

- On the Cover: Juvenile Tarpon N
- Can grow up to 280 lb. and 8' in length.
 - Breeds in passes and lays eggs in the open ocean.
 - The only marine fish that can breathe air, allowing juveniles to escape competition and predation in very low oxygen mangrove pools.

About the Lemon Creek Estuary:

- Lemon Creek is brackish, meaning “somewhat salty.” It receives saltwater tidal flow from Lemon Bay and fresh water from rains and surface water flows. The creek’s saltwater level varies considerably based on weather events. An area where fresh and salt water mix is known as an estuary. Fish, including juvenile Tarpon and Snook, and other species (such as Blue Crab) living in the creek must be able to adapt to the varying conditions.
- The creek has very reduced oxygen levels which also limit the species that can survive there.

Write-in additional species you observed:

N = native E = exotic

Lemon Bay Conservancy gratefully acknowledges the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program for providing grant funding to support development of the safari walk programs at Wildflower and to print this brochure.



www. CHNEP.org
The CHNEP is a partnership working to protect the natural environment from Venice to Bonita Springs to Winter Haven.

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Photos by Bill Dunson and Eva Furner.
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Take a Nature Safari: Use this brochure to take a “safari” walk along Lemon Creek at Wildflower Preserve. On a safari, travelers take note of the species they see. You can do that too! As you spot the various species mentioned in this brochure, use the checkboxes next to the pictures to mark the animals and plants you see. You may want to write a date in the checkbox and save your brochure from visit to visit to mark additional sightings on later walks. The descriptions below each picture will tell you a little about the species that you are observing.

Wildflower is open to Lemon Bay Conservancy members daily. The public is invited to visit the preserve during regularly scheduled walks and public events. LBC membership information and the schedule of walks are available on the Lemon Bay Conservancy website and at the entry kiosk.

All visitors must review and comply with all posted preserve rules. Visitors to Wildflower Preserve do so at your own risk.

LEMON BAY
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CONSERVANCY
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- Typically the mangrove closest to the water with prop roots. Dark green leaves.
- Fruits (propagules) drop from the tree and stick in the mud or float away to colonize new areas.



- Normally found in muddy areas with roots/ pneumatophores that stick up 6-8 inches
- Leaves are a dull green on top and whitish/salty underneath



- The mangrove with rounded light green leaves on both sides and no unusual roots.
- Salt glands can be seen by holding a leaf up to the light.



- Sometimes called high tide bush since it grows on slightly elevated ground above most tides.
- Leaves are pointed with serrated margins and are slightly succulent.



- A grass-like sedge that grows in areas inundated only at extreme high tides.
- Grows in areas behind the mangroves with very salty soil but not suitable for mangroves.



- Distinguished by white wings with dark edges and light blue antennae tips.
- Caterpillars feed on Saltwort, Peppergrass and Crucifers (cabbage-family plants).



- Resembles the Common Buckeye except darker with smaller eye spots in hind wing. Holds wings open.
- Caterpillars feed on Black Mangrove.



- Brightly colored moth with distinctive eye spots. Caterpillar protected by poisonous spines.
- Caterpillars feed on White Mangroves along the coast.



Rambur's Forktail

Ischnura ramburii

Length: 1.1" - 1.5"

- Found around fresh and brackish waters. Very slender body with wings folded back.
- Male coloration (as above) occurs in some females, but typical females are orange.



Blue Crab

Callinectes sapidus

Size: 5" - 9"

- Modified back legs called swimmerettes rotate 20 to 40 revolutions per minute allowing for rapid speed.
- Females have red claws and males blue.



Fiddler Crab

Uca

Carapace 1"
Cheliped (male) 2"

- There are several different species in Florida: Sand, Red-jointed, Marsh and Mud.
- Males have a large claw (cheliped) used to attract females and in territory battles.



Mud Crab

Panopeus spp

To 1.5" wide

- A common small predatory crab found around oyster shells, sponges and general debris. Resembles a tiny stone crab.
- Feeds on young oysters and clams.



Common Snook

Centropomus undecimalis

Size: up to 48"

- Snook are "protandric hermaphrodites" that change sex from male to female as they age.
- Snook are predatory and compete with tarpon. They are sensitive to cold.



Striped Mullet

Mugil cephalus

Size: Up to 19.5"

- A herbivore commonly known as the flathead grey mullet.
- Feeds in schools and may be seen jumping.



Sheepshead Minnow

Cyprinodon variegatus

Size: Up to 3"

- Predominately herbivorous. Extremely tolerant of changes in salinity and temperature.
- In breeding season, the male has a bright bluish back.



Sailfin Molly

Poecilia latipinna

Size: Up to 3"

- Males have a spectacular brightly colored dorsal fin.
- Feeds on algae and can live in a wide variety of salinities.

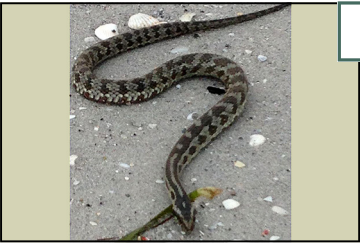


Leopard Frog

Lithobates sphenocephalus

Size: 2" - 4"

- Brown to green with three rows of irregularly arranged black spots on the dorsal side.
- Often confused with Pickerel Frogs and with the calls of the Cuban Tree Frog.



Mangrove Snake

Nerodia clarkii compressicauda

Avg. length: 14"-28"

- Variable in color, ranging from grayish-olive to dark black to reddish, with or without bands.
- The estuarine equivalent of the banded water snake. Feeds on fish.



Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

Nyctanassa violacea

Length: 24"
Wingspan: 44"

- Adults males and females similar in color. Juveniles brown streaked with heavy black bills.
- Primarily a crustacean eater and usually seen in saltwater areas along the coast.



Tricolored Heron

Egretta tricolor

Length: 26"
Wingspan: 37"

- A mid-sized heron with dark back and white belly. Often forages by running and spreading its wings.
- More common in salt water than fresh water.



Great Egret

Ardea alba

Length: 39"
Wingspan: 55"

- A tall all-white egret with a yellow bill and dark legs.
- Although it is a fish eater, it is often seen hunting lizards on land.



Snowy Egret

Egretta thula

Length: 24"
Wingspan: 39"

- One of the smaller all-white egrets, with dark legs and yellow feet. Backs of the legs are lighter on juveniles.
- Sometimes forages by shuffling its feet.



Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

Length: 22"
Wingspan: 65"

- The fish hawk that soars overhead with bent wings (m shaped).
- Plunge dives into water to catch fish with talons.



Bald Eagle

Haliaeetus leucocephalus

Length: 32"
Wingspan: 78"

- Usually nests in pine trees close to water.
- Will swoop into the water to catch fish, but also will harass Osprey in flight to get them to drop fish that the Eagle then grabs.