

Year Round Outdoor adventure guide

Florida's Space Coast

*BIRDING
WILDLIFE
PADDLING
HIKING*



NIKON & The Brevard Nature Alliance
present

The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival

Titusville, Florida • January 24-28, 2007
Brevard Community College • North Campus

*Photo courtesy of
Thomas J. Dunkerton*

BIRDING JOURNAL #379

I CAN'T FULLY EXPRESS MY PASSION FOR RAPTORS.

Coming back home to the Catskill Mountains for a long weekend between our tour dates gave me time to exercise my own wings and do a little exploring on the property with Nikon's newest DigiScope system. Susan and I are on the road so much during the year traveling with our raptor exhibit it's rewarding to get back to nature and experience these birds in their true element. Having spent most of my life up close and personal with raptors in my care, I'm especially thrilled to be able to get such highly detailed digital images of birds enjoying their privacy in the wild.



As one of the world's foremost handlers and rehabilitators of raptors, Jonathan Wood uses The Raptor Project to educate and entertain millions of people about owls, eagles, falcons and hawks.

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Jonathan Wood
Raptor Project
raptorproject.com



on the cover

Florida Scrub Jay

Cover Photo Credit: Thomas Dunkerton

The photograph was taken last year on Cape Canaveral Air Force Station while Tom, an avid nature photographer since 2004, was a field research technician for the Florida Scrub-Jay Project. The pictured Jay was one of over 300 Scrub-Jays who call the Kennedy Space Center home. To see more of Tom's photography, visit www.pbase.com/boidpikchas

Florida Scrub & Scrub Jay -- 90% Gone! Enough?

The Florida Scrub-Jay the only bird species that is endemic to the state; that is out of over 400 species of birds that migrate through or live in Florida, it is the only bird that is found strictly in Florida. It lives in a habitat referred to as "scrub," which exists in isolated patches throughout the central peninsula. Scrub habitat evolved when North America was much drier and desert animals from Texas and Mexico colonized Florida. When the oceans rose, the plants and animals remained and evolved into an eco-system unlike any other in the world. Florida's desert-like prehistoric sand ridges are home to marvelous animals such as the armadillo, gopher tortoise, indigo snake, scrub lizard, Crested Caracara and Burrowing Owl.

Dozens of plants and animals living in Florida scrub are found nowhere else on Earth. One of these animals is the Florida Scrub-Jay, which lives among low growing scrub oaks. Scrub-Jays live in family units which occupy and defend distinct territories. Within their territory, family members (parents, siblings and even grandparents) feed new chicks and cooperate in foraging for food, watching for predators and even attacking intruders. Florida Scrub-Jays are among only 2% of all birds known (and the only jay) that exhibit this fascinating practice. Less than 10% of the large populations of Scrub-Jays that once lived here survive today. Unfortunately, the future of scrub habitat and its occupants is uncertain. More than 90% of Florida's historical scrub-lands have been converted to shopping malls and housing tracts, severely reducing the water that replenishes residents' underground drinking water supply in the process. Efforts are underway to preserve and manage portions of remaining scrub to ensure the future survival of these wondrous areas and their resident species.



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"This project made possible through funding provided by VISIT FLORIDA™ and the Florida Commission on Tourism."



www.space-coast.com

contents

<i>Space Coast Outdoor Adventure Guide</i>	2
<i>on the cover</i>	3
<i>museums, attractions, nature centers</i>	5
<i>birding</i>	8
<i>paddling</i>	16
<i>hiking</i>	23
<i>site map</i>	28
<i>outdoor providers</i>	31

<i>Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival</i>	33
<i>welcome</i>	34
<i>sponsors & partners</i>	35
<i>schedule of events</i>	36
<i>opportunities to meet & mingle</i>	38
<i>art competition</i>	38
<i>how to get here</i>	38

<i>Keynote: Ryan Wheeler</i>	
<i>Ancient Artists Found Inspiration in Florida Birds</i>	39

