

West Klosterman Preserve Tour

By Sanne Kure-Jensen

Site Background and Description

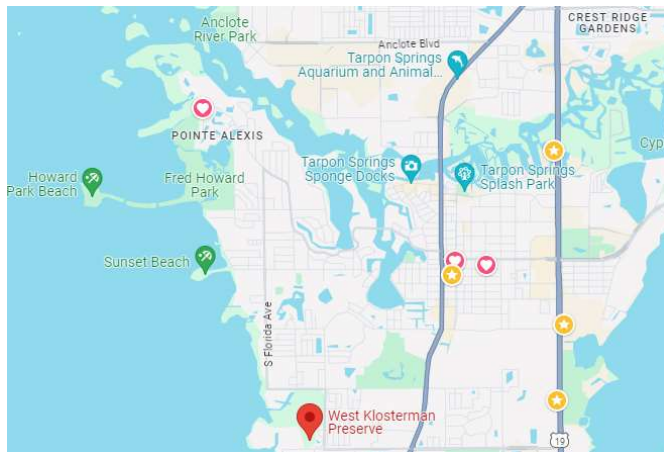
The West Klosterman Preserve is in southwest Tarpon Springs, Florida. The Preserve is nearly 14 acres and abuts the 76-acre Mariner's Point Management Area. More information on the Preserve is available at <https://wkpreserve.com>.

Fundraising is underway to prevent development. \$3,000,000 is needed by Sept 15, 2024 to purchase the property from the Pinellas County School Board. Only \$870,000 is left to raise as of May 15, 2024. Funds will go to the Pinellas County School Department to improve educational facilities, doubling benefits to this community. The funds will not go to private interests.

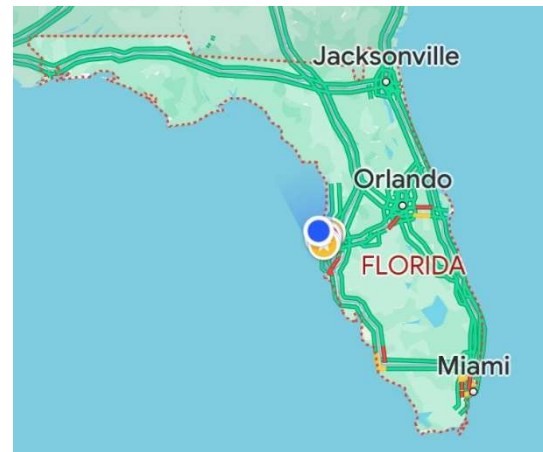
When preserved, Pinellas County will manage the Preserve. The County already oversees the adjacent Mariner's Cove Management Area <https://pinellas.gov/mariners-point-management-area>. The County may provide public access trails on the West Klosterman Preserve in the future.

The West Klosterman Preserve encompasses a sandy Coastal Ridge with areas of Sandhill Scrub, Pine Flatlands, Oak Hammock and the beginnings of a small Rosemary Bald. The Preserve is about 2000 feet from the shore of Saint Joseph Sound in the Gulf of Mexico.

Sandhill Scrub and Rosemary Bald ecosystems are classified as "globally imperiled" (G2/S2) by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory and are extremely rare in Pinellas County. Nearly all examples of these Ecosystems have already been developed in Pinellas County.



West Klosterman Preserve in southern Tarpon Springs



West Central Gulf Coast, Florida

Tours

Interpretive guides educate the public and potential donors on the importance of these rare and Imperiled habitats. West Klosterman Preserve Group board members and volunteers lead prearranged group tours.

Last Updated June 1, 2024

Guided groups enter the Preserve through the South Gate. Parking is available across the street. Ribbons on the fence represent incremental donations of \$20 each.

The Preserve is gated to protect this fragile habitat.



Planned Tour Stops and Discussion Topics

1. **Gopher Tortoise Burrow – Threatened species, Keystone species**, 350+ other animals use burrows. Please do not step near burrow – risk collapsing long tunnels or crushing eggs laid in apron. Tracks will indicate who is using the burrow. 15-16 burrows near Preserve trails.
2. **Longleaf Pine Sandhill – Endangered species and ecosystem, Keystone species** - history of fire in FL – suppressing fires causes changes in and loss of habitat. Residual charring on lower trunk bark only

Scrub Meadow of low herbaceous plants – importance of host plants for butterflies and caterpillars for birds

Describe whatever is in bloom or has notable seedheads that day: FL lupine, coastal pine honecombhead, pine barren frostweed, coastal dog fennel, pinewoods fingergrass, partridge peas, prickly pear cactus, FL goldenrod, Muhly grass, sedges, blue toadflax or netted pawpaw

3. Evan's **Deer Moss** – Lichen specializing in dry, upland environments, eaten by deer in scrub and alpine conditions. This lichen thrives in ecosystems managed by regular fires. Lichen are indicators of clean air.

