

LONGLEAF PINE

Native to Alabama and throughout the Southeast, the majestic Longleaf Pine forests (*Pinus palustris*) were once the dominant ecosystem of the region. It was home and hunting ground for the Muskogean speaking peoples. These forests had since been depleted by over harvesting and fire suppression to near the point of extinction. Here at Shady Street Park we have a restoration effort underway.

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Grass Stage (Hooping) | Seedling Stage (Sprouting) | Mature Stage

Pinus palustris is Latin for Marsh Pine because they can grow in wetlands.

Woodland Era Extinct | Pine Needle Basketry | Pitch & Turpentine Industry | Lumber Mills for Housing and Ships | Decline | Regeneration | Sustaining

SENSE

See the pines that look like alien creatures with many funny "heads"? That is a Longleaf Pine in its candlelike age, when it is shooting up toward the sky. See how long the needles are? Do you see any growing on the ground like grass? That's not grass. It's Longleaf Pine tree in its Grass Stage when its roots are shooting downward as far as they can reach. The top root will anchor the tree when it towers above all the other plants.

LEARN

The first or native peoples, living in the area, knew how to burn the longleaf pine needles on the ground! Try landing them and weaving them together. Do you think you can weave enough pine needles to make a basket? What else can you do with them? If we protect these trees, we as well as our animals benefit from them. They have been a benefit to many in this region for generations. Can you do inside a pinecone like the Crossbill on the right to find seeds? Learn more about how to find and plant your own seeds from the Longleaf Alliance QR code above.

PLAY

Can you find any long copper colored Pine needles on the ground? Try landing them and weaving them together. Do you think you can weave enough pine needles to make a basket? What else can you do with them? If we protect these trees, we as well as our animals benefit from them. They have been a benefit to many in this region for generations. Can you do inside a pinecone like the Crossbill on the right to find seeds? Learn more about how to find and plant your own seeds from the Longleaf Alliance QR code above.

SHADY STREET PARK

Longleaf Pine has the longest needles, and giant pine cones. Many mammals depend on its habitat like the Cooper's Towhee & Red Cockaded Woodpecker. The Woodpecker is a protected species which has in turn protected the Longleaf forest home.

12-16" Red Cockaded Woodpecker

The Red Crossbill is a Finch with crossed beak that can reach deep into pinecones for seeds. It is not common in Alabama but is so rare as to be a protected seed eater.

POLLINATOR PATCHES

Here at Shady Street Park, we have done and will continue, hard work to remove invasive non-native plants. We have added back more than six dozen native trees and shrubs. Native plants provide food and habitat for native species that have evolved over time to live in landscapes like this one, so close to the Alabama River. Butterflies and other pollinators are key to the health of the whole ecosystem.

NATIVE AZALEA | Black Swallowtail | **BLUEBERRY**

LATE THOROUGHWORT | **INSECTS & OTHER POLLINATORS**

MONARCH BUTTERFLIES | HAIRSTREAK BUTTERFLY | BLUEBERRY BEES | HUMMING BIRDS | FIERY SKIPPERS

WINTER | **BLOOMS & POLLENS** | **SPRING** | **SUMMER** | **FALL**

SENSE

Plants use flowers with all sorts of bright colors, shapes, sizes, smells, and nectars to attract different animals. When these pollinators eat the flower's sugary nectar, pollen grains produced by the flower get stuck to them. When they feed on other plants of the same species, the pollen grains attach to the flowers stigma, fertilizing the flower so it produces seeds in fruit. Pollinators include various insects such as butterflies, bees, and beetles as well as birds, bats, and various other small mammals.

LEARN

Unfortunately, our pollinators are in trouble due to habitat loss, pesticides, invasive organisms, parasites, disease, and climate change. Agriculture crops rely heavily on pollinators, especially bees, to pollinate crops to produce high quality and quantities of fruit and vegetables that we eat every single day. Without pollinators a huge food source for us would disappear. Pollinators include various insects such as butterflies, bees, and beetles as well as birds, bats, and various other small mammals.

PLAY

You may be thinking, "That's sad, but what can I do about it?" Well, there are plenty of ways you can help! You can plant native pollen producing plants near your home that bloom at different times of the year for the various hungry pollinators. Then watch to see who visits! Scan below.

OLD FIELD NEIGHBORHOOD

SHADY STREET SWIFT CHIMNEY

This swift tower at Shady Street Park was built in 2022 by a local Eagle Scout. It provides safe ledges upon which swifts can build nests and bring birdseed to the new outdoor classroom and nature trail.

Original range of the Chimney Swift | Swifts nest in hollow tree trunks | Top piece with reduced opening on north side | exterior sheathing | 2" x 4" spacers | air space / insulation | 5/8" textured 1-1/2" siding with grooves facing inside and running horizontally | bottom with ventilation holes | angle steel legs

SENSE | **LEARN** | **PLAY**

How many naturalized garden plants can you find throughout the park? Much of Shady St Park carries the memories of the Old Field neighborhood gardens and the people who tended them. Do you see the chimney in the middle of the park?

Long ago the U.S. was filled with old hollow trees, that a bird called a swift lived in. Many were replaced by houses with chimneys that the swifts could live inside. As old houses are torn down, new ones without chimneys are built, so chimney swifts are losing homes.

See if you can find a Pecan tree, an Okra plant, a Canna Lily, a Chickasaw Plum Tree and a wild Onion. Where else might animals make their homes?

