

## BIRDING SITES IN AND AROUND MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA

Marion County is a wonderful place to be a bird watcher. In addition to being a great place for backyard birding, there are over 150 fantastic birding places within an hour and a half driving time. So, grab your binoculars and get out there. Don't forget insect repellent, a hat and some water.

### GREAT FLORIDA BIRDING TRAIL



"The Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail is a program of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. At its core is a network of nearly 500 sites throughout Florida selected for their excellent birdwatching, wildlife viewing or educational opportunities. This 2,000-mile, self-guided highway trail is designed to conserve and enhance Florida's wildlife habitats by promoting birding and wildlife viewing activities, conservation education and economic opportunity." from the Great Florida Birding Trail web site. Visit the web site at <http://floridabirdingtrail.com> for more information.

There are over 48 Great Florida Birding Trail sites in and around Marion County. After you have explore them you can expand your experience by visiting some of the sites that are further away. The

following information came from the Great Florida Birding Trail East and the Great Florida Trail West Booklets. Booklets are also available for the Panhandle section and the South Section. Visit the above web site to request copies of the guide booklets for the Great Florida Birding Trail or visit the local office of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 1239 S.W. 10th Street, Ocala, FL 34471. Phone 352-732-1225.

## **GREAT FLORIDA BIRDING TRAIL: WEST**

### **O'Leno State Park and River Rise Preserve State Park**

**SiteID:** W13, page 5

**Phone number:** 386-454-1853

**Website:** [www.floridastateparks.org/oleno/](http://www.floridastateparks.org/oleno/)  
[www.floridastateparks.org/riverrise/](http://www.floridastateparks.org/riverrise/)

**About the site:** Trail traverses river through hardwood lowlands 1.5 miles to a sinkhole where the river goes underground. Trails through mesic uplands off Bellamy Rd., esp. Paraner's Loop, showcase migrants like black-throated blue warblers and breeders like Acadian flycatchers. South entrance trail leads 1.5 miles to where the river re-emerges. Fees: \$5.00 per vehicle. Restrooms, picnic tables, camp ground. Brochures about these state parks are available at the above web sites. Brochures contain trail maps.

**Directions:** Main entrance (A) located 6 mi. north of High Springs on the east side of US 441; Bellamy Rd. Trails (B): Drive appx. 1 mi. south of Main Entrance on US 441, and turn left (E) on Bellamy Rd. Parking area and trails on the left (N) side, 2 mi. ahead. South entrance (C) appx. 4 mi. south of Bellamy Rd (1 mi. north of the river) on the east side of US 441.

**Address:** 410 S.E. O'Leno Park Road, High Springs, Florida 32643

### **San Felasco Hammock Preserve State Park**

**SiteID:** W14, page 6

**Phone number:** 386-462-7905

**Website:** [www.floridastateparks.org/sanfelascohammock/](http://www.floridastateparks.org/sanfelascohammock/)

**About the site:** South Entrance: Bird the hiking trail through hardwood hammocks punctuated with sinkholes, especially in migration. Local breeding birds include wood thrush, hooded warbler, yellow-throated vireo and red-headed woodpecker. North Entrance: improved pasture good for sparrows, raptors and other grassland birds. Check oak edges in migration also. Fees: \$4.00 per vehicle. Printable trail maps are available at the above website.

**Directions:** South entrance (A) is located just east of the intersection of Millhopper Rd. (CR 232) and I-75 in northwest Gainesville. Parking area and a nature trail are located on south side of the road; more extensive hiking trails on north side of road. North entrance (B): From Alachua, follow US 441 southeast about 1 mi. across the railroad tracks. Turn right (S) on Progress Blvd., and follow to the trailhead at the end.

**Address:** 11101 Millhopper Road, Gainesville, FL 32653

### **Devil's Millhopper Geological State Park**

**SiteID:** W15, page 6

**Phone number:** 352-955-2008

**Website:** [www.floridastateparks.org/devilsmilhopper/](http://www.floridastateparks.org/devilsmilhopper/)

**About the site:** A series of boardwalks allows you to bird the slopes of a massive sinkhole 120 feet deep and 500 feet across. The lush hardwood slope forest is good for skulking songbirds like the veery and eastern towhee, and brown creepers have been found here in winter. Birding by ear skills can be helpful, although not necessary.

Entry fee: 4.00 per vehicle.

**Directions:** Park is on Millhopper Rd., 0.25 mi. west of NW 43rd. St.

**Address:** 4732 Millhopper Road, Gainesville, Florida 32653

### **Gainesville Regional Utilities' Chapman's Pond**

**SiteID:** W16, page 6

**Phone number:** 352-393-6701

**Website:**

<https://www.gru.com/OurCommunity/ParkProjects/chapmanspond.jsp>

**About the site:** From the elevated overlook, scope the large holding pond for a possible 16 duck species in winter, wading birds year-round, as well as shorebirds in the shoulder months of migration. Mississippi kites are common in summer. Adjacent forest hosts migratory songbird species, including orange-crowned warblers in winter/spring. Restrooms, picnic tables and recreation facilities are available at the adjacent Kanapaha Veterans Memorial Park. This is a good site for beginning birders. A bird checklist is available from a link at the above website.

**Directions:** From I-75 in Gainesville, take Archer Rd. (SR 24) southwest 2 mi. Turn right (N) onto SW 75th St. Go 1.2 mi. and turn right (E) on SW 41st Pl. Veteran's Park will be on the left (N) side of the road. Parking area is on the left (N) side of the road, 0.75 mi. ahead, across from the water reclamation facility.

**Address:** 7100 SW 41 Place, Gainesville, FL 32608

### **Morningside Nature Center**

**SiteID:** W17, page 6/7

**Phone number:** 352-334-2170

**Website:** [www.natureoperations.org](http://www.natureoperations.org)

**About the site:** Morningside features longleaf pine savanna, a popular bird blind and an educational nature center. Blind offers good looks of common birds like goldfinches and eastern towhees. Hiking trails have same, plus savanna specialties like common yellowthroat, brownheaded nuthatch and eastern bluebird. Check web for educational program schedule. This is a good site for beginning birders. Restrooms and picnic tables.

**Directions:** From Waldo Rd. (SR 24) in Gainesville, go east on University Ave. (SR 26) 1.9 mi.; entrance is on the left (N) side of the road.