Bluejack oak, Sand live oak – better choices for residential yards than huge live oaks

4. **Gopher Apples** – lush in dry conditions; food for gopher tortoise
5. **Rosemary Bald – Imperiled ecosystem** – this small colony of Florida Rosemary is declining due to poor management – stress of oak shade plus over a year of extreme drought. Typical growth habit is full sun, dry sandy soils. Allelopathic roots, propagation challenges and slow fire response yet long internal fire dependence

Nearby *Gladys Douglas Preserve* in Dunedin Florida has larger, healthier Florida Rosemary and Deer Moss patches.

Last Updated June 1, 2024

Giant Airplants – Endangered species – pineapple relative grows on the ground or in trees. 3 small and medium at this stop – at least 5 on property. Largest one 2-3' across has 4' bloom starting to open, awaiting pollinators and seeds – beetle threatens Florida populations

6. **Upland Pine Scrub** – Sand Pines – holds cones, short needles, different fire response than Longleaf pine

American Turkey oaks – often found near pines; offer fall color in landscapes

7. **Invasive Exotic Plants** almost exclusively at property edges – future management by County should prevent further incursion

- Boston Fern or Sword Fern (*Nephrolepis cordifolia*)
- Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolia*)
- Carrotwood Tree (*Cupaniopsis anacardioides*)
- Camphor Tree (*Cinnamomum camphora*)
- Chinese Tallow or Tallowwood (*Ximenia americana*)
- Giant Guinea Grass (*Urochloa maxima*)
- Roadside lantana (*Lantana strigocamara*)
- Lantana (*Lantana camara*)
- Madagascar Periwinkle (*Catharanthus roseus*)
- Natal Grass (*Rhynchelytrum repens*)
- Rosary pea (*Abrus precatorius*).
- Schefflera or Umbrella Tree (*Schefflera actinophylla*)
- St. Augustine grass (*Stenotaphrum secundatum*)
- Streaked Rattlepod (*Crotalaria pallada*); Please collect and dispose of seeds.
- Queen Palm (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*)

Impromptu Stops or Quick Trailside Messages

- Gopher tortoise sighting
- Gopher tortoise poop – high fiber
- Inactive or occupied tortoise burrow
- Typical former Coastal Dunes with white surface sand; yellow subsurface sand
- Raccoon or Nine-Banded Armadillo sighting or tracks
- Snake or eggs
- Special birds, flyovers or calls – osprey, black vultures; (*see list of birds observed below*)
- Harvester, pyramid or fungus farming ants
- Broom Sedges – friends made their family a new broom each winter from these stalks
- Hog plum – fruit for migrating birds; **Beware** trailside spiny branches
- Spurge Nettle, Florida Nettle or Touch-Me-Not; **Beware** this painful hazard!
- Poison Ivy (native) or Brazilian Pepper (invasive exotic); **Beware** this rash-causing hazard!
- Greenbrier, smilax – native, shoots taste like asparagus; **Beware** this thorny hazard!
- Muscadine grape vines – in bloom or in fruit
- American Beautyberry – in bloom or with purple berries
- Spanish Moss – *not Spanish and not a moss* – will not hurt trees, do not pay to remove
- Airplants, needleleaf ball moss