<i>Keynote: Bill Thompson III</i>	
<i>Ten Reasons Why You Should Stop What You Are Doing & Become a Birder Right Now</i>	40

<i>Keynote: Debra Shearwater</i>	
<i>Birding the Ends of the Earth</i>	41

<i>Keynote: Scott Weidensaul</i>	
<i>Return to Wild America</i>	42

<i>Keynote: Dr. John Fitzpatrick</i>	
<i>River of Hawks</i>	43

<i>field trips</i>	44
---------------------------	-----------

<i>paddling adventures</i>	51
-----------------------------------	-----------

<i>seminars</i>	53
------------------------	-----------

<i>workshops</i>	61
-------------------------	-----------

<i>photo opportunities</i>	65
-----------------------------------	-----------

<i>additional activities</i>	68
-------------------------------------	-----------

<i>registration</i>	69
----------------------------	-----------

<i>activities for families</i>	71
---------------------------------------	-----------



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museums, attractions & nature centers

Located between the temperate and sub-tropical climatic zones, Florida's Space Coast is famous for its mild weather. However, an occasional cold front does push through in winter, and our seasonal afternoon thunderstorms (not to mention the heat) can sometimes turn outdoor activities into a bit of a challenge. It's best to schedule your outside fun in the mornings during the summer, before it gets too hot and the storms kick up. You can spend the afternoon relaxing at one of our many outstanding air-conditioned museums and attractions and have a great time learning why we call the Space Coast your "Gateway to Discovery." www.space-coast.com

Ponce Inlet Lighthouse

Completed in 1887, the Lighthouse is a National Historic Landmark. At 175 feet, it is the second tallest lighthouse in the U.S. and the tallest lighthouse open to the public. A climb to the top reveals a breathtaking view of inlet, estuary and beaches. With a glorious shining beacon, maritime museum and lens restoration facility, the Lighthouse offers a tremendous opportunity to learn of our great maritime heritage.

Ponce Inlet - 386-761-1821

www.ponceinlet.org

Marine Science Center

Adjacent to the Lighthouse, the Marine Science Center is a rehabilitation center for injured sea turtles and an important marine and estuary environmental education center. The Center features sea turtle tanks, exhibits, nature trails through maritime hammock, and boardwalks over coastal dunes. Also on the site is the Mary Keller Seabird Rehabilitation Sanctuary, a 3,000 sq. ft. rehabilitation center to provide a place for sick and injured birds.

Ponce Inlet - 386-304-5545

www.marinesciencecenter.com

Harry T. & Harriette V. Moore Memorial Park and Cultural Center

This park is dedicated to the celebration of the lives of the Moores and their unique contributions to the early civil rights movement. Serving to stimulate appreciation of African-American culture and heritage, the cultural center is located on the original Moore family home site. Dedicated to preserving African-American history, the center is a repository of artifacts and historical documents and features a timeline of strategic events of the pre-civil rights era beginning with slavery.

Mims - 321-264-6595

www.brevardparks.com/htm/intro_h.htm

North Brevard Historical Society

The North Brevard Historical Society features exhibits of historical clothing, printing presses, Indian artifacts, shells, earthenware and historical books. Arrangements can be made for a member of the NBHS to accompany a walking tour of historic Downtown Titusville.

Titusville - 321-269-3658

www.nbhd.com/godo/history

U.S. Space Walk of Fame

Features exhibits commemorating America's space programs, such as the Mercury and Gemini missions. A popular area for viewing launches, the beautiful riverwalk features educational and interpretive stations, public art, plaques, sculptures and bronze statues.

Titusville - 321-264-0434

www.spacewalkoffame.com

U.S. Space Walk of Fame Museum

Also in historic Downtown Titusville, the U.S. Space Walk of Fame Museum is operated by the Space Walk of Fame Foundation. The museum is filled with memorabilia from the men and women whose "blood, sweat and tears" helped to put astronauts in space.

