



Our Wetland Preserves Play a Vital Role in Rivendell.

Safeguard Wildlife Habitats. Enjoy the Views.

By Sue Remy, Ponds & Preserves Committee

[Woodlands Word – September 2022]

The protection of native habitat areas and wildlife has long since been a community priority for Sarasota County and is greatly appreciated by Rivendell homeowners. Sarasota County has adopted standards that protect specific types of native habitats to ensure that their values and functions are retained for future generations. The most common habitat in Sarasota County is freshwater wetlands, which typically have an upland buffer surrounding the wetland preserves. (G.Mruz video->)

Rivendell has 14 wetlands and upland preserves covering about 115 acres. We are so fortunate to live in this community with its beautiful greenspaces, lakes, ponds, and natural preserves. Our preserves, along with our ponds, are part of our stormwater management system, designed to control flooding. Other important benefits of preserves include improved water quality, diverse wildlife habitats, aesthetics, privacy & screening by native vegetation, and strong property values.

- **“Nature’s Kidneys.”** Wetlands are a combination of water and land. Wetlands are often referred to as “nature’s kidneys” because of their ability to remove pollutants from water via storage in the soil and vegetation, as well as through losses to the atmosphere. They are like a natural water-treatment plant, trapping much of the silt and sediment carried by rivers which flow through the wetlands. Most wetland areas have lush growths of plant life, both trees and grasses.



- **Wildlife Nursery.** A wetland is a unique hatching and breeding area for many aquatic animals. The eggs of many species of aquatic animals’ drift into the wetlands. Here, the eggs hatch and the young grow up. The wetlands provide critical shelter and a food source for these small animals.
- **Habitat, Shelter, & Food.** Nutrients for plant growth are plentiful in wetlands from land runoff and from the grasses, providing abundant food for animals. Vegetation provides homes, protective cover and food for the many different animals that inhabit a wetland. Wetlands are collecting and dispersal areas for nutrients. Nutrients from the grasses and from land runoff make up the first (basic) link in the food chain of the wetlands. (Source: UF/IFAS)

What Can We Do to Keep Our Preserves Healthy and Attractive to Wildlife?

Leave Our Preserves Alone. Together with our ponds, these preserves are also an integral part of our stormwater management system and also add significant aesthetic value to our community. With one-third of the homes in Rivendell bordering designated preserves, we share the County’s commitment to protecting our preserve areas. Homeowners who live adjacent to a preserve need to be aware of their special responsibilities. Please leave our preserves and buffer areas alone.

Know Your Property Line. Homeowners must know their property line so they are not encroaching on community-owned or preserve land. Consult the survey map of your property. You can also find the Plat for Rivendell and your lot on the County’s website.

Regular Maintenance and Inspections. The Rivendell Community Association (RCA) is responsible for maintaining our preserve areas as required by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and the County. As part of our HOA contractor’s preserve management contract, preserves are routinely inspected to remove invasive, nuisance plants that can negatively affect native plants in a habitat. Although preserve areas might look aesthetically unpleasant due to layers of fallen branches, palm fronds and vines, they generally do not need to be “cleaned” up. Instead, leaving these areas in their nature state encourages the decomposition cycle - an important biological process that creates microhabitats, food sources, nesting areas, and returns valuable nutrients to the soil.



Together, let’s enjoy and protect the beauty of our wetland and upland preserves. After all, isn’t that one of the main reasons we choose to live in Rivendell?