



# Restoration: RED BUG SLOUGH PRESERVE

*A project to restore natural habitat and water quality in an urban waterway*

**Red Bug Slough (Sloo) Preserve** is a natural oasis in the midst of Sarasota’s suburban landscape. The 72 acre Preserve, located at 5200 Beneva Road, is named for the broad, shallow channel that flows through it. Red Bug Slough originates at Mirror Lake, flows northwest through the Preserve to Phillippi Creek, then out to Roberts Bay and Sarasota Bay. The Preserve features “Old Florida” oak hammocks, pine flatwoods and wetlands. Its wooded lands and peaceful waterways offer refuge for wildlife and a refreshing escape for Sarasota families to walk, picnic and view wildlife. In 2013, Sarasota County launched an innovative project to improve water quality, restore natural flow patterns, enhance native habitat, and increase recreational opportunities in the Preserve.



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**Above** The scarlet skimmer dragonfly is one of more than a dozen dragonfly species that call Red Bug Slough home (photo by Mike Kaplan). The Preserve is dominated by oak hammock and it features several miles of hiking trails, a small playground, restrooms and picnic shelters. The restored shoreline improves recreational opportunities, including photography, bird watching and fishing.



**Shorelines along the slough** were gently sloped and planted with flowering wetland vegetation, which helps filter debris, uptake nutrients and provide habitat to birds and fish.

**A wetland was restored** and reconnected to the slough. Runoff from neighborhoods is now captured, nourishing wetlands, restoring nature and expanding opportunities for viewing wildlife.

**Two new footbridges** provide public access to northern areas of the Preserve, which were cleared of invasive and exotic plants and replanted with native vegetation. Isolated ponds were reconnected to the slough to improve water flow and enhance habitat and water quality.

**Skimmers** were installed to intercept branches and litter entering the Preserve from upstream urban areas.



**The restoration project** restored 2.3 acres of wetlands and 2,300 linear feet of slough shoreline. It replaced invasive and exotic vegetation with native plants along a more gently sloping shoreline. New shoreline vegetation provides water quality treatment and wildlife habitat. The project also improves access and opportunities for hiking, photography, bird watching and fishing in the restored habitats.

## PROJECT SNAPSHOT

**Who:** Sarasota County, SWFWMD  
**When:** Designed in 2010, Completed in 2014  
**Location:** Red Bug Slough Preserve  
**Cost:** \$600,000  
**Funding Source:** County Surtax III and SWFWMD Cooperative Funding Program.

Red Bug Slough Preserve was purchased by Sarasota County in 2000 and 2001 through the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection Program with funding assistance provided by Florida Communities Trust.

## GET INVOLVED

For more information, contact: Sarasota County Government at 941/861-5000 or [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net).

To get involved in protecting Red Bug Slough, contact the Friends of Red Bug Slough at 941/861-5000.

  
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