, such as the Florida scrub jay, eastern indigo snake and gopher tortoise live in scrub oak habitat. Scrub oak is a fire adapted community; under natural conditions it will burn every 7-20 years. This keeps the oaks under six feet tall and maintains open areas. If fire is excluded, the trees grow to heights of 12-15 feet, open areas close in and the habitat is no longer suitable for the jay, snake or tortoise (for further discussion of these animals and their habitats, see Animals/Birds, Reptiles). The park is implementing a prescribed fire program to return fire to its vital role in the CANA ecosystem.

Pine flatwoods contain large slash pine trees (*Pinus elliottii*), up to 30 meters high, in an open canopy. Main shrub species include saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), myrtle oak, fetter bush (*Lyonia lucida*), stagger bush (*L. fruticosa*), wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), and gallberry (*Ilex glabra*). The pines are self-pruning, leaving a large gap between their branches and the shrub layer. The pine flatwoods are also fire adapted and if not burned periodically, will degrade as wildlife habitat. At CANA the bald eagles nest in the tallest pine trees. Biologists believe that the number of nesting eagles in the park is limited by the number of suitable nesting trees. Therefore, it is critical to allow fire to stimulate the regeneration of smaller pines and reduce high fuel loads that could kill nesting trees (for more information on CANA's eagles, see Animals/Birds section).