### [11] Water Oak

Water oak (*Quercus nigra*) leaves are wider at their tip. This tree has had an interesting history. The trunk might have been grazed by a falling tree, which allowed the heartwood to rot. You can see faint traces of soot inside the cavity. Despite adversity, the tree is attempting to heal the wound. If you knock on the tree, the resonant sound can be used as a signal.

### [12] Sweet Gum

Sweet gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) trees have star shaped, palmate leaves that are 4-7 inches in diameter. Its gummy sap can be used as a breath freshener, tooth cleaner or adhesive. It acts as an antiseptic on wounds.

The trail will soon leave the moist slope forest for the drier, sandier uplands, dominated by oaks and shrubs.

### [13] Berries

Here are three berries commonly found in a Dry Upland Hardwood Forest. Sparkleberry is to the left of this marker. A clump of ← knee-high southern blueberries (*Vaccinium tenellum*) are on the right. They have alternate, elliptical leaves, about an inch long. On the opposite side of the trail are sawtooth blackberries (*Rubis argutus*). Look for arching stems with stout thorns, and leaves with three leaflets. These berries provide food for wildlife in the summer and early fall.

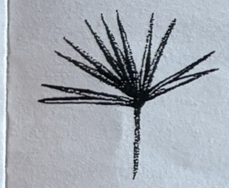
### [14] Upland Edge

The thick shrubby oaks are Darlington oaks (*Quercus hemispherica*), with elliptical leaves 3 – 6 inches long. Deer and squirrels eat their acorns. They also provide cover for songbirds such as warblers, cardinals, towhees, and vireos. Across the trail, a fallen tree is decomposed by grubs and other insects, which are in turn eaten by snakes, lizards, Carolina wrens, thrush, grouse ← and wild turkeys.

### [15] Steephead Overlook

This depression is (appropriately) called a steephead. Springs have washed away the soft sandy soils. Since the drainage area is small, a bowl-shaped depression results, with a flat bottom.

### [15] Dwarf Palmetto



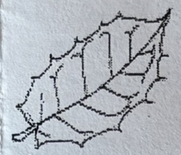
The dwarf palmetto (*Sabal minor*) is one of the few plants that can tolerate the dim light and saturated soils. It has dark green fan-like leaves with smooth stems. Palmetto fronds can be used for thatch.

### [17] Light Gap

This fallen giant has created a gap in the canopy, so that sunlight reaches the forest floor. The light opening allows young trees and shrubs to sprout, competing with each other for the available light. Eventually a few winning trees will fill in the canopy, and the light opening will disappear. At any time a storm can create another canopy gap, starting the process of succession all over again. Meanwhile, the decomposing log provides nutrients to the soil.

### [18] Stream Floodplain

The trail skirts the flat floodplain of the same spring-fed stream you crossed at its start.



← American Holly (*Ilex opaca*) is an understory shrub with dark green leaves having large spiny teeth. The evergreen leaves are 2-4 inches long. Bright red berries appear in the late fall. Across the creek, netted ← chain ferns (*Woodwardia areolata*) cover the ground. They have light green, coarsely–cut leaves that are widest towards the base. The scattered fronds grow in wet soils of the bottomlands.

### [19] Loblolly and Spruce Pines

The two pines with gray-brown plated bark near this marker are loblolly ← pines (*Pinus taeda*). They have three needles per bundle. About 20 feet beyond the loblollies is a ← tall spruce pine (*Pinus glabra*). It can grow to 125 feet in rich bottomlands, and has 2 thin twisted needles per bundle. Look for lots of small cones. The gray, flaky bark resembles a spruce tree, hence its name. Pine nuts are edible, and attract squirrels, turkey and other game birds. Pine wood is easily split, and can be fashioned into many artifacts. It burns easily, and (when dried) makes a quick, hot cooking fire. Pine resin can waterproof canoes, fabrics or baskets. Flexible pine needles can be plaited into baskets or mats.

### [20] Summary

While walking along the Trillium trail you have traversed several natural communities, little changed from when Native Americans grew crops on the Little Kolomoki Creek floodplain (now flooded by the lake). Several spring-fed streams flow into the lake year-round, attracting wildlife with a constant supply of clear water.

You ascended a moist slope forest with spruce pines, as well as hardwoods such as water oak, magnolia, sassafrass, and hickory. The moist soils and high humidity reduce the risk of wildfires. A great diversity of animals and plants provide resources for food, beverages, clothing, shelter and fuel.

The dry upland hardwood forest has less diversity. It is dominated by oaks, and offers food and habitat for birds and small game.

A steephead has steep sides and a flat floor with plants and animals that can tolerate saturated soils. There are abundant ferns and shrubs such as dwarf palmetto and American holly.

Native Americans lived here for hundreds of years by utilizing the diverse resources in these natural communities to supplement their crops. These rich forests are a living link with the past.

Please recycle this leaflet in the box at the start of the trail.

Developed by volunteer naturalist Carol Schneier 11/05

Georgia
STATE PARKS
& HISTORIC SITES

**Kolomoki Mounds Historic Park**

# Trillium Trail

## Introduction

*This 1 ¼ mile-long loop traverses several natural communities.* Starting along Lake Kolomoki, you will cross several spring-fed streams, climb a moist slope forest, ramble through an upland hardwood forest, and descend a dramatic steephead. Watch for transitions between communities as the trail climbs and descends.