Titusville - 321-264-0434

www.spacewalkoffame.com

Jungle Adventures

Jungle Adventures offers a boat cruise around an island for a close-up view of native Florida wildlife. A tour of the Native American village reveals a fascinating look at Florida's first inhabitants. The endangered Florida panther, alligators, snakes and other Florida animals are featured daily during four wildlife shows.

Christmas - 407-568-2885

www.jungleadventures.com

Fort Christmas Historical Park

Features a replica of the log fort used by pioneers during the Seminole Indian wars. Old pioneer homes, churches and schoolhouses have been relocated to the park to recreate a historic "Florida Cracker" town.

Christmas - 407-568-4149

www.nbhd.com/godo/fortchristmas

Enchanted Forest

The flagship sanctuary for the Brevard County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program. It preserves a significant sample of the natural communities originally found in this region, including xeric oak scrub, mature hardwood forests, wetlands and pine flatwoods. The Education Center showcases universal design, providing accessibility to outdoor natural areas for all people, regardless of age or ability.

Titusville - 321-264-5185

www.eelbrevard.com

Valiant Air Command Warbird Air Museum

Provides an innovative exhibit of air history. The museum offers an excellent static display of vintage Warbird aircraft, including the VAC Flagship, a Douglas C-47A. Listen to war stories retold by veteran tour guides.

Titusville - 321-268-1941

www.vacwarbirds.org



Brevard Community College Astronaut Memorial Planetarium and Observatory

museums/attractions/nature centers

American Police Hall of Fame & Museum

The American Police Hall of Fame & Museum is the nation's first museum and memorial honoring all police in federal, state, county and local departments. Featuring a memorial to New York City and the victims of 9/11, interactive displays and an indoor gun range, this new attraction displays thousands of law enforcement items. Katabi Helicopter Tours operates on-site, offering the once-in-a-lifetime chance to get an astronaut's eye view of the Kennedy Space Center, spot dolphins or just enjoy a high-flying experience.

Titusville - 321-264-0911
www.apht.org

Astronaut Hall of Fame

The only facility in the nation dedicated to telling the stories of American astronauts and features the world's largest collection of astronauts' personal effects.

Titusville - 321-269-6100

Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex

Offers an exhilarating and educational look at the incredible feats accomplished by America's space program. Get a close look at the most famous launch pads in the world, first built for NASA's Apollo missions and presently used by the Space Shuttle fleet. The Observation Gantry near Launch Complex 39 offers the best all-around view of the Space Shuttle launch pads, the gigantic Vehicle Assembly Building and the well-traveled crawler-way over which so much history has passed. The Saturn V Complex brings back to life the awesome spectacle of the largest vehicle ever flown and the moon landing that still raises goose bumps more than 30 years later.

Titusville - 321-449-4444
www.kennedyspacecenter.com

Audubon Center for Birds of Prey

ACBOP is an urban environmental nature center that specializes in the rescue, medical care, rehabilitation and release of sick, injured and orphaned raptors (birds of prey). A leading raptor rehabilitation facility in the Southeast, ACBOP has treated over 8,000 eagles, hawks, owls, falcons, kites and vultures since opening in 1979. The annual release rate of healed "patients" averages nearly 40% of all admissions, and has totaled more than 3,500 birds of prey, including over 225 Bald Eagles, a significant contribution to their recovery off the Endangered Species List! The Center is a resource for novice and expert birders as well as a favored destination of school and civic organization tours.

Maitland - 407-644-0190
http://audubonofflorida.org/who_centers_CBOP.html

Brevard Community College Astronaut Memorial Planetarium and Observatory

Located at the Cocoa campus, the Planetarium and Observatory has been called one of the world's most unique astronomical educational facilities. Under the 70-foot dome, the building houses a museum honoring space explorers from around the world, a planetarium featuring a first-of-its-kind dual projection system, a fully accessible observatory, a hands-on demonstration hall, an Iwerks movie theatre and laser light shows.