**Address:** 3540 E. University Ave., Gainesville, FL 32641

### **Newnans Lake: Palm Point Park**

**SiteID:** W18, page 7

**Phone number:** 352-334-2231

**Website:** [www.natureoperations.org](http://www.natureoperations.org)

**About the site:** This peninsular park on the west shore of Newnans Lake offers the usual Florida waterbirds year-round, but is known locally for its songbird fallouts in migration. Outside of migration it warrants a quick stop; during Sept.-Oct. and April, it is a destination unto itself. During periods of low water, the lake has hosted shorebirds rarely seen in the area otherwise. Caution: Make sure your vehicle is locked. Do not bird alone at this park; take a friend or two.

**Directions:** From Gainesville, take University Ave. due east until it dead ends at SE 55th Blvd. at Newnans Lake. Turn south on SE 55th Ave (Lakeshore Dr.). Palm Point parking area will be on the left (E) side of the road about a mile south, just as the road takes a wide curve to the west.

**Address:** 7401 Lakeshore Drive, Gainesville, FL

### **Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park**

**SiteID:** W19, page 7

**Phone number:** Park office: 352-466-3397; Visitor Center: 352-466-4100

**Website:** [www.floridastateparks.org/paynesprairie/](http://www.floridastateparks.org/paynesprairie/)

**About the site:** This park encompasses a 15,000-acre basin marsh and wet prairie ringed with hardwood hammock. Main Entrance: pick up a map, check for recent sightings, Chacala Trail has nice uplands. LaChua Trail: good winter sparrow habitat (white-throated, swamp, song, vesper and more), hawks, waterfowl and quick entrée to the prairie wetland. Bolen Bluff: trail winds through hardwood hammock thick with warblers fall through spring, with viewing platform on prairie. Large numbers of sandhill cranes winter here, Nov. to March.

**Fees:** Main entrance - \$6.00 per vehicle, limit 2-8 people per vehicle, LaChua Trail - \$2.00 per person, Bolen Bluff - \$2.00 per vehicle, limit 8 people. Restrooms and picnic tables.

**Directions:** LaChua Trail (A): From Gainesville, take SR 26 (University Dr.) east of town and across Waldo Rd. (SE 11th St.). Turn right (S) on SE 15th St. and continue straight through the three-way intersection, through the gate and down Camp Ranch Rd. to the DEP regional HQ.



Trail begins to right of stone interpretive center. Bolen Bluff Trail (B): Located on the east side of US 441, 4.3 mi. south of the intersection of SR 331 and US 441, on the south side of Gainesville. Main Headquarters (C): Located on the east side of US 441, appx. 4 mi. south of Bolen Bluff Trail, just north of Micanopy.

**Address:** Visitors center: 100 Savannah Boulevard, Micanopy, Florida 32667

### **Lochloosa Wildlife Conservation Area**

**SiteID:** W20, page 7

**Phone:** 386-329-4410

**Website:** [www.sjrwmd.com](http://www.sjrwmd.com)

**About the site:** Cross Creek Trail: hike the trail to the marsh overlook, watching for turkey, bobwhites and redshouldered hawks along the way. Marsh hosts ducks, bitterns and a variety of waders. Burnt Island: road leads past cypress domes through hydric hammock to a lake overlook. Listen for migrants along the way; bald eagles and osprey frequent the lake. This area is hunted heavily fall through spring; wear blaze orange and use caution. Restrooms and picnic tables are available at the nearby Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. The state park is just west of the Cross Creek fire station on the south side of the road.

**Directions:** Cross Creek Fire Station Trail (A): Trail and parking adjacent to fire station on south side of the community of Cross Creek. Burnt Island Access (B): located 1.5 mi. north of city of Island Grove and CR 325 on west side of US 301.

### **Cedar Key Scrub State Reserve**

**SiteID:** W32, page 10

**Phone number:** 352-543-5567

**Website:** [www.floridastateparks.org](http://www.floridastateparks.org)

**About the site:** The east end of this site features upland sandhills and scrubs, home to the elusive Florida scrub-jay and short-tailed hawks. The west end slopes down through Black Point Swamp to tidal creeks and salt marsh. This is a beautiful, rustic preserve. Come with

water; prepare to hike. Limited hunting on-site Sept. - Nov. Call for dates. Note: Do not feed the scrub-jays. Young jays are almost identical to adults but cannot digest peanuts until they are one year old. Feeding them peanuts can kill them. No entrance fee is required to enter this park. Picnic tables.

**Directions:** From Cedar Key, follow CR 24 out of town, and veer left onto CR 347. Entrance is 1 mi. ahead from this intersection, on the left (W) side of the road.

**Address:** 8312 S.W. 125th Court, Cedar Key, Florida 32625

#### **#4 Bridge and Fishing Pier**

**SiteID:** W33, page 11

**Phone:** None

**Website:** None

**About the site:** In late fall and winter, flats in the channels between the islands of Cedar Key host a tremendous diversity of shorebirds, and can be viewed from vantages like this one. Kayak concessions offer a unique access to the surrounding waters, where peregrines stoop on clusters of sandpipers and kettles of white pelicans soar on thermals. Roseate Spoonbills are summer treats. Note: Check tide tables before you visit this site. This site is best at low tide.

This is a good site for beginners.

**Directions:** Take SR 24 towards Cedar Key. After crossing the first bridge to the keys, take the first left (E) onto SW 153rd Ct. Follow the road to the fishing pier/overlook at the end.

#### **Cedar Key City Park, Marina & Fishing Pier**

**SiteID:** W34, page 11

**Phone:** 877-387-5673

**Website:** <http://www.visitnaturecoast.com/birding.html>

**About the site:** As long as you're in Cedar Key, you might as well check the waterfront for lingering night-herons on pilings in the marina or spotted sandpipers bobbing on the rocky shore. Sandy spits off the city park are teeming with peeps in winter. This is a good site to visit

after you have been birding all morning and had lunch at one of the many good seafood restaurants in Cedar Key. Also a good site for beginners. Restrooms and picnic tables. Check tide tables before you go. This site is best at low tide.

**Directions:** Drive SR 24 into Cedar Key and turn left at the first stop sign onto 2nd St. Go 3 blocks to A St. Park is on the corner of 2nd and A; A St. becomes Dock St. at Waterfront.