Steep slopes are impractical to cultivate. Except for the lakefront, the natural communities are relatively unchanged since Native Americans lived here. Stops on this trail describe how people might have used the diverse and abundant natural resources. As you walk, try to imagine how you might find food, beverages, clothing, shelter, and fuel.

**Common Birds**

***Woodpeckers:*** Red-bellied, Piliated, Flicker
***Warblers:*** Common yellow, Pine
***Song birds:*** Blue jay, Eastern towhee, Northern cardinal, Nuthatch, Chickadee, Brown thrasher
***Ground Birds:*** Wild turkey, Northern bobwhite
***Soaring birds:*** Crow, Turkey vulture, Red-shouldered hawk, Red-tailed hawk

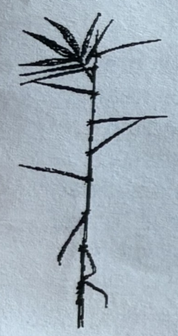
## [1] Beargrass

Beargrass (*Yucca filamentosa*) is a member of the agave family. Its long leaves taper to a sharp tip, and have frayed fibers at the edges. Native Americans would use these fibers to make a rough twine, which could be woven into sandals, mats, nets, and ropes.

## [2] Spring–Fed Stream

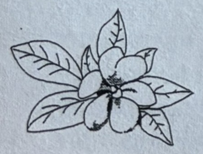
Notice the clear water and sandy stream bottom. Springs near the stream head supply clean water year round. A constant water supply might be one of the reasons Native Americans settled along the Little Kolomoki Creek. The original river bottomlands have been inundated by the lake.

## [3] Switchcane



Switchcane (*Arundinaria gigantea*) is one of the largest native grasses in the Southeast, and our only native bamboo. Its slender, woody stems are 3 to 10 feet tall. Spreading via roots (called rhizomes), it can form extensive colonies along river bottomlands. It can be used for torches, fishing poles, mats, baskets, pipe stems and flutes.

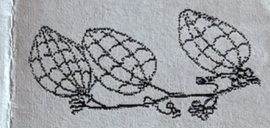
## [4] Southern Magnolia



Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) is commonly found in slope forests. It has leathery evergreen leaves that are 5-8 inches long. Large white flowers appear throughout the spring and summer. Yellow-bellied sapsuckers, red-eyed vireos, and other songbirds feed on the red seeds, sharing them with squirrels and wild turkeys.

## [5] Sassafrass and Sarsparilla Vine

← Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) is a small tree common in slope forests. A single plant can have leaves of three shapes: elliptic, single mitten and double mitten. Its roots can be steeped in hot water to make a tea. At the base of the marker is sarsparilla vine ← (*Smilax pumila*) which can also be made into a beverage.



## [6] Sparkleberry

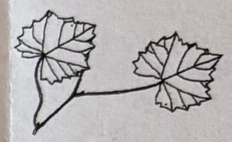
A common midstory shrub is sparkleberry, (*Vaccinium arboreum*) a tall blueberry with reddish-brown shreddy. bark. It has shiny oval leaves ½ - 2 inches long. The white bell-shaped flowers produce a round black berry in the fall.

## [7] Pignut Hickory

The tall trees on both sides of the marker are pignut hickories *(Carya glabra*), a common tree of the slope forest. They have light green composite leaves with 5-7 leaflets. Look for hickory nuts beneath the tree. Nuts are a rich and nutritious food that is easily stored. The husks also make a dye for fabrics.

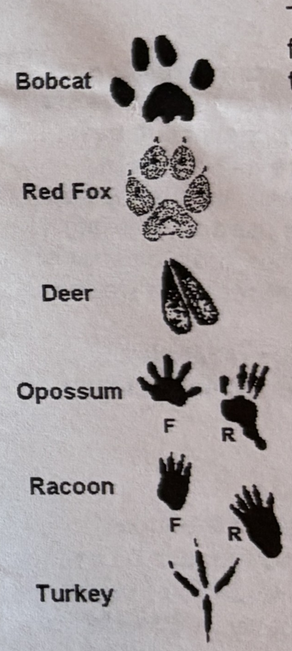
As you ascend the trail, notice the rich,moist, clayey soils change to lighter, well-drained sandy soils of the uplands.

## [8] Grapes and Cherries



← Muscadine grapes (*Vitis rotundifolia*) have round leaves with coarse teeth. This vine is twining over a young black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), which has elliptical leaves with tiny teeth on the edges. White blossoms in the spring develop into small cherries in the summer. Fruits such as these can be eaten fresh or dried and stored.

## [9] Animal Tracks




This small stream is fed by seepage from the surrounding uplands. It is a source of water, even during dry periods. The mucky soil near the creek is a good place to find animal tracks. Do any look like these? You also might see crawfish casts near the creek. Native Americans ate small animals, along with cultivated vegetables and plants gathered from the forest. (F = Front, R = Rear)

## [10] Mature Slope Forest

Notice how the forest has several levels. A high canopy forms the "roof", composed of oaks, pines, hardwoods and climbing vines. There is a midstory of small trees, and a shrub layer. Little light reaches the forest floor, so there is a sparse ground layer. This mature forest probably looks much as it did when Native Americans lived here.