

Colleton State Park Cypress Swamp Nature Trail

What is a swamp?

Simply put, it's a wetland forest. It stays wet much of the year. The water moves through these areas, sometimes slowly, and during periods of flooding, very quickly and powerfully. Bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) and water-tupelo (*Nyssa aquatica*) make up the main species in a swamp. They have buttressed bases to help them withstand the elements.



Swamps and other wetlands absorb, filter and slowly release water, making them important habitats.

Along this trail, if you walk quietly, you may spot river otters, wood ducks, beautiful, yellow prothonotary warblers and more.

Be aware!
Some dangers are inherent in park settings, including venomous snakes, fire ants and poison ivy. Look where you are going, stay on the trail and leave plants and animals alone.



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Park Hours: M-SU 9 am-6 pm
9 am - 9 pm during Daylight Savings
Office Hours: 11am-noon

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SOUTH CAROLINA'S Colleton STATE PARK

Cypress Swamp Nature Trail
Self-guided Trail Brochure
Distance—0.3 mile



Help us conserve resources. Return this brochure to the box when you have finished the trail.

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS

Cypress Swamp Nature Trail

The Cypress Swamp Nature Trail starts among upland hardwoods and leads you down to a cypress swamp. There are many things to see in a short walk along this trail. As you walk, watch for the numbered, brown markers. Those numbers correspond to the information in this brochure.

1. The trees leaning over the road are live oaks. As hinted by their name, these oaks are evergreens, with leaves present year-round. They often are decorated with resurrection fern and Spanish moss, neither of which hurt the tree. They are epiphytes, or plants that live upon other plants.
2. High-bush huckleberry, a relative of blueberry, grows along the edge of the swamp. These shrubs have small leaves and smooth stems. In early summer, they produce blueberry-like fruit.
3. River birches thrive in the moist soils near rivers. Their paper-like, exfoliating (peeling) bark makes identification easy throughout the year.
4. Loblolly pines are more common now than in historic times. Native to low, poorly drained soils along streams and floodplains, they are now the favorite pine for commercial production. They adapt easily to new soils and grow faster than slash and longleaf pines.
5. Red buckeyes are a shrub or small tree found in moist soils of the Southeast. Look for the red flowers in April-May, or the “palm-shaped” leaves that grow opposite one another.
6. Wax myrtle is an aromatic shrub that produces small, grayish-blue fruits. These fruits are a favorite late winter food for yellow-rumped warblers, also known as myrtle warblers.
7. Red bay is another aromatic plant. This important wildlife food species is used by songbirds, wild turkey, bobwhite quail, deer and caterpillars of Palamedes swallowtail butterflies. A new concern for this species is the spread of the Asian red bay ambrosia beetle that carries and spreads a fungus which is lethal to the red bays.
8. The southern magnolia offers it’s own sweet

fragrance. During May and June, the beautiful, white flowers of the southern magnolia sweeten the air all around the tree. Later, these flowers develop into red fruits that provide winter food for many birds.

9. Several ferns can be found on the forest floor. The netted chain ferns have light green fronds with connecting leafy tissue along the rachis (stem). Ferns produce spores, not seeds, to reproduce. Look for two types of fronds: sterile and fertile. For the netted chain fern, the leafy frond is sterile. The fertile frond looks shriveled and fleshy.
10. Cinnamon fern get their name from the cinnamon-colored spores on the fertile fronds, which form long, straight clumps in the middle of the fern.
11. Royal ferns grow in low, wet areas. Related to the cinnamon fern, they also have cinnamon colored spores on the fertile fronds. They can be distinguished by the leaflets. Royal ferns have large, separate terminal leaflets, while cinnamon fern leaflets are smaller and connected to each other by a leafy tissue.
12. Red maple is a common floodplain tree. Leaves have three main lobes and red stems. The samara, or winged seeds, dry and “helicopter” down in fall.
13. Tulip tree, also known as yellow poplar, is one of the first flowers available for honey bees. The leaves look like a silhouette of a tulip flower, which helps in identifying it.
14. The willow oak is common in this floodplain. It produces acorns that will feed wild turkeys, deer, squirrels and wood ducks.
15. Bitternut hickory is commonly found in moist soils along rivers and floodplains. It has 7-11 leaflets, and a bright yellow bud, which gives it another common name, yellow-bud hickory.

Walk to the fork in the trail. You are now in the floodplain of the Edisto River, a black-water river. The water is clean and healthy, but “stained” by the tannins from decaying leaves in the swamps and floodplains along the river. Walk to the river. The Red Bank Canal enters the river here. Built by slaves, it was used to float timber out of the swamp and

downriver to the sawmills. Looking around, you will see many bald cypress trees, marked by the “knees” growing out of the ground. Knees help the bald cypress trees stand in the soft, swamp soils, and may help the tree “breathe” as well.



Red buckeye in bloom

16. Partridgeberries are a common ground cover and food source for birds. Look for small, white flowers or bright red berries on the ground.
17. Look into the water for a wood duck box. Wood duck boxes helped bring back populations after near extinction during the early 1900s.
18. From this intersection, you can return to the parking lot either way. The left trail will take you back to the start of the trail. The right trail will take you to the open field. Once there, follow the entrance road to the left to return to the park office.

Please return this brochure for the next trail user.



Cinnamon fern with fertile frond