### **Goethe State Forest**

**SiteID:** W35, page 11

**Phone:** 352-465-8585

**Website:** [www.fl-dof.com/state\\_forests](http://www.fl-dof.com/state_forests)

**About the site:** Get a map at Forest HQ or at trailheads. Most open forest roads are accessible to 2WD vehicles. Hunting pressure is heavy Nov.-Dec.; wear blaze orange (during hunts). Follow Gas Line northeast to Bee Hive Rd. Red-cockaded woodpecker cavity trees are ringed with white paint. Cow Creek and Black Prong roads also offer nice flatwoods, cypress domes and freshwater creeks. Extensive, rustic hiking/horseback riding trails are available. Entrance fee. Restrooms at some trailheads.

**Directions:** From Inglis, drive 10 mi. north on US 19. Merge right (N) onto SR 121 and go to the intersection with CR 336. Gas Line Rd. (A): make a right at stop sign (SE) onto CR 336. After appx. 2.4 mi. turn left (N) onto Gas Line Rd. Follow Gas Line 1 mi., then turn right (NE) on Beehive Rd. and continue another 1.3 mi. Turn around here or continue on foot. Cow Creek Rd. (B): From SR 121 and CR 336 intersection, cross CR 336 and continue appx. 1.2 mi. north on SR 121. Turn left (across from the state forest sign) onto Cow Creek Rd. Parking for cypress boardwalk is on left. HQ is located on the east side of forest at 9110 SE CR 337.

### **Bird Creek Park**

**SiteID:** W36, page 11

**Phone:** None

**Website:** None



**About the site:** While Bird Creek Park is at the end of Follow That Dream Trail (CR 40), the last 5 miles of this road wind through saltmarsh and tidal creeks to the Gulf at the end. Drive the road, watching for waders and stopping at pull-offs for better looks along the way. Several kayak put-in points offer nice access to the marsh; take water and insect repellent. This is a good site for beginning birders. Check tide tables before you go. Best at low tide when sandbars at the end of the road are used by shorebirds and other resting birds. Not a primary trail site but can be worth a visit if you are in the area. Restrooms.

**Directions:** From Inglis, drive west on CR 40 until it dead ends at the Gulf of Mexico.

### **Cross Florida Greenway: Withlacoochee Bay Trail**

**SiteID:** W37, page 11

**Phone number:** 352-447-1720

**Website:** [www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/)

**About the site:** This paved trail follows the south shore of the Barge Canal, ending at a Gulf overlook. Waders and shorebirds frequent the shoreline and sparrows hide in growth along the trail edges. Follow the trail to the left (S) side of the berm for a vantage of gorgeous salt marsh. Need boat access? A canoe launch is available near the west terminus of the trail; motorized boat launch is available on the east side of the bridge. Spoil islands directly offshore have shorebirds in fall/winter, including large groups of oystercatchers.

**Directions:** Entrance is on the west side of US 19 on the south side of the Barge Canal north of Crystal River

### **Cross Florida Greenway: Inglis Dam**

**SiteID:** W38, page 11

**Phone number:** 352-447-1720

**Website:** [www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/)

**About the site:** At the dam, scope the reservoir for wintering ducks and loons; in spring/summer, barn swallows nest beneath the dam. Cross the dam to a loop trail through successional habitat, whose edges

attract migratory songbirds. White-crowned, grasshopper, song, white-throated, field, chipping and vesper sparrows winter in grassy fields. Not a primary trail site but worth a visit if you are in the area. Restrooms.

**Directions:** From Inglis, travel south on US 19, cross the Barge Canal, and turn left (E) on Cornflower Dr. Go 1.5 mi. to Riverwood Rd., and turn left. Inglis Dam will be 0.25 mi. on left.

### **Eco-Walk at Crystal River Preserve State Park**

**SiteID:** W39, page 12

**Phone Number:** 352-563-0450

**Website:** [www.floridastateparks.org](http://www.floridastateparks.org)

**About the site:** This pleasant 2-mile trail offers up a surprising diversity of birds, including yellow-breasted chats and Swainson's warblers in springtime, soras and both bitterns in the ponds year-round, and Carolina, house and sedge wrens in fall/winter. Open areas are good for kestrels and red-shouldered hawks, as well as swallowtailed kites in summer. Restrooms.

**Directions:** From the intersection of Powerline Rd. and US 19 north of Crystal River, drive 1 mi. south to Curtis Tool Rd. Turn right (W) and follow to preserve entrance directly ahead.

### **Crystal River Archaeological State Park**

**SiteID:** W40, page 12

**Phone Number:** 352-795-3817

**Website:** [www.floridastateparks.org](http://www.floridastateparks.org)

**About the site:** This small park has nice facilities and easy paved trails through hardwoods attractive to songbirds in migration. The river view from the top of an ancient shell mound is excellent for scoping for winter ducks and waders year-round along the waterline. Eagles, waterbirds and common songbirds make this a nice starter site for beginners. Not a primary trail site, but worth a visit if you are already in the area. Restrooms.

**Directions:** From CR 495 in Crystal River, take US 19 north 2 mi.

to State Park St. Turn left and go to Museum Pointe Rd. Turn left; ends in parking lot.

**Address:** 3400 N. Museum Point, Crystal River, FL 34428

### **Crystal Cove Trail at Crystal River Preserve State Park**

**SiteID:** W41, page 12

**Phone number:** 352-563-0450

**Website:** [www.floridastateparks.org](http://www.floridastateparks.org)

**About the site:** The trail at this site follows a limerock path around a freshwater pond as well as saltwater marsh areas. Snipe and other shorebirds, wading birds and songbirds are possible. The site frequently has Mississippi kites in summer/fall. The Boy Scout Trail across the road offers hydric hammock good for songbirds, but birding by ear skills are essential. Not a primary trail site, but worth a visit if you are already in the area. Restrooms.

**Directions:** From Crystal River, take US 19 north to State Park St. Turn left (W) and go to Sailboat Point Rd. Turn left, second left is parking area for trailhead.

**Address:** 3266 N. Sailboat Avenue, Crystal River, FL 34428

### **Kings Bay**

**SiteID:** W42, page 12

**Phone number:** 352-563-2088

**Website:** [www.citrusbirdingtrail.com](http://www.citrusbirdingtrail.com)

**About the site:** A pleasant, cool-weather paddle at the headwaters for the Crystal River, this site hosts flocks of wintering lesser scaup, coots, and white pelicans. Wading birds like yellow-crowned night-herons, gulls, and bald eagles are frequently spotted. This area is also well known for its wintering population of manatees. Canoes are available from local dive shops. Significant open water makes this challenging on windy days. Not a primary Trail site, but worth a visit if you're already in the area

**Directions:** From the intersection of SR 44 and US 19 in Crystal River, drive south on US 19 five blocks to Kings Bay Dr. Turn right (W) and continue straight until you reach Pete's Pier

boat ramp to launch your canoe.