Fruit Trees: Plum, Peach, Pear

Garden: Squash

Canna Lilies

Blueberry

Heirloom Garden Survivors



SHADY STREET TRAILHEAD & PARK



BILLINGSLEA CLASSROOM

The center block of Shady Street Park was the site of the former Billingslea School, which served the neighborhood for 65 years. Billingslea was originally built as a school for Black children during the Jim Crow Era. It was a place of education and community until it closed in 1964. Now, through the creative reuse of building materials and new concepts of community, health, and equity, the classroom lives again as an outdoor classroom for all.

SENSE | **LEARN** | **PLAY**

Do you see the gravel area towards the city? That is the foundation of the Billingslea School that served the Old Field neighborhood. It was named after Alfred Billingslea, one of the Montgomery's pre-eminent Black leaders during the Reconstruction Era. The school closed with much of the neighborhood as Montgomery advanced its hardware efforts towards equity in education and fair housing.

Do you see the benches and the three stone monuments? Those came from cut stone curbs that had been replaced by concrete curbs. By salvaging the old stone curbs we are able to salvage the hard work that people did a hundred years ago when they cut the stone by hand. These benches are now being used in the Outdoor Classroom in honor of the history on which they built.

What are some materials that you can salvage to make something new, wibbly? Are there any old bricks around your house that you can turn into pavers or curbs to a garden bed? Are there any discarded containers in which you can grow plants to put in your window seat? Can you try cutting off clear plastic bottle necks so you can see the roots of sprouting seeds?

SHADY STREET PARK

MONTGOMERY HISTORY

Gravel is quarried Northwest of Montgomery

Waters workers channel the water into a bay.

Slabs are installed deep in the Montgomery streets for the Great City Canal

1923 School Built

1954 Brown vs. Board of Education

1966 Can vs. Board of Education

1968 Fair Housing

1984 Billingslea Closes

Curb is replaced with recycled bricks. The old granite slabs are used with diamond blade saw.

The Slabs are Reutilized as Benches in Shady Street Park's Outdoor Classroom

OSPREY TOWER

If you walk down Shady Street, to your left, you will find the Alabama River. Many large and small birds are there. The Osprey flying above are considered an important sign of a healthy and thriving riparian ecosystem. On the tower by the railroad, you can see an Osprey nest.

Osprey feed on fish from the nearby Alabama River

Osprey make for life and use the same nest made from sticks that they find, each year. They lay up to 1 to 4 eggs in the Spring around April and May. They reach maturity at age 3 and live from 7 to 10 years.

Frames carry massive materials across the region. They are also rolling an exciting public art show.

Water, sediments, and chemicals run off into the river.

Microbes absorb nutrients & chemicals.

Small fish feed on zooplankton. Amphipods like crawfish and other aquatic bugs feed on the microbes.

They Microbes in the water are very sensitive to the chemicals in the river. They are an important food source for the osprey and water insects on which fish feed. These fish in turn are food of the Osprey.

Osprey catch the large fish in the river.

Larger fish feed on smaller fish.

Do you see the tower by the Railroad tracks? At the top perhaps you can see a nest built of sticks or even a large bird perched on top of a pole? This is the majestic Osprey. And do you see the street behind you? That is Shady St. It leads you to the Alabama River where the variety of species is healthy enough to support a food chain that the Osprey can visit for nutrition.

Ospreys are large raptors that dive into nearby bodies of water such as rivers, salt marshes, ponds, etc. and retrieve fish. They will make their nest near their hunting ground, which indicates that the water nearby is in good health. Osprey, and many others, suffered a drop in numbers when the pesticide DDT was introduced and infected the food chain that reached the bird.

Can you make a Stick fort like the Osprey's in your backyard? How wide is your wing span? Spread your arms and find out! We can all help in keeping the animals of the sky and the rivers safe from harm. When we pay attention to what chemicals we are putting in the ground, or down the drain, we can make decisions about what we want or don't want in our waters.

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TURTLE CROSSING

Wetlands were once thought of as hard to reach, dark, disease ridden places, and had been drained for this reason. Today we have come to realize that wetlands serve as important areas for water storage, soil conservation and habitat to a variety of wildlife. There are many areas of Shady Street Park that retain this wetland habitat.

his virginica | Bald Cypress | White-tail Dragonfly

Coosa River Cooter

SENSE | **LEARN** | **PLAY**

You may notice standing water around the park. That's because Shady St. Park is a wetland next to the Alabama River floodplain. There are so many species that live in wetlands. Can you hear each of them? Maybe you can hear the high pitch of the crickets? Or is that the peeping of the frogs? When it gets hot you can hear the cicadas sing. And on Sundays you might hear the choir at the church.

Protecting wetlands is key to the survival of our overall ecosystem. Did you know that Alabama has the highest diversity of turtles in the country? You might notice the Coosa River Cooter or the Strapping Turtle which has a powerful bite. The many Damselflies and Dragon Flies perch on the tall grasses to watch for other insects to eat. Hear the Southern Toad make a high pitched call.

Listen, how many different bird songs can you hear in the wetland choir?

SHADY STREET PARK

WETLAND JAZZ

Old Field singers by octave range

Audible to Humans

TURTLES | **FROGS** | **BIRDS** | **HUMANS** | **CICADAS** | **CRICKETS**

Common Snapping Turtle (Beneath?)

Green Heron

Coosa River Cooter

White-tail Dragonfly

Bald Cypress

his virginica

Old Field Church

Urban Turtle Project

Morin Bird Song ID

Coosa River Cooter

Strapping Turtle

Southern Toad

White-tail Dragonfly

Damselfly

Dragonfly

Old Field St James Baptist Church

Southern Swamp Cuckoo (Woodcock-like sound)

Marsh Ground Cricket

Fall Field Cricket