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# Hometown Herald

SERVING PEMBROKE PINES & MIRAMAR

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## Park at SilverLakes excites naturalists

By AJOWA N. IFATEYO  
Special to The Herald

As hikers make their way over small foot bridges in a SilverLakes Park in Pembroke Pines, Helen Josepher spots a plastic foam cup in the water among the tadpoles and underwater plants and quickly fishes it out.

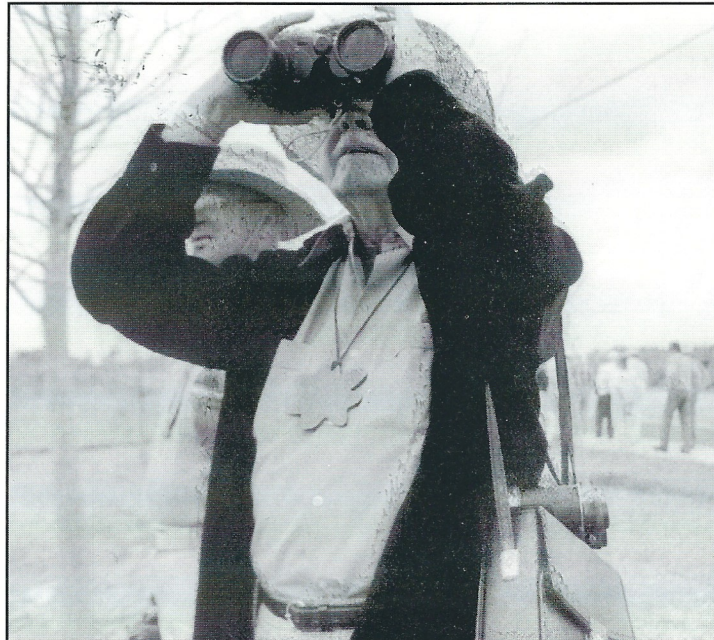
"It really offended me to see that plastic cup in the water," said Josepher, of Lauderhill.

Broward County naturalist Judy Sulser applauded Josepher's action as she talked to a group of 30 hikers Friday at the SilverLakes Park, a park in the SilverLakes community two miles west of Interstate 75.

Created by the developers of SilverLakes, it's a park naturalists like Sulser from Broward County's Parks and Recreation Division want people to see. "We chose to come here because we think they are doing something right," Sulser said.

SilverLakes Park, 2300 NW 172nd St., is home to native birds, plants and other wildlife. It was created four years ago by SilverLakes Partnership, and is now maintained by the city of Pembroke Pines.

At the park, Sulser and Linda White, also a county naturalist, point out different features of the park to the hikers. The park is part of a 2,480-acre development



ISABEL GRIFFITH / For The Herald

**NATURAL REACTION:** Henry Gebhardt of Davie tracks an osprey as it glides above the new park in the SilverLakes community.

that used to be part of the Everglades, Sulser said. Only 1,018 acres have homes, she said.

Friday's hike was the first of the park sponsored by the county.

It is among 37 activities the county's park and recreation division organized across the county to explore biodiversity as part of the division's 20th anniversary. Biodiversity en-

compasses the different species of animal and plant life and the habitats they live in.

The SilverLakes tour, which was repeated Saturday morning, explored solutions to the loss of biodiversity.

A major feature of the park is a sprawling man-made lake dotted with islands, or uplands, that are refuges for animals. Houses topped with red tile

can be seen across the water where coots, duck-like birds, can be seen all over.

On Friday, a great egret flew across the lake and the excited hikers pulled out binoculars to get a better look. At one point, a red-winged blackbird's call, o-ka-ree-o, was heard.

"I really like that," Sulser said. She and White also pointed out pickerel, purple flowering grass-like plants growing out of the water. They provide food and shelter for frogs, fish, snakes and lizards, Sulser said.

In the water also are bulrush, plants with clusters of Apple snail egg on them, that serve as food for native Florida birds such as the Great Egret, Snail Kite and Limpkin.

Along the shoreline, native cypress are planted. To the east, closer to 172nd Avenue, Sulser and White point out other native trees such as coastal plain willow, red maple, red bay and wax myrtle. The park also has a section of native pines: slash, beautyberry, lantana, and saw palmetto.

For more information on the nine remaining activities exploring biodiversity scheduled by the Broward County Parks and Recreation Division until May, call 938-0615. Some activities require paying park admission.