### **Fort Island Trail, Crystal River Preserve State Park**

**SiteID:** W43, page 13

**Phone number:** 352-563-0450

**Website:** [www.floridastateparks.org/crystalriverpreserve/](http://www.floridastateparks.org/crystalriverpreserve/)

**About the site:** A series of public lands managed by Crystal River Preserve State Park are accessible from this road. Each offers a hike through brief upland habitats good for ground doves and nighthawks, out to tidal marshes good for waders, clapper and king rails, Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrows and more.

**Directions:** From US 19 south of Crystal River, turn west on Fort Island Tr., which runs to the Gulf through the Crystal River Preserve State Park. Trails at (A) Dixie Shores (mile marker 2.5), (B) Redfish Hole (mile 4.0) complement the Fort Island Trail Park and the Fort Island Gulf Beach and Hammock.

### **Fort Island Trail Park**

**Site ID:** W44, page 13

**Phone number:** 352-527-7677

**Website:** [www.bocc.citrus.fl.us](http://www.bocc.citrus.fl.us)

**About the site:** Worth a quick stop on your way down Fort Island Trail, to bird and use the facilities. Check for shore and wading birds from the pier, as well as wintering ducks and loons in the river. Vegetated edges can attract songbirds, but waterbirds are this site's stronger suit. Not a primary Trail site, but worth a visit if you're already in the area. Restrooms.

**Directions:** Located 5 mi. west of US 19 in Crystal River on north side of Fort Island Trail.

### **Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park**

**SiteID:** W47, page 13

**Phone number:** 352-628-5343

**Website:** [WWW.floridastateparks.org/homosassasprings/](http://WWW.floridastateparks.org/homosassasprings/)

**About the site:** From the parking area, a paved walking trail leads off to the west through hardwood hammock, and wetlands where you can find yellow-bellied sapsuckers and black-and-white warblers, among other winter birds. At the extreme west end, either pay a fee to visit the park proper, or loop back to the parking lot via Pepper Creek on the park's pontoon boats. Handicaped access and restrooms.

**Directions:** In the town of Homosassa Springs, on the west side of US 19 just south of CR 490A (Grover Cleveland Blvd.) Park fees are \$19.00 for adults, \$5.00 for children - group fees are available.

**Address:** 4150 S. Suncoast Boulevard, Homosassa, Florida 34446

### **Bluebird Springs Park**

**SiteID:** W48, page 13

**Phone number:** 352-527-7540

**Website:** [WWW.bocc.citrus.fl.us](http://WWW.bocc.citrus.fl.us)

**About the site:** Not a primary Trail site, but worth a visit if you are in the area. Some viewing is barrier free, Birding by foot/hiking, Best time of day: Morning, Recommended length of visit: quick stop. Has restrooms and picnic tables.

**Directions:** From Homosassa Springs, drive south on US 19 to CR 490/W. Yulee drive. Travel southwest 0.7 miles to Noontide Ave., then left onto Bluebird Springs LN.: Park is at the end of the road.

**Address:** 8950 W. Bluebird Springs Lane, Homosassa, FL 34448

### **Homosassa Track of the Withlacoochee State Forest: Rooks Trail**

**SiteID:** W49, page 13

**Phone number:** 352-382-2822

**Website:** [www.fl-dof.com/state\\_forests/](http://www.fl-dof.com/state_forests/)

**About the site:** This approximately 3-mile roundtrip trail runs primarily through improved pasture, past some ponds, through hardwood swamp and a sandhill. Excellent for a casual hike, you're likely to see or hear turkeys, eastern meadowlarks and northern bobwhites, as well as a diversity of migratory songbirds like blue-headed vireos and blue grosbeaks. No fee. Seasonal hunting.

**Directions:** 4 mi. south of Homosassa Springs, turn west by

the fire tower on Burnt Bridge Trail. Continue straight 1.5 mi. to parking area.

### **Lake Panasoffkee Wildlife Management Area**

**SiteID:** W54, page 14

**Phone number:** 352-796-7211

**Website:** [www.swfwmd.state.fl.us](http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us)

**About the site:** This popular hunting and equestrian area can be nice birding in cool weather, too. Check oaks near parking for red-headed woodpeckers, and follow the loop trail through open pasture, watching for kestrels, meadowlarks and killdeer. The spur to little Jones Creek is worth a peek for warblers. Area is closed during special opportunity hunts. Not a primary Trail site, but worth a visit if you're already in the area. Restrooms.

**Directions:** From the intersection of I-75 and SR 44, drive west 3 mi. and enter via Jones Creek Trail on the left (S) side of the road.

### **Potts Preserve Trail**

**SiteID:** W57, page 15

**Phone number:** 352-796-7211

**Website:** [www.swfwmd.state.fl.us](http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us)

**About the site:** This 8,400-acre tract of wilderness offers oak hammocks, river frontage, marshes, pine flatwoods and improved pasture. Accordingly, the diversity of possible birds is tremendous. Scrubjays, burrowing owls, swallow-tailed kites and wood storks have been seen on site. Plan on hiking several miles; bring water and insect repellent. Area is closed during special opportunity hunts.

**Directions:** From Inverness, drive northwest on US 41 to Zephyr St. Turn right (E) and go three blocks to Ella Ave. Turn left (N), Ella will become Turner Camp Rd. (CR 581). Follow Turner Camp Rd. 5.4 mi. through a series of turns. At N. Dee River Rd., bear right at fork, continuing northeast on Turner Camp Rd. for 1.2 mi. to N. Hooty Point Rd.; follow N. Hooty Point Rd. to gate (on right).



## **Withlacoochee State Forest, Two Mile Prairie Tract: Johnson Pond Trail**

**SiteID:** W59, page 15

**Phone number:** 352-489-6507

**Website:** [www.fl-dof.com/state\\_forests/](http://www.fl-dof.com/state_forests/)

**About the site:** This 2.4-mile trail in the Withlacoochee State Forest winds through sandhill and scrub habitats, past its namesake pond. In migration, watch for ovenbirds; Blackburnian, chestnut-sided and blackpoll warblers (among others); and 5 species of vireos. The uplands are home to red-headed woodpeckers year-round, and the pond hosts wood ducks, snipe and purple gallinules.

**Directions:** Drive southwest on SR 200, entering Citrus Co. as you cross the Withlacoochee River. Turn right almost immediately onto CR 39. Site will be 2.5 mi. straight ahead, on the left (S) side.

