

## Scrublands

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Much of the area in and around Canaveral National Seashore (CANA) is oak scrub, a plant community consisting of several species of small oak trees. These include: myrtle oak (*Quercus myrtifolia*), chapman's oak (*Q. chapmanii*), sand live oak (*Q. geminata*) and some live oak (*Q. virginiana*). They are called live oaks because they retain green leaves throughout the winter. Saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) and other scrub species are common components. Several federally-listed animals and species of concern, such as the Florida scrub jay, eastern indigo snake and gopher tortoise rely on 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 and Reptiles). The park is implementing a prescribed fire program to return fire to its vital role in the CANA ecosystem.