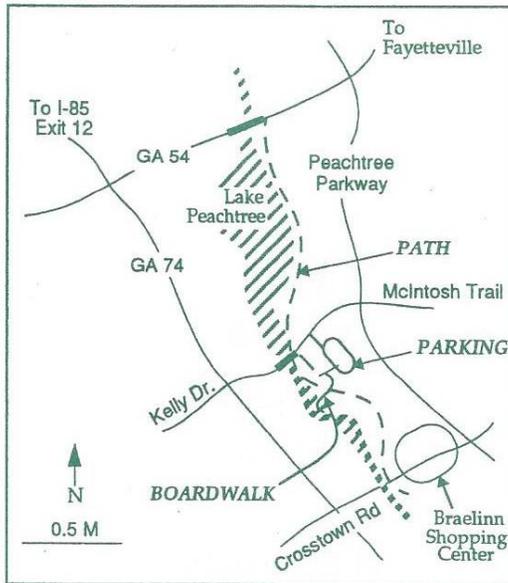


The Flat Creek wetlands, downstream from Lake Peachtree, are now under the watchful eye of the Southern Conservation Trust, Inc. SCT built a boardwalk into the wetlands with money contributed by Fayette County as a condition of its permit to develop Lake Horton. The boardwalk gives visitors a close look at the wonderful world of wetlands.

Peachtree City is about 35 miles southwest of downtown Atlanta. Parking for the boardwalk is off McIntosh Trail, near the Frederick J. Brown, Jr. Amphitheater. The path to the boardwalk begins about midway along the path from the parking lot to the amphitheater.



Uplands vs Wetlands

The path to the boardwalk begins in uplands dominated by loblolly pine trees and sweetgum trees. When you arrive at section one of this two-section boardwalk you will be at the natural border between upland and wetland.

Stop and compare vegetation behind you and ahead of you. One significant difference is the pine tree, common in the upland but absent in the wetland. In Fayette County, pine trees often mark the boundary between upland and wetland.

Two things to note on this short section of boardwalk:

- Numbers at the edges of the boardwalk identify plants. The numbers correspond with descriptions that follow in this pamphlet.
- The boardwalk contains white boards, made from recycled plastic, being tested for durability.

Riverine Wetlands

The Flat Creek wetlands are mostly in the flood plain of the creek. Here you will see many plants and conditions characteristic of riverine wetlands. Riverine wetlands are much different from coastal wetlands and swamps like Georgia's Okefenokee.

Riverine wetlands are formed mostly from upland water seeping through the ground to the water table which flows to the nearest creek bed. Wetlands purify water. And wetland vegetation in a flood plain helps to control the flow of water during floods.

A riverine wetland is also host to birds, deer, raccoon, fox, beaver, and other residents. Many animal species depend on wetlands for life. Except for some wetland birds and insects, animals are rarely seen...but keep your eyes open. You are likely to see dragonflies, sitting with wings spread wide, and damselflies which look like small dragonflies but sit with wings together. And you are likely to see and hear a variety of birds, some whose lives depend on wetlands.

Wetland Plants

All plants listed here live in wetlands. However, some are also able to live in uplands and are noted accordingly.

- (1) **American Hornbeam, *Carpinus caroliniana***: A gray muscular trunk is this tree's most distinguishing characteristic. Its leaves are small, narrowly oval and toothed.
- (2) **Arrow Arum, *Peltandra virginica***: This is a common flowering plant whose most conspicuous characteristic is its large leaf, up to 18 inches long, shaped like an arrowhead. Its straight veins help to distinguish it from the Swamp Potato described below.
- (3) **Black Willow, *Salix nigra***: This is a tree with rough bark, narrow leaves 3 to 5 inches long, and hairy white fruits (containing seeds) that drift through the spring air. You'll find several of these where the boardwalk and recreation path cross.
- (4) **Bur Reed, *Sparganium americanum***: It usually stands in water. Its narrow 4-foot leaves look somewhat like leaves of the cattail. Look for burs growing from a center stalk.
- (5) **Cattails, *Typha latifolia***: The brown 8-inch flower or fruit mass on a 6-foot stem accompanied by narrow, 6-foot, upright leaves identify this plant. It is usually found in water or very wet soil.