## **GREAT FLORIDA BIRDING TRAIL: EAST**

### **Gold Head Branch State Park**

**SiteID:** E15, page 5

**Phone number:** 352-473-4701

**Website:** [www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/)

**About the site:** Unique ravine is haven to migratory songbirds in season, including tanagers, thrushes and warblers. Eagles are common. Turkeys and bobwhites feed in the morning along the entrance road. Check the lake for wading birds, ducks and terns. Owls prowl the campground at night. This is a good site for beginning birders. Entrance fee is \$5.00 per vehicle.

**Directions:** From Keystone Heights take SR 21 NE 6 mi. Park is on right (E) side of road.

**Address:** 6239 State Road 21, Keystone Heights, Florida 32656

### **Ravine Gardens State Park**

**SiteID:** E24, page 8

**Phone number:** 386-329-3721

**Website:** [www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/)

**About the site:** Hike ravine or drive loop road around it, watching for migratory songbirds, resident woodpeckers, owls and hawks. Ruby-throated hummingbirds frequent the gardens in spring/summer, and pond has ducks and waders. This is a good site for beginning birders. Entrance fee is \$5.00 per vehicle.

**Directions:** From SR 17 in Palatka, turn S on Moseley Ave. Go to Twigg St. and turn left (E). Park entrance is on the right.

**Address:** 1600 Twigg Street Palatka, Florida 32177

### Caravelle Ranch Wildlife Management Area

**SiteID:** E25, page 8

**Phone number:** 386-329-2517

**Website:** <http://myfwc.com/viewing/recreation/wmas/lead/caravelle-ranch>

**About the site:** During hunting seasons Sept.- March, you can drive into the area to bird for sparrows, turkeys, wading birds and swallowtailed kites. Get a map at the check station. Outside of hunting season, walk in at main gate, or 1 mile S, on E side of road.

**Directions:** Take SR 19 S from Palatka approx. 12 mi. The main entrance is approx. 1 mi. S of Barge Canal bridge on left (E) side of road.

### Welaka State Forest

**SiteID:** E26, page 8

**Phone number:** 386-467-2388

**Website:** [www.fl-dof.com/](http://www.fl-dof.com/)

**About the site:** From parking area, Talking Tree Trail with boardwalk into floodplain interprets the forest's wildlife. John's Landing trail extends S for 4.5 mi. Expect turkeys, bobwhites, eagles, migrating warblers, and sandhill cranes. A printable bird checklist is available at [http://www.floridaforestservice.com/state\\_forests/welaka.html](http://www.floridaforestservice.com/state_forests/welaka.html).

**Directions:** From Palatka, take SR 17 S 10 mi. to CR 309. Go W on CR 309 5 mi. to town of Welaka. Continue on CR 309. Office will be 0.8 mi. S of Welaka on the left (E) side. Go 1 mi. further S and the Talking Tree Trail and John's Landing trailhead will be on the right (W).

### **Welaka National Fish Hatchery & Aquarium**

**SiteID:** E27, page 8

**Phone number:** 904-467-2374

**Website:** <http://southeast.fws.gov/welaka/>

**About the site:** Hatchery's ponds attract fish-eating wading birds; check out birders' viewing platform to see eagles, ospreys, waders, kingfishers and mergansers. Hike the short trail just N of observation tower for migrants and turkeys. This is a good site for beginners.

**Directions:** From Palatka, take SR 17 10 mi. S to CR 309. Turn right on CR 309 and go S 9 mi. to observation tower and ponds on left (E) side.

**Address:** 726 County Road 309, Welaka, Florida 32193

### **Ocala National Forest: Salt Springs Recreational Area**

**Site ID:** E28, page 8/9

**Phone number:** 352-685-2048

**Website:**

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/ocala/recarea/?recid=32362>

**About the site:** Enter at the spring entrance, or park and hike for free at the trailhead just S of the springs. A wooded trail offers migrants in season, and at the water's edge, look for waders and limpkins.

**Directions:** Salt Springs is located just N of intersection of CR 314 and SR 19 on NE side of Ocala National Forest. From Ocala drive east on SR 40 for about 12 miles, then turn north on CR 314 for another 18 miles. Turn north on SR 19 for about a half mile to the recreation entrance of the left. Hiking trailhead is 0.5 mi. S of the Salt Springs campground entrance, on E side of road.

**Address:** Florida 19, Salt Springs, FL 32134

### **Sportsman's Cove**

**SiteID:** E29, page 9

**Phone number:** 352-591-1435

**Website:** <http://www.sportsmanscoveresort.com/>

**About the site:** This private fish camp on Orange Lake is known

for its limpkins, wading birds, shorebirds and wintering ducks. From the waterfront, scope for shorebirds on the flats. A reasonably priced pontoon boat tour is available. Note: Water in Orange Lake is at an all time low. Bring a scope and bird off the point.

**Directions:** From I-75 S of Gainesville, take exit #368 (CR 318) and drive E 2.5 mi. to US 441. Turn left (N) on US 441. Go 3 mi. into McIntosh. Turn right (E) on Ave. F. Site is 8 blocks E of 441 at end of Avenue F.

**Address:** 5423 Avenue F, McIntosh, FL 32667

### **Silver River State Park**

**SiteID:** E30, page 9

**Phone number:** 352-236-7148

**Website:** [www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/)

**About the site:** Driving in, watch for woodpeckers, turkeys and bobwhites. Nature trails run between the museum and the river, through oak hammock. Watch for migratory songbirds in season, and waders and limpkins by the river. Call for details about monthly bird walks. A checklist of animals (including birds) is available at:

[http://floridabirdingtrail.com/index.php/trip/trail/Silver\\_River\\_State\\_Park/](http://floridabirdingtrail.com/index.php/trip/trail/Silver_River_State_Park/) Restrooms, picnic tables, museum (open on weekends).

Entrance fee is \$6.00 per vehicle.

**Directions:** From I-75, take SR 40 E 10 mi., thru Ocala, to SR 35 in Silver Springs. Turn right (S) on SR 35 (Baseline Rd.) and go approx. 1.2 mi. to entrance on left (E).

**Address:** 1425 N.E. 58th Avenue, Ocala, Florida 34470

### **Ocklawaha Prairie Restoration Area**

**SiteID:** E31, page 9

**Phone number:** 352-288-2233

**Website:** <http://sjr.state.fl.us/>

**About the site:** Excellent site for ducks, shorebirds and wading birds, raptors, sparrows, and blackbirds. Hike to the overlook and the levee trail paralleling the wetlands. Large flocks of Sandhill cranes forage the wetlands in season. Check trees along the river for belted

kingfishers and Bald eagles. An observation tower and a long boardwalk into the wetlands make for excellent bird watching and wildlife photography.

