

THE NATURAL STONEY BROOK



by Larry Eichert



There are 11 different micro-ecosystems that are found in 76 different areas throughout Stoneybrook.

They are divided into three major groups.

Wetlands

Upland

Mitigated sections

(a term used for a wetland that has been altered)

Cypress marsh by the main gate on the north side.



Hardwood Hammocks

(shady place)

There are 3 different types
in our community.

Temperate Dry Hardwood
Mixed Wetland Hardwood
Wetland Mixed Hardwood

(The two hardwood types differ in plant
diversification and complexity)

Spanish moss, oaks and
cypress trees make these
areas easy to spot.

Temperate Hardwood East
side behind Quail Greens
Terrace.



Dry Hardwood Stands can be found in a variety of places in Stoneybrook.

They contain a wider variety of oaks and pine trees. Spanish moss, and woody vines such as Virginia Creeper and Devil's Claw some ferns and occasionally bromeliads.

Upland area east of Fairway Isles Lane along the golf course.



Wet Prairie

A wetland prairie is really a marsh dominated by grasses and is slightly lower than a flat pine area. Nutrient starved soil flooding and drying prevent it from becoming a swamp.

Looking west from the west side of Stone Harbour Loop.



Where systems
merge

Wet Prairie looking
westward into a
Wetland Forested
Mixed showing
Broad-leaved
Arrowhead and
Pickerelweed in the
fore ground.

River Heritage Blvd.
looking west just north
of the Pinnacle building



Bald Cypress

The bald cypress lose their needles during the winter, hence the name “bald”. New growth appears in March.

Heritage Isles Way
north of Quail Greens
Terrace looking
westward.



Spanish Moss

Bald Cypress covered with Spanish moss, which really is not a moss but an air plant taking moisture and nutrients only from the air. Cypress knees can be seen in the fore ground.

Heritage Isles Way
north of Quail Greens
Terrace looking
eastward.



Broad-leaved Arrowhead

The three-petaled white flowers can be present any time of the year. Seminole Indians used this plant for treatment from alligator bites; and wildlife enjoy eating the starchy tuberous roots.

They are often planted along the littoral zones of holding ponds to purify water run off and prevent erosion.

Wetland at Stone Harbour Loop junction looking south.



Mitigated Area

A Cypress stand covered with water lettuce and duck weed plus invasive terrestrial plants. By interrupting the natural flow of water, the system is in the process of adapting to a modified environment.

On Haven Harbour Way west of New Briton Ct. looking north.



Native and Invasive

The light green water plants in the background is water lettuce. Under the leaves is an extensive root system that provides protection for small fish and extracts nutrients dissolved in the water. It is an invasive plant in our area. The middle plant life is dollar weed taking advantage of food and water. The light plant at the bottom is duck weed an important pond plant.

Close up of previous slide.



Water lettuce Close up

An excess amount is due to a high amount of nutrients in the water which can be caused by decomposition and/or fecal matter from an over population of fish.

Haven Harbor Way



Blue Flag Iris

This plant is endemic (native) to our area. It prefers moist to wet soils. It blooms in the early spring. It is a favorite of many insects that feed on its nectar. It has an inferior flower (the male reproductive system is below the female) which prevents self fertilization. It relies on the fact that the insects will carry the pollen to other flowers of the same species.

Wetland at the junction of
Stone Harbour Loop.



Wax Myrtle

Also known as southern bayberry is one of Florida's wide spread plants. It can be found in a variety of habitats. It was used by early settlers who gathered the berries and melted off the waxy covering to make bayberry candles. Other parts of the plants were used for the treatment of stomach aches, ulcers, dry skin and relief from the common cold.

It is found along the boarder areas of temperate hardwood throughout the community.



Bromeliad

This plant is an epiphyte. It grows on other plants without the aid of soil, but they are not parasites, doing no harm to the host tree.

They obtain food from organic debris and rainfall trapped by the plant. We are on the northern boarder of their growing range.

Wetland Forest section between Brookfield Terrace and Cedar Harbour Ct. on the west side.



Pickerelweed

This plant is a wide range aquatic plant and can be found as far north as Canada. The violet blue flowers are clustered on an upright spike. Blooms can be seen any time of the year. Butterflies are fond of the nectar. It is found along the waters edges and helps clean the water.

It is found throughout our community in wetland areas.



These pictures show the same area by New Briton Court. Invasive species plants have over taken the surrounding wetland because of inadequate drainage resulting in an excess of nutrients from decomposing organic matter and an increase in the fish population that does not have access to other bodies of water.



The maintenance of our wetlands is an on going process. During construction of our community they were disturbed. This provided opportunity for other plants to move into the area.

Both pictures were taken in the same place on River Heritage Blvd. The picture below shows a years growth of an invasive species plant covering the disturbed area in front of the wetland.





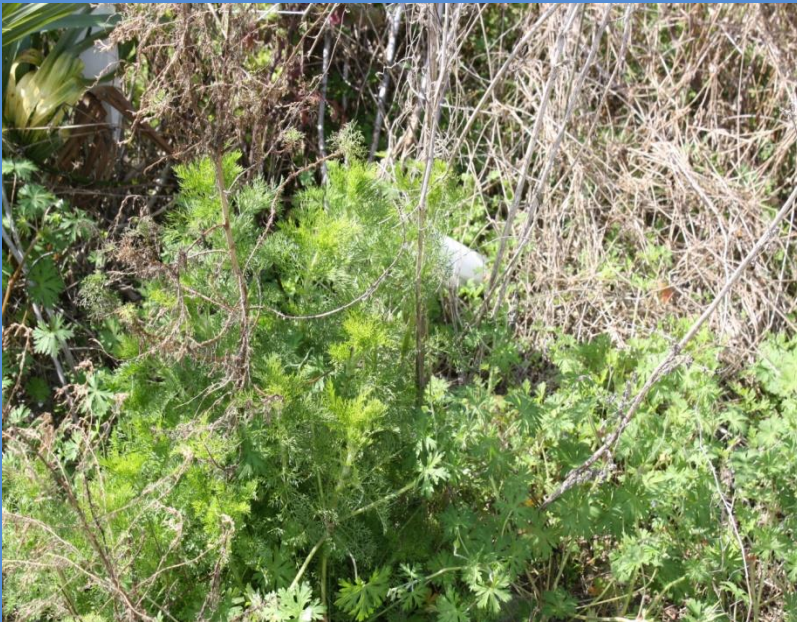
Down flow drain on Grand Harbour Parkway



Animal access passage way at Stone Harbour Loop.

An increase in sediment build up is a result of several years of unmanaged drain cleaning within the community. This leads to flooding of our streets and prohibits some wetland areas from their natural drying process.

A variety of opportunistic plant species that take hold in the mitigated areas surrounding the wetlands. Some are necessary for succession and others are invasive.



Trash in our community is detrimental to plant and animal life.



Clean lakes provide a food supply for a variety of bird species.





Wood storks search the shallows for food.

A blue heron has his catch for the day.





Community awareness of Stoneybrook's natural features and natural resources is the responsibility of all the members of our community. Spend some time to become acquainted with the natural environment. Walk some of the trails, sit and observe, but most of all become a part of the natural community in which we live.

What was provided to make us more ***A PART OF THE ENVIRONMENT*** is gone because we have grown so ***FAR APART FROM THE ENVIRONMENT*** that we have little or no respect for it.