



## Other Parks and Preserves

These areas are grouped together simply because they do not belong in any of the previous complexes. Most have the common characteristic of existing as isolated “islands” of natural habitat surrounded by development, without the connections provided by river systems or coastlines. Each one is included in this guide because it represents a natural resource that plays an important role in the preservation of native plant and animal species in a rapidly developing region.

Ecologists have conducted extensive research into the ability of isolated areas of natural habitat to support native species. Without some kind of habitat corridor connection to enable species to travel from one area of suitable habitat to another, local populations will become “extirpated” (die out) if an area falls below a minimum size. While this minimum size figure varies depending on the individual species, as well as factors such as habitat quality, composition and adjacent land use, scientists have determined that there is an approximate minimum area, below which a dramatic decline in overall species diversity will occur. In Florida, that minimum size is about 50 acres.

The relevance of this discussion can be summarized in the following way. While it may be desirable to protect small areas of greenspace, for human enjoyment, in an urban or suburban environment, if wildlife species inhabiting such areas are physically isolated, and the area falls below a minimum size, then preservation of the site cannot be justified by the goal of maintaining the species found on the site. The long term viability of a healthy and diverse array of species will not be possible.

This is not to say that such areas are not important in terms of overall “quality of life” benefits. The point is that such areas do not play a role in preservation of native species that are declining in the face of ongoing development. Often, small parcels of undeveloped land surrounded by residential development are the focus of grass roots campaigns by well-meaning citizens trying to “stop the bulldozers”. However, expending scarce land preservation and land management resources to acquire and manage small tracts of land as preserve areas is counterproductive, and should be discouraged.