**Directions:** From downtown Ocala, take SR 40 E 14 mi. to CR 314A. Turn right (S) on CR 314A and go 7 mi. Turn right and follow SE 85th St. less than 1 mi. to public parking area.

### **Ocala National Forest: Alexander Springs**

**SiteID:** E36, page 11

**Phone number:** 352-669-3153

**Website:**

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/ocala/recarea/?recid=32209>

**About the site:** On Timucuan Trail, watch for songbird migrants and waders. When driving in the Forest, watch for scrub-jays on wires; limpkins at river crossings; and red-cockaded woodpecker trees, ringed with white paint, throughout the forest. Entrance fee is \$6.50 per person. Restrooms and picnic tables.

**Directions:** From SR 19 N of Eustis, take CR 445 NE 5 mi. Entrance to Alexander Springs will be on left (N) side of road.

**Address:** 49525 CR 445, Altoona, Florida 32702



### **Sunnyhill Restoration Area**

**SiteID:** E37, page 11

**Phone number:** 386-329-4404

**Website:** <http://sjr.state.fl.us/>

**About the site:** Follow the levees, watching for wintering ducks. Waders nest here, including both ibises, purple gallinules and least bitterns. Portions of this property will be closed intermittently for

restoration. There is an observation tower .08 miles from the Blue House trailhead on the W/Y connector trail. There are restrooms available at the St. John's River Water Management district office near the entrance and picnic tables at the Blue House. This is an excellent site for beginning birders.

**Directions:** From Weirsdale, take CR 42 E 5.9 mi. Blue House entrance to Sunnyhill is on left (N) side of road. From SR 19 N, take CR 42 left (W); entrance is on the right (N).

**Address:** 19561 Southeast County Road 42, Weirsdale, Florida



### **Emeraldal Marsh Conservation Area**

**SiteID:** E38 & E39, page 11

**Phone number:** 386-329-4404

**Website:** <http://sjr.state.fl.us/>

**About the site:** Entrances along Emeraldal Island Rd. host large flocks of bobolinks each spring. Both bitterns are common, as are migratory ducks in fall and winter. There is intermittent springtime driving access to an interpretive loop at Wood Duck Drive; call (352) 429-3673 for dates. This is a good site for beginners.

**Directions:** From Leesburg, take US 441 S 2 mi. to CR 44 E. Take CR 44 to Emeraldal Ave. and turn left (N). When road comes to T, turn left and follow Emeraldal Island Rd. NW. Accesses to marsh property will be on both sides (at mile markers 0.5, 0.9 and 1.8 mi. on left; and 1.4 mi. on right), with occasional closures for this area's ongoing restoration.

### **Hidden Waters Preserve**

**SiteID:** E40, page 11

**Phone number:** 352-343-3777

**Website:** [www.lcwa.org](http://www.lcwa.org)



**About the site:** Steep slopes lead to a sinkhole formed over time by underground water sources at this small site. Hardwood forest surrounds the lake and is productive for songbirds in early Oct. and early April. Check the lake for ducks and wading birds, and open areas for raptors. The recent Florida drought has occasionally reduced the pond at this site to a mud hole. Although it is not a primary site it can be very good during migration. A brochure about Hidden Waters Preserve can be downloaded at <http://www.lcwa.org/index.asp?page=69>

**Directions:** From the SR 44B and US 441 intersection in Mt. Dora, take US 441 N 0.8 mi. Turn right at East Crooked Lake Rd and go 0.4 mi. to Country Club Rd. Turn right on Country Club and go 0.7 mi. Site is on the right.

### **Lake George State Forest - Bluffton Recreation Area**

**SiteID:** E41, page 12

**Phone number:** 386-985-7822

**Website:** [www.fl-dof.com/](http://www.fl-dof.com/)

**About the site:** Drive to end of road into Bluffton Recreation Area; watch for eagles, turkeys, bobwhites and raptors; songbird migrants in hardwood hammock; and swallow-tailed kites, limpkins and waders at the river. Check the entrance kiosk for occasional hunt dates, or call ahead. Picnic tables. Good site for beginning birders. A printable bird checklist is available at

[http://www.floridaforestservice.com/state\\_forests/lake\\_george.html](http://www.floridaforestservice.com/state_forests/lake_george.html)

**Directions:** Drive 0.5 mi. E of town of Volusia on St. Johns River, or 5.7 mi. W of intersection of SR 17 and SR 40. Turn S on St. Johns River Rd.; go 0.75 mi. to forest entrance gate. The drive to river extends 2.5 mi. S on St. Johns River Rd.

### **DeLeon Springs State Park Area**

**SiteID:** E42, page 12

**Phone number:** 386-985-4212

**Website:** [www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/)

**About the site:** Check waterfront for coots, ducks, limpkins and waders, then hike the 5-mi. hammock trail across floodplain and

cypress margin, looking for hermit thrushes, blue-winged warblers and other migrants. Boat tour runs to Lake Woodruff. This is a good site for beginning birders. Restrooms. Entrance fee of \$6.00 per vehicle. A birding checklist is available at this link.

<http://www.floridastateparks.org/deleonsprings/additionalinformation>.

**Directions:** From I-4, take exit #114 to US 17-92 N, and head N 11.2 mi. to DeLeon Springs. (Choose US 17 N when road splits). Turn left (W) on N side of town onto Ponce DeLeon Blvd. Cross the railroad tracks and enter the park at this point.

**Address:** 601 Ponce de Leon Boulevard, De Leon Springs, Florida 32130

### **Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge**

**SiteID:** E43, page 12

**Phone number:** 386-985-4673

**Website:** <http://www.fws.gov/lakewoodruff/>

**About the site:** Impoundments provide resting and feeding areas for waterfowl, waders and shorebirds, especially in winter. Good songbird viewing along trails S of the entrance area, and in flatwoods on NW side of pools. Bring your scope for best birding from the observation platform. This is a good site for beginning birders. A bird checklist is available at the above link.

**Directions:** From US 17 N of DeLand, turn W on Retta Ave. and drive to Grand Ave. Turn left (S) on Grand Ave. and proceed to Mud Lake Rd. Turn right (W) on Mud Lake and drive to refuge entrance at the end.