Cocoa - 321-433-7373
www.brevardcc.edu/planet

Brevard Museum of History & Science

Colorful dioramas depicting this area from the days of woolly mammoths and saber-tooth cats to the modern era of rockets and Space Shuttles show visitors the rich and diverse history of Brevard County. The museum features the remains of the "Windover Man," the oldest human remains found on the North American continent and a fabulous recreation of the Windover Dig, one of the most important and productive "wet" archaeological sites in the nation. See how Native Americans lived and Florida pioneers survived. Walk the nature trail and see Florida in its natural setting in the 22-acre wildlife sanctuary.

Cocoa - 321-632-1830
www.brevardmuseum.com

Alma Clyde Field Library of Florida History

Houses the 60,000-item collection of the Florida Historical Society, the state's oldest cultural organization. The collection contains books on Florida, papers of prominent Floridians, historical maps, photos, artifacts and family histories.

Cocoa - 321-690-1971
www.florida-historical-soc.org

Brevard Veterans Memorial Park & Veterans Military Museum

Showcases a large collection of weapons, maps, uniforms, medals,

newspaper clippings and much more war memorabilia. Artifacts date back to the Civil War. An extensive library is also on-site.

Merritt Island - 321-453-1776

East Coast Surfing Hall of Fame Museum

Located at Ron Jon Surf Shop in Cocoa Beach, the museum features a collection of vintage surfing magazines, boards and memorabilia. See the collection that curator Sean O'Hare has accumulated, from shots of the original greats like Pat O'Hare, Mike Tabeling and the McRoberts brothers to the current celebrities and their humble beginnings. Check out the exhibit on Cocoa Beach native Kelly Slater, seven-time world surfing champion.

Cocoa Beach - 321-799-8840

Brevard Museum of Art & Science

Located in the historic Downtown Eau Gallie district, the museum contains seven art galleries featuring changing exhibitions of internationally recognized, nationally recognized and regional artists representing a variety of styles and media. The Children's Science Center features more than 35 exciting, interactive hands-on exhibits focusing on the physical sciences.

Melbourne - 321-242-0737
www.artandscience.org

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museums/attractions/nature centers

Honor America Inc. Liberty Bell Museum

Houses a replica of the Liberty Bell, historical documents and patriotic memorabilia. Items are permanent reminders of our nation's history, as well as a memorial to military veterans.

Melbourne - 321-727-1776
www.libertybellmemorial.com

Erna Nixon Park & Nature Center

The Erna Nixon Park & Nature Center is a 54-acre natural Florida hammock and nature preserve that features a 2,345-foot-long elevated boardwalk with 640 feet of trail that winds through three different ecosystems. The nature trail has signage that identifies many different plant species and a nature center with exhibits is on the site.

Melbourne - 321-952-4525
www.brevardparks.com

Florida Tech Botanical Garden

This 30-acre, Florida-type, botanical garden is a picturesque treat from sandy uplands of pines and palmettos to lush hardwood hammock including oak, maple, hickory and one of the largest palm tree collections in Florida. A plant guide and nature trail map are available at the adjacent Evans Library.

Melbourne - 321-674-8000
www.fit.edu

Florida Eco-Safaris at Forever Florida

Forever Florida/Crescent J Ranch is a 4300-acre wilderness preserve southeast of Orlando. Here, visitors can see the "Real Florida" aboard comfortable swamp buggies or on horseback on a tour through wet prairie, cypress swamps, grasslands, pinewoods, creeks and dense oak hammocks. The tour also passes through a working cattle ranch where a program takes place to preserve the bloodlines of descendants of the original cattle and horses that came to Florida on Spanish galleons during the sixteenth century. Learn about the Florida pioneer turpentine and cattle industries and the heroic efforts of the Broussard family, who have dedicated considerable time and money to obtain as much of the land surrounding their ranch as possible in order to preserve it forever.

Kenansville - 1-866-854-3837
www.floridaeco-safaris.com

Sebastian Fishing Museum

Portrays the history of Sebastian's fishing industry through pictures, video presentations, fishing gear, homemade boats and replicas.

