

CONSERVATION FACT SHEET



Pine Rockland Restoration

There is less than 2% of the original pine rockland habitat left in Florida. Pine rockland is a globally imperiled habitat with a rich diversity of unique flora and fauna. There are still new species being discovered frequently in the remaining fragments. Zoo Miami grounds contains part of the largest fragment of pine rockland left outside Everglades National Park. Although most of it has been designated to be protected from future development, it is under constant assault from invasive plant species. These invasive plants must be removed and the disturbed areas restored to help protect this valuable natural resource.

With a long list of federally and state protected species occurring on the property, some of which occur nowhere else in the world, it is Zoo Miami's responsibility to ensure that this special habitat exists for future generations. Most of the area which is now the city of Miami was built on former pine rockland due to its higher elevation and well draining rocky substrate. Looking at a pine rockland forest is seeing what most of Miami actually looked like until a relatively short time ago. With pine rockland fragments in the keys and Caribbean being destroyed by saltwater intrusion and development, preserving the remaining area around Zoo Miami becomes even more important.

Zoo Miami staff and Miami-Dade County Natural Areas Management work together to protect the pine rockland from disturbance and help control the invasive plant species which threaten it. They must also work together to conduct regular controlled burns since it is a fire dependent habitat. Several areas that had soil disturbance years ago are now home to invasive plants that spread and out compete the native plants. These areas serve as seed banks for the invasives to spread into the healthy pine rockland habitat and must be reclaimed and replanted with pine rockland native plants to remove the threat. The actual plantings are often turned into public awareness and volunteer events to invest the local community in their preservation. Constant maintenance is needed to keep the invasive plants at bay due to South Florida's climate and the large number of new invading plants that are introduced each year.