**Address:** 2045 Mud Lake Road, DeLeon Springs, FL 32130

### **Hontoon Island State Park**

**SiteID:** E44, page 13

**Phone number:** 386-736-5309

**Website:** [www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/)

**About the site:** Take the free ferry to this island park and bird for ospreys, anhingas, limpkins and other wading birds at water's edge. The 2- mi. trail down W side of island traverses hammocks full of songbirds and woodpeckers. Scrubby flatwoods in island's interior are good for

warblers and vireos.

**Directions:** From DeLand, take SR 44 W to Old New York Ave. Turn left and go approx. 2.5 mi. to Hontoon Rd. Turn left and travel 1 mi. to River Ridge Rd. Turn left and ferry parking area will be 2 mi. ahead on left side.

**Address:** 2309 River Ridge Road, Deland, Florida 32720



"West-central Florida is a wonderful place to get outside. From the sandy beaches on the Gulf of Mexico to the wild beauty of the Green Swamp, there's something for everybody. Whether you are a casual viewer or an avid birder working on your life birding list, bird-watching opportunities abound on all District lands."

from: Recreational Guide to Southwest Florida Water Management District Lands. This booklet can be ordered or downloaded at <http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/publications/search.php?id=13>

The booklet has maps and much more information.

### **Chassahowitzka River and Coastal Swamps**

**Phone number:** 800-423-1476

**About the site:** Purchased in the early 1990s, this property is part of a large greenway of public lands that protects the Chassahowitzka Swamp ecosystem and wildlife resources. The Chassahowitzka River's headwaters, several tributaries and springs are within this tract and are known locally for their great sport fishing and crabbing. The vast expanse of salt marsh, hardwood swamps, crystal-clear springs and river are a canoeist's paradise. The river has been designated an

Outstanding Florida Water by the state of Florida. Chassahowitzka River Trail is Site 51 on western section of Great Florida Birding Trail. Restrooms, potable water and camp store available at campground.

**Address:** 7940 Burnt Bridge Road, Homosassa, FL 34448

### **Flying Eagle Preserve - McGregor Smith Scout Reservation**

**Phone number:** 813-872-2691

**About the site:** This property was purchased from the South Florida Council, Inc., Boy Scouts of America in 2004 to preserve and protect water resources, ecological values and cultural and historical resources. This property is adjacent to the Flying Eagle Preserve that together encompasses 16,334 acres of protected lands. The property is heavily wooded with native vegetation and is composed of approximately 41 percent uplands and 59 percent wetlands and streams. The eastern portion of the property is bordered by the Withlacoochee River for approximately three miles. Portable toilet available.

**Address:** 12650 East Boy Scout Road, Inverness, FL 34450

### **Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve East Tract**

**Phone number:** 800-423-1476

**About the site:** This area is an ideal place where visitors, from school groups to master birders, can visit and explore some of central Florida's flora and fauna found in a natural state that has had little modification by man. The area contains a variety of different habitat types with a wide diversity of plant life. These types include, but are not limited to, sandhills, flatwoods, oak hammocks, river swamp and cypress ponds. The characteristic cypress ponds that dot the landscape can only be found in central Florida. This intact ecosystem attracts many types of wildlife. The preserve is an excellent place for bird watching and observing other wildlife from mammals, amphibians, reptiles and butterfly species.

**Address:** 28057 SR 471, Webster, FL 33597

### **Half Moon-Gum Slough**

**Phone number:** 352-732-1225

**About the site:** This property was acquired to protect and preserve natural water resources and the water quality of the Withlacoochee River, Gum Slough and associated tributaries. The Withlacoochee River, Gum Slough and Gum Springs Run are located adjacent to the property and were designated Outstanding Florida Waters in 1989. Gum Slough is a four-mile-long spring run that flows into the Withlacoochee River. The water in Gum Slough comes from several springs, which makes it remarkably clear and appealing. For the most part, the riverine shores along the property are still natural and undeveloped. The upland areas of the property are a mixture of natural pine flatwoods and oak hammock. Restrooms and water available at check station. Picnic facilities throughout property.

**Address:** 8864 CR 247, Lake Panasoffkee, FL 33538

### **Hálpata Tastanaki Preserve**

**Phone number:** 800-423-1476

**About the site:** A variety of plant communities occur on the property, including floodplain swamp and oak scrub along the Withlacoochee River and longleaf pine turkey oak sandhills occurring in upland areas. Recovering stands of oak scrub scattered amid the sandhill support the threatened Florida scrub-jay. Portable toilets and picnic tables are available at Pruitt Trailhead parking area.

**Address:** 15430 SW CR 484, Dunnellon, FL 34431

### **Lake Panasoffkee**

**Phone number:** 800-423-1476

**About the site:** Acquired to preserve Lake Panasoffkee's vast floodplain forest, the land also preserves pine flatwoods, freshwater marshes and oak scrub forest. As the land continues to rise, pines and scrub oaks of upland sandhills replace the wetland forest trees. A comprehensive restoration effort of Lake Panasoffkee has been completed to enhance both the water quality of the lake and recreational opportunities. Restrooms adjacent to picnic pavilion. Site 54 on western section of Great Florida Birding Trail.

Address: 7519 NW 18th Way, Wildwood, FL 34785

### **Potts Preserve**

**Phone number:** 800-423-1476

**About the site:** The property was acquired for protection of the area's groundwater recharge, as well as important surface water features and wetland habitats. The preserve's wetlands play a role in both the Tsala Apopka Chain of Lakes and the Withlacoochee River systems, part of the Floridan aquifer's recharge/discharge system. Additionally, the site provides habitat to wildlife, including a small population of threatened Florida scrub-jays. Site 57 on western section of Great Florida Birding Trail. Portable toilets located at equestrian/group and primitive campgrounds.

Address: 2988 North Hooty Point Road, Inverness, FL 34453



"The St. Johns River Water Management District owns or manages nearly 700,000 acres of land, acquired for the purposes of water management, water supply and the conservation and protection of water resources. These lands largely consist of wetlands or historically wet areas. Of less acreage, but not of less importance, are upland areas. These areas preserve wetlands, waters and wildlife, and provide critical buffers between rapidly encroaching development and important wetland areas.

Virtually all District property is open to the public for activities that are compatible with conservation. Many recreational activities are allowed on District properties including hiking, biking, wildlife viewing, canoeing, boating, camping, fishing, hunting and horseback riding. The



District provides informational kiosks at each property with informative brochures and trail maps available." From the St. Johns River Water Management District Recreation Guide to District Lands. This booklet can be ordered or downloaded at <http://floridaswater.com/recreationguide/> This booklet contains maps and more information about the sites.