Sebastian Inlet State Park - 772-388-2750

McLarty Treasure Museum

Features exhibits from the 1875 Spanish

Silver Fleet that wrecked just off the shore and from the encampment that was established by the survivors.

Sebastian Inlet - 772-589-2147

Environmental Learning Center

Situated on beautiful Wabasso Island, the center is a 51-acre preserve with a nature center and an emphasis on the Indian River Lagoon estuary. Enjoy hiking, nature walks and hands-on activities for all ages.

Wabasso - Environmental Learning Center - 772-589-5050
www.elcweb.org

On the same property is a historical building, the former home of poet Laura Riding Jackson.

Wabasso - Laura Riding Jackson Home - 772-589-6711

Welcome to Titusville

Photo by Jeff Bouton



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birding

If you are a birdwatcher, welcome to paradise! Located on the Eastern Continental Flyway, a major bird migration corridor, this region provides prime stopover habitat for many migrating shorebirds, waterfowl, raptors, and passerines. More than 330 species of birds have been seen here. Thousands of birds migrate from their northern homes to spend the winter here; the Painted Bunting, North America's most colorful bird, is a winter resident. The Space Coast is also home to one of the largest populations of Florida Scrub-Jays remaining in the state.

The fastest growing passive sport in America, birdwatching is an activity that can be enjoyed by families, groups and individuals. Easy and inexpensive, it requires minimal equipment, skill or physical fitness. With its diverse habitats and favorable climate, the Space Coast is among the best birding locations in North America. Featuring numerous charismatic and colorful birds, easily seen and identified with a field guide, this area appeals to beginning birders as well as experts. The animated Reddish Egret (the rarest heron in North America), spectacular Roseate Spoonbill (the pink bird that many assume is a flamingo) and the imposing Bald Eagle are not as common in other areas as they are on the Space Coast. Other avian species coveted by experienced birders can be seen here, including Crested Caracara, Snail Kite, Swallow-tailed Kite, Peregrine Falcon, Black Rail, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Bachman's Sparrow, Red-cockaded Woodpecker and many more. Another magical opportunity is the possibility of spotting pelagic seabirds in fall and winter. On days with strong winds from the east, Northern Gannets and jaegers may be seen from the beach. Tropicbirds and Magnificent Frigatebirds are sighted occasionally.

Great Florida Birding Trail

To help people locate well known, as well as new places to look for birds, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, with help from the Florida Department of Transportation, has established the 2,000-mile-long Great Florida Birding Trail (GFBT) to connect birders with Florida's best spots and species. The GFBT consists of numerous sites in each of four geographic locations of the state. Sites are pinpointed on special guide maps and marked by highway signs. More than 40 GFBT sites are located within an hour from mainland locations on the Space Coast; many can be reached within minutes.

850-922-0664

www.floridabirdingtrail.com

Smyrna Dunes Park

Located on the south side of Ponce Inlet, this Volusia County park offers panoramic views of ocean, inlet and estuary via two miles of boardwalks that wind around its perimeter. You can spot a variety of birds without leaving the boardwalk as it passes through hammock, which is good for warbler landfalls in fall and spring, then on to the oceanfront where you can check the beach for loafing gulls, terns and shorebirds and scope the water for loons and ducks. Along the western side of the park, boardwalk spurs lead out to the estuary, passing through a saltmarsh area where Saltmarsh and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows are sometimes seen. Watch for gopher tortoises as you pass over pristine coastal scrub habitat.

Low tide is the best time to visit Smyrna Dunes, especially in winter, when exposed mudflats attract massive numbers of coastal birds. Winter is also a good time to look along



Photo courtesy of VISITFLORIDA

the shoreline for delicate small shorebirds, like the endangered Piping Plover, Wilson's Plover and Semipalmated Plover. Baitfish activity attracts gulls and terns as well as Northern Gannets.

