

# Okaloosa County News Release

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Kathy Newby, 850.651.7515, [knewby@co.okaloosa.fl.us](mailto:knewby@co.okaloosa.fl.us)



## Learn About the Real Florida from the Master Naturalist Program *Register by September 12, 2011*

Florida is a fascinating state with a unique geological and ecological history. Florida's climate ranges from temperate to subtropical, ecological processes include such extremes as flooding and fire, and plant and animal communities are diverse and abundant.

At least 275 species of trees are native to Florida. High pine is a collective term for several pine communities that occur on well-drained soils of north and central Florida's higher elevation areas and ancient ridge systems. Scrub and dry prairie are rare habitats. In Florida many rare, endemic, and endangered species occur in and depend on scrub and dry prairie habitats for their continued survival.

Florida has 53 native species of terrestrial mammals and 31 species of marine mammals. The Florida Breeding Bird Atlas confirms that there are 196 species of birds bred in Florida. In addition to birds that breed in Florida, approximately 300 species visit Florida as winter residents or during migratory flights. Florida is among the top states in the United States and all of North America in terms of herpetological diversity. It is estimated that 95% of all animal species on Earth are insects.

These facts and much more are covered during a 40 hour course offered at the Okaloosa County Extension office. Learning more about Florida's natural environment is possible through the Florida Master Naturalist Program. Training includes ecosystem processes, identification of key plants and wildlife, and the role of humans in shaping Florida's environment, interpretation skills, and environmental ethics. The upland module will be taught September 19-November 14, 2011. **Registration closes September 12, 2011.** Cost is \$225, which includes materials, instruction and three field trips. Visit

[www.MasterNaturalist.org](http://www.MasterNaturalist.org) for more information.

*Prepared by: Sheila Dunning  
Extension Agent, Horticulture  
UF/IFAS Extension-Okaloosa County  
850-689-5850*

[sdunning@ufl.edu](mailto:sdunning@ufl.edu)

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