

## *History & Nature*

A pre-Columbian Native American shell midden dating back possibly to the Weedon Island Period 1,500 years ago sits along the shore of the Dead River. The midden was identified in 1998. Cat-faced pine trees scattered throughout the park serve as living exhibits and evidence of the late 1800s turpentine industry. Trees were scarred to release resin when processed into turpentine. In 1970, the property was acquired by the state and was renamed Ochlockonee River State Park.

Nestled in beautiful pine flatwoods, the park is the perfect area for nature studies. Of special interest is the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker that nests in the cavities of the park's mature pine trees. Small grass ponds, bayheads and oak thickets are diverse habitats for the park's wide variety of wildlife. Deer, fox squirrel, bobcat, gray fox and numerous species of birds are commonly seen. Patient park visitors may be rewarded with a glimpse of white squirrels, a rare color variant of the Eastern gray Squirrel. Florida black bears, gopher tortoises, fox squirrels and snowy egrets are other threatened or endangered species that call the park home.

Rare plant species, such as wiregrass gentian and ladies tresses (a rare orchid with spiraling fragrant flowers), may be seen in the spring. Colorful wildflowers living in the pine flatwoods, such as meadow-beauty and yellow-eyed grass, depend on fires to survive and flourish.

The junction of the Ochlockonee and Dead Rivers offers the ideal setting for a picnic. A boat ramp provides access to the Ochlockonee River, Ochlockonee Bay and the Gulf of Mexico.

Pine flatwoods, named for the flat monotonous topography shaped by fire, is the park's most significant natural community. A prescribed burning program mimics the natural fire cycle and provides healthy ecosystems.