Directions: From I-95 or U.S. 1 in New Smyrna Beach, take SR 44 east to Canal St. Turn left (north) onto Riverside Dr. and then right onto Flagler Ave., crossing the Halifax River to the barrier island. Just after crossing the bridge, turn left onto North Peninsula Dr. The park is two miles north, at the end of the road. Entrance fee is \$5.

904-424-2935

www.volusia.org/parks/smyrnadunes

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge is a designated gateway to the East Section of the GFBT, where visitors can find detailed information and materials. Staff members at the Refuge Visitor Center are available to answer questions and provide information

about birding classes and events. Merritt Island has the distinction of being home to NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (MINWR) and Canaveral National Seashore. Comprised of 140,000 acres of salt marsh, freshwater impoundments, brackish estuaries, hardwood hammocks, pine flatwoods and scrub, the Refuge remains unsurpassed as a refuge for endangered wildlife. At 21 species, it supports more threatened and endangered animals than any other refuge in the continental U.S., including the Florida manatee, Bald Eagle, Wood Stork, gopher tortoise and eastern indigo snake. Over 6,000 alligators call it home.

Birding a variety of habitats on the Refuge can be exceptionally rewarding, particularly from November through March. Impoundments and saltmarshes offer the most diversified viewing opportunities. One of the most popular areas of MINWR, world-renowned Blackpoint Wildlife Drive, offers visitors an opportunity to observe birds and wildlife without leaving their vehicles. Peacock's Pocket, Gator Creek, Shiloh Marsh, Biolab and L Pond Roads offer more opportunities to bird and photograph from a vehicle. MINWR offers more than 40 miles of drivable dike roads. Within hardwood hammocks, you'll find excellent birding for warblers and other songbirds during migrations.

Haulover Canal & Mullethead Island

The big attraction for birders in boats is a large spoil island that lies just west of the Haulover Canal. One of the most significant colonial waterbird nesting islands in the state, Mullethead Island and its surrounding grass

flats provide an excellent opportunity to view a variety of birds from the water's level. In late spring, there's a good chance you'll see Roseate Spoonbills and Reddish Egrets feeding their young. Other birds that nest on the island include Great Blue, Little Blue, Tricolored and Black-crowned Night-herons; Great and Snowy Egrets; White Ibises; Brown Pelicans; and Double-crested Cormorants. Prime viewing time is March through July. In addition to wading birds in spectacular breeding plumage, look for shorebirds, gulls and terns loafing on sandbars. In winter, Lesser Scaups, American White Pelicans, Common Loons, Red-breasted Mergansers and Horned Grebes may also be seen on the lagoon's open waters. Mullethead Island can be scoped from the northwest side of Haulover Canal. Turn west on the dirt road immediately north of the bridge (across from Manatee Viewing Platform) and follow the road around until it ends at the shoreline of the Indian River Lagoon. A dirt road system on the southeast side of the canal passes through prime scrub habitat where Florida Scrub-Jays may be seen. Check power lines on the south side of the canal for scrub-jays.

Directions: From Titusville, go east on SR 406 across the Indian River. At the big curve, stay to the right and take SR 402 to get to the Visitor's Center; to get to the Black Point Wildlife Drive, go left on SR 406. To get to Haulover Canal, take SR 406 until it ends at SR 3; turn left and go north on SR 3 for 4.5 miles.

321-861-0667

www.nbbd.com/godo/minwr

Canaveral National Seashore

Nationally recognized as one of America's most beautiful beaches, CNS is directly adjacent to the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. It consists of 24 miles of undeveloped beach and wetland environs that stretch from Playalinda Beach in Brevard County northward to Apollo Beach in Volusia County.

CNS offers a rich array of birding pleasures: access to the beach for shorebirds, gulls and terns; elevated platforms on the dune line to scope for migrating raptors along the shoreline and gannets and jaegers out at sea; winding trails through maritime hammock for Painted Buntings and migratory songbirds; and vantages of the lagoon where waders, shorebirds and rafts of migratory ducks seek shelter and food. This property is one of the best sites in Florida to scope offshore for seabirds. You might even spot one of the world's most endangered large whales, the northern right whale, which calves here in winter.