Additional Site Observations

- Evidence of fire on pine trunks. Some charcoal present. Anecdotally, there was a fire 17-20 years ago. Before fencing was installed, teens held parties with bonfires.
- Coastal ridge with slight rise above adjacent wetland and ponds in floodplain forest of Mariner's Point Management Area
- Several standing dead oak snags
- Recent storm-toppled sand pine with persistent cones
- Some young tree seedlings at woodland edges
 - Canopy of medium sized sand live oaks, blackjack oaks, turkey oaks
 - Areas of longleaf pines, sand pines and scattered slash pines
 - Understory of scrub oaks, hog plum, saw palmetto, beautyberry, grasses and greenbrier and muscadine grape vines
 - Airplants, Spanish moss in trees and deer moss on open ground
 - Several sabal palms
 - Diverse grasses including little bluestem, broom sedges, Muhly grass and wiregrass
 - No lichen lines on oaks or other evidence of inundation
 - Exposed sugar sand soils with minimal leaf and needle litter in open areas
 - Wooded areas have slowly accumulating fuel – leaf litter, pine needles, pinecones (1 area of chewed pinecones making a thick mulch), bunch grasses, woody twigs and branches
 - The Preserve is gated to prevent further vandalism, squatters or teen parties.

Birds Observed

Observed or verified by Merlin Sound recordings

- American Crow
- Black Vulture
- Blue Jay
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
- Carolina Chickadee
- Downy Woodpecker
- Eastern Towhee
- Fish Crow
- Great Crested Flycatcher
- Great Horned Owl
- Laughing Gull
- Mourning Dove
- Northern Cardinal
- Osprey
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Red Shouldered Hawk
- Tufted Titmouse
- Wood Stork

Insects Observed

Observed and verified by iNaturalist

- Buren's Pyramid Ants
- Eastern Lubber Grasshoppers
- Florida Harvester Ants
- Honeybees
- Hover Flies
- Lovebugs
- Metallic Flea Beetles
- Northern Fungus Farming Ants
- Spiders
- Swallowtail Butterflies
- Zebra Longwing Butterflies

Wildlife Observed

Observed and verified by iNaturalist

- Juvenile and adult Gopher Tortoises
- Gopher Tortoise - *inactive and active burrows, scat*
- Raccoon - *tracks*
- Nine-banded Armadillo – *tracks*
- Crab - *tracks*

Plants Observed

Observed and verified by Florida Native Plant Society specialists, Ecologists and iNaturalist App.

- American Beautyberry
- American Turkey Oak
- Barometer Earthstars
- Blue Toadflax
- Blackroot
- Bluejack Oak
- Bluestem
- Broom Sedge
- Carolina Laurelcherry
- Chapman's Oak
- Chickasaw Plum
- Coastal Dogfennel
- Coastal Pine Honecombhead
- Cup and saucer lichen
- Eastern Poison Ivy
- Eucalyptus or Melaleuca
- Evan's Deer Moss
- Fetterbush
- Florida Goldenrod
- Florida Lupine
- Florida Rosemary
- Florida Scrub Frostweed
- Giant Airplants
- Goldenrod
- Gopher Apple
- Greenbrier or Smilax – multiple varieties
- Hairs Sedge
- Hog Plum
- Huckleberry
- Jester Lichen
- Lantana
- Laurel Dodder or Love Vine
- Longleaf Pine
- Muhly Grass
- Muscadine Grape
- Myrtle Oak
- Netted Pawpaw
- Painted Leaf
- Partridge Pea
- Pine Barren Frostweed
- Pinewoods Fingergrass
- Pixey Cup Lichen
- Prickly Pear Cactus
- Red Cedar
- Sabal Palms
- Sand Live Oaks
- Sand Pine
- Saw Palmetto
- Scrub Live Oaks
- Scrub Wiregrass
- Shining Sumac
- Silkgrass
- Sky Blue Lupine
- Slash Pine
- Smith's Earthstar
- Southern Needleleaf Airplant
- Spanish Moss
- Spurge Nettle
- Streaked Rattlepod or Rattlebox
- Virginia Creeper
- Water Oaks



Image from
 PRELIMINARY FIELD SURVEY OF
 THE 14-ACRE PCSB KLOSTERMAN
 ROAD SITE
 08 March 2021
 By Donald Richardson, Ph.D., CEP, PWS
 Ecological Consultants, Inc.

Figure 3. Vegetation and Listed
 Species map for the PCSB site

Legend

- GT – Gopher tortoise burrow
- CE – Florida Rosemary
 (*Ceratiola ericoides*)
- TU – Giant Airplant
 (*Tillandsia utriculata*)

View site photos from May 12, 2024 at

www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/vky96li8nomvxbpzgh86n/ACaUNCPRZvDj6ECyLxJew58?rlkey=ytylqzmib5nwb53nii0bxy7u&st=wqv29xi4&dl=0