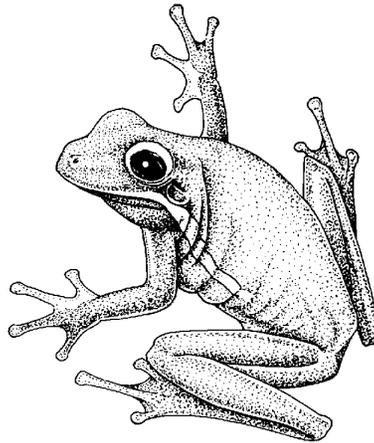
- (6) **Climbing Hydrangea, *Decumaria barbara***: This vine has shiny oval leaves on stems that stand away from the tree to which it clings. In spring it produces showy clusters of white flowers, often high in the tree.
- (7) **Cross Vine, *Bignonia capreolata***: The yellow-tipped, red, funnel-shaped flowers of this vine decorate the tops of trees before falling to the ground and announcing their presence to passers-by. At eye level you can identify this vine by its two leaf pairs, each pair hanging on a short stock on opposite sides of the vine. If you cut across a stem you can see the cross for which the vine is named.
- (8) **Jewelweed, *Impatiens capensis***: Also known as Spotted touch-me-not, this plant adorns the entrance to the main boardwalk. Its July flowers hang like pendants among its 4-inch leaves which are light green with wavy edges. You can relieve the itch of poison ivy by crushing jewelweed stems and dabbing its oils on the itchy spot.
- (9) **Soft Rush, *Juncus effusus***: Often called Juncus, this is a common species in this wetland. Its bright green, tubular, leaf-like stems grow in large unmistakable clumps up to 4 feet high. Because it is so common here it is a significant wetland indicator.
- (10) **Lizard's Tail, *Saururus cernuus***: This prolific plant with heart-shaped leaves produces a long curving stem of little white flowers in spring.
- (11) **Loiblolly Pine, *Pinus taeda***: This common pine in north Georgia has 9-inch twisted needles in bunches of three.
- (12) **Murdannia, *Murdannia keisak***: This is a ground-covering plant about a foot high at maturity, with narrow 2-inch leaves. It produces small, pink or purple, 3-petaled flowers in September or October. It can be seen at several locations along the main boardwalk.
- (13) **Netted Chain Fern, *Woodwardia areolata***: Commonly confused with Sensitive Fern, the lobes of this fern are alternating along the stem. But the name actually comes from the chain-like structure of spore clusters on the fertile fronds that rise in mid-summer from the center of the plant. The netted chain fern is always found in wet soil.

- (14) **Poison Ivy, *Rhus radicans***: Lealets, in groups of three, hang from large hairy clinging vines in this wetland. You will find some poison ivy ground plants also. Leaves, branches, flowers, berries, and trunk of this vine contain a toxic oil that can cause severe itching.
- (15) **Rattan Vine, *Berchemia scandens***: This is a friendly vine with small oval leaves and very supple stems that can be woven into baskets and other articles.
- (16) **Red Maple, *Acer rubrum***: This tree is common in the wetland but it will grow well in the upland as well. Since it blooms in mid-winter, it is one of the earliest signs of coming spring.
- (17) **River Birch, *Betula nigra***: The defoliating paper-like bark on the branches and trunk of small river birch make this tree easily identifiable in the Flat Creek Wetland. It grows naturally in wet ground and is also a popular landscape tree.
- (18) **Sedge, *Carex* sp.**: A grass-like plant whose stems have three edges forming a triangular cross section. This is another common wetland plant.
- (19) **Sensitive Fern, *Onoclea sensibilis***: Unlike its look-alike, the netted chain fern, the lobes of the sensitive fern are opposing. This is a slightly larger fern with wavy lobes. It is always found in wet soil. This fern, sensitive to cold, turns brown with the first frost.
- (20) **Southern Cane, *Arundinaria gigantea***: Also called Canebrake and River Cane, this is the only native bamboo in the U.S. It is often found on the fringes of rivers, creeks, and ponds.
- (21) **Spatterdock, *Nuphar luteum***: The large oval leaves of this plant rival the Arrow Arum in size. It produces a 2-inch wide, yellow, bowl-shaped flower in summer.
- (22) **Marsh St. John's Wort, *Triadenum virginicum***: The Marsh St. John's Wort produces pink flowers in summer.
- (23) **Swamp Chestnut Oak, *Quercus michauxii***: This tree has large oval sawtooth leaves, similar to chestnut leaves.

- (24) **Swamp Potato, *Sagittaria latifolia***: Also known as Duck Potato and Broad-leaved Arrowhead, this plant is often confused with Arrow Arum. But the leaf of the Duck Potato is more oval, and its veins are distinctly curved.
- (25) **Sweetgum, *Liquidambar styraciflua***: This tree is common in wetland and upland. It has distinctive star-shaped leaves and 1-inch, prickly spherical seed pods.

Wetlands Protection

Wetlands are given a measure of protection by the U.S. Clean Water Act which governs the use of wetlands. There are several state and federal agencies responsible for protecting wetland values through a permitting process.



Southern Conservation Trust: SCT is a non-profit organization with offices in Peachtree City, Georgia. SCT was incorporated in 1993 for the purpose of protecting the Flat Creek wetland and other natural areas in Georgia. SCT was formed to maintain, protect and enhance natural areas entrusted to its care for public use. SCT will consider accepting or purchasing land or conservation easements of unique and endangered properties in the SE United States.



Flat Creek Nature Area

Wetlands Guide

192 McIntosh Trail
Peachtree City, GA 30269
Direct: 770-846-4730

