



# De Soto Nature Trail

## The Mangrove Ecosystem

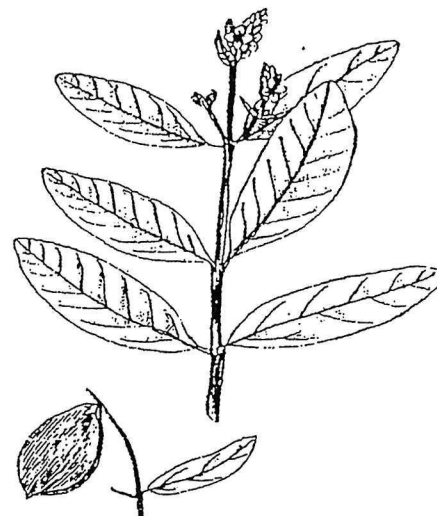
Mangrove swamps are special places. Subject to tidal flooding like salt marshes, mangrove ecosystems are rich in life. Dense thickets of mangrove roots trap organic material brought in by tides,

providing safe haven for many marine creatures and preventing coastal erosion. Birds benefit from the protection afforded by the tangle of branches and roots.

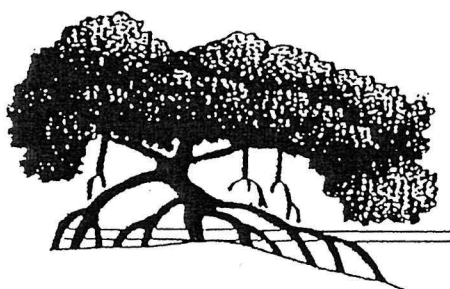
### Black Mangrove



This tree is distinguished by many breathing tubes sticking up from the surrounding soil, allowing the tree to absorb oxygen. Unlike most trees, the black mangrove reproduces by propagules, young plants which begin to grow while still attached to the parent tree. Dropping into the water, they float until washed ashore, where they take root.



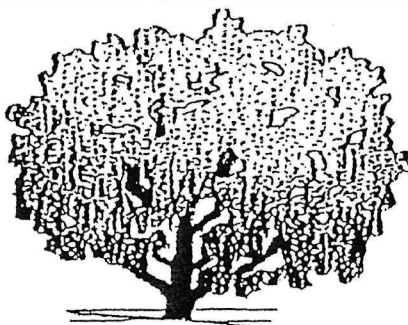
### Red Mangrove



This is the master soil builder. It is noted for its dangling prop roots, which grow down into the soil forming thick tangles. It is sometimes called the "walking tree" because of these. The propagules of red mangroves may be as much as 8" long, but less than 1/2" in diameter.



### White Mangrove



Generally found above the tide line, white mangroves reproduce through seeds, and are related to the button-wood, also called the button mangrove.

## History and Nature

As you walk this trail, imagine being in De Soto's army, in an unknown land, without the help of maps, guides, signs, trails, or boardwalks. Or imagine being a native seeing an unknown vessel approach, or a settler looking to build a home.

Humans have wandered here for many centuries. One sign of this is the tabby ruin, from a house built a-round 1843. The house was dismantled and moved to Key West in 1855 in response to the threat of attack by Seminoles.

## Walking the

Wildlife is most active near dawn and dusk, but the trail can be enjoyed at any time of the day. In addition to the mangroves, you will find Florida privet, sea purslane, strangler fig, saw palmetto, cabbage palm, groundsel, spanish moss, ball moss, sea grape, and other salt-resistant plants.

Please remember that all plants and animals at DeSoto National Memorial are protected by federal law against removal or destruction; take only photographs and memories.

## Trail Map