### **Rice Creek Conservation Area**

**SiteID:** N14, page 43

**Phone number:** 386-329-4404

**Website:** <http://www.sjrwmd.com/recreationguide/ricecreek/>

**About the site:** Rice Creek Swamp covers approximately 70 percent of the property. Together with Palmetto Branch, Oldtown Branch and Hickory Branch — which are all just west of the conservation area — the swamp forms the headwaters of Rice Creek, a large tributary of the St. Johns River. The area was an indigo and rice plantation during the 18th century, and most of the uplands were managed as commercial pine plantations before District ownership. The site has a variety of natural communities, including floodplain swamp, flatwoods, dome swamp, floodplain forest and upland mixed forest. The area is also a key parcel for connecting Etoniah State Forest to the Cross Florida Greenway. The area serves as a wildlife corridor, connecting several large natural areas. Natural community diversity supports Florida black bear, white-tailed deer, turkey, river otter, wood duck and diverse migratory songbirds.

**Directions:** Trailhead parking is on the property's north end, along SR 100. Entry to the southern end is only possible by foot on the Florida Trail.

**Location:** Along Rice Creek Swamp, extending south from State Road (SR) 100 to just south of SR 20 in Putnam County, approximately six miles west of Palatka.

### **Clark Bay Conservation Area**

**SiteID:** NC1, page 53

**Phone number:** 386-329-4404

**Website:** <http://www.sjrwmd.com/recreationguide/clarkbay/>

**About the site:** The uplands of the conservation area are comprised mainly of wet and mesic flatwoods. These communities have been altered extensively by tree farming. They were affected by the 1998 wildfires and are in various stages of restoration. The uplands drain into several large basin swamps that form two streams, Deep Creek and Little Haw Creek. The creeks are main tributaries for Lake Woodruff Basin and Crescent Lake Basin, respectively. The wetlands within the conservation area are largely intact. Species here include Florida black bear, bald eagle, sandhill crane, gopher tortoise and wood stork. Deer, turkey, migratory songbirds, swallow-tailed kite, heron, wood ducks and a variety of snakes and lizards have also been observed.

**Directions:** Public parking and access is off Old Daytona Road, just west of where it intersects U.S. 92.

### **Heart Island Conservation Area**

**SiteID:** NC4, page 59

**Phone number:** 386-329-4404

**Website:** <http://www.sjrwmd.com/recreationguide/heartisland/>

**About the site:** The District acquired this property in 1994 with Preservation 2000 funds to protect water resources. At the time of purchase, the property had undergone extensive clear-cutting for the timber resources. The District has focused on planting longleaf pine to restore the area's native plant community. In July 1998, wildfires burned more than 4,000 acres. The District is working to replant vegetation devastated by the wildfires. This conservation area is part of the 35,380-acre Lake George Wildlife Management Area. Hunting on the property is managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Natural communities include basin swamp, floodplain swamp, basin marsh, baygall, blackwater stream, hydric hammock, mesic flatwoods and scrub. Slash pine, cabbage palms and an undergrowth of saw palmetto and gallberry can be found in nearly all of the upland areas. Wetland areas contain various hardwoods, cypress, sweetbay, red bay, loblolly bay and wax myrtle thickets. The mix of natural communities provides excellent habitat for a variety of species,

including Florida black bear and gopher tortoise. Deer, otters, woodpeckers, songbirds, raptors, wading birds, foxes, raccoons, and alligators have been observed.

**Directions:** The property can be accessed from three different roads: from U.S. 17 just south of State Road (SR) 40 — parking area with walk-through for bicycling, hiking and horseback riding; from SR 40 — parking area with walk-through; from SR 11 north of SR 40 — two parking areas on the west side of SR 11.

### **Emeralda Marsh Conservation Area**

**SiteID:** W1, page 73

**Phone number:** 386-329-4404

**Website:** <http://www.sjrwmd.com/recreationguide/emeraldamarsh/>

**About the site:** Historically, the Emeralda Marsh extended for more than 10,000 acres on the eastern side of Lake Griffin, near the headwaters of the Ocklawaha River. The District has acquired approximately half of the project area identified by the state's Conservation and Recreation Lands acquisition program for restoration. In 1974, the area was designated as a National Natural Landmark through a program of the National Park Service. The natural communities and agricultural lands support a large and diverse wildlife population, particularly migrating and wintering birds. A large number of the eastern greater sandhill crane population winter in the area. Thousands of ring-necked ducks and lesser numbers of wood ducks, Florida ducks, and hooded mergansers and large flocks of white pelicans and other waterfowl species can be seen in the area. Listed species include bald eagle, wood stork, limpkin and snowy egret. The wetlands and adjacent water bodies support one of the highest concentrations of alligators in central Florida. A seasonal interpretive drive is open to vehicular access starting the third weekend in February through May on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The gate is locked at 5 p.m. Emeralda is site number E38/39 on the Great Florida Birding Trail.

**Directions:** Travel east from Weirsdale on SR 42 past the Sunnyhill Restoration Area and turn south on CR 452. Public parking areas are

provided off CR 452. Access is also available from Emerald Island Road.

### **Lochloosa Wildlife Conservation Area**

**SiteID:** W4, page 79

**Phone number:** 386-329-4404

**Website:** <http://www.sjrwmd.com/recreationguide/lochloosa/>

**About the site:** The area protects the water quality and species diversity in this environmentally sensitive watershed. Preservation of the shoreline helps maintain hydrologic connections within the Orange Creek Basin. In 1987, the state designated Orange Lake an Outstanding Florida Water. The Cross Creek community adds historic character with the site of author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' home close by. The District also purchased an adjacent 16,610 acre conservation easement from Georgia-Pacific Corp. (now Plum Creek Corp.). Both properties are wildlife management areas. This area is of regional significance for large populations of bald eagles, ospreys, wading birds and other wetland-dependent species. Eighteen listed species live within the area, including wood stork, sandhill crane, black bear, fox squirrel and eastern indigo snake. Lochloosa Wildlife Conservation Area is a Great Florida Birding Trail site (W20, page 7).

**Directions:** From the north off County Road (CR) 2082 and from the Gainesville-Hawthorne State Trail. From the east, off U.S. 301. In Cross Creek, access is adjacent to the volunteer fire department on the east side of CR 325 and from Fish Camp Road.