There is more to CNS than just its beaches; more than 100 Native American Indian shell middens are located within the park. One of these is the 60-foot-high Turtle Mound, which is also one of the best sites on Florida's East Coast for viewing raptors during migration. Winter birding can often be quite good along the Oak Hill waterfront. You will not want to miss the flock of American White Pelicans that spend the winter loafing on a shell bar behind Goodrich's Seafood Restaurant north of Seminole Rest Indian Mound. To access the waterfront, go east from U.S. 1 at the blinking yellow caution light in Oak Hill.

Directions: The south entrance is reached from Titusville. Take SR 406 east and veer right (east) onto SR 402. Proceed through Merritt Island NWR to the entrance station. Watch for Florida Scrub-Jays near the station. The north entrance is reached from New Smyrna Beach. Go east on SR 44 to Highway A1A. Go south on A1A seven miles to the park entrance.

321-267-1110

www.nbbd.com/godo/cns

Riverbreeze Park

The unique feature of Volusia County's beautiful Riverbreeze Park is a keyhole dock that passes over an oyster bar and extends out into Mosquito Lagoon. At high tide, the area may seem quite unremarkable, but at low tide, mudflats are exposed in and around the keyhole, where shorebirds like avocets, godwits, dunlin, Red Knots and dowitchers feed close to the viewers above. This is a good site to practice coastal bird identification in fall and winter when exposed sandbars also host loafing gulls, terns, Black Skimmers, pelicans and wading birds. Keep a close watch for oystercatchers. Check the tide tables the night before your visit so you can plan your route accordingly. Camping is permitted.

Directions: From the blinking caution light on US 1 in Oak Hill, go north about two miles. Turn right on H.H. Burch Rd. The park is located at the end of the road on the north (left) side.

386-345-5525

Buck Lake Conservation Area

For a great hiking experience, visit the 9,600-acre Buck Lake Conservation Area west of Mims. Consisting of natural woodlands and wetlands that were historically used for pine and hardwood timber production and cattle ranching, this area was also used as the personal hunting preserve for the ranching family that formerly owned it. To ensure better hunting, the woodlands here were better preserved than on many of the neighboring properties, which were heavily logged. A ridge in the eastern part of the property supports about 200 acres of scrubby flatwoods and oak hammocks that provide habitat for Florida Scrub-Jays. A basin swamp community dominates the eastern third of the property. The western portion of the property features a large floodplain marsh and a marsh lake, Buck Lake. There is an observation tower on the southeast side of Buck Lake, accessible from the second parking area.

Congratulations
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Birding and Wildlife Festival
on your 10th
anniversary

from your friends
and colleagues at

BIRDWATCHER'S
Digest

North America's favorite birding magazine since 1978!
birdwatchersdigest.com

Sought-after species here include King Rail, Swallow-tailed Kite, Bachman's Sparrow, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Carolina Chickadee, Wild Turkey, Eastern Bluebird, Bald Eagle, Wood Stork and Red-headed Woodpecker. Watch for alligators, gopher tortoises, indigo snakes, bobcats, otters, deer and gray fox.

Directions: Three parking areas can be accessed from SR 46 west of Mims. From the I-95/SR 46 interchange: The first parking lot is located approximately one mile west on SR 46 on the north side of the road. The second parking area is located about 6.5 miles west on SR 46 on the north side of the road. The third parking area can be accessed by going approximately 10 miles west on SR 46 then turning right on Morgan Alderman Rd. and go about 0.25 miles; the parking area is on the right. For hunt information, call 352-732-1225. 407-893-3127

<http://sjr.state.fl.us/programs/outreach/pubs/recguide>

Seminole Ranch Conservation Area

The nearby 28,000-acre Seminole Ranch Conservation Area, like Buck Lake, yields the best experience when time and energy are invested in hiking the property's extensive trail system. A variety of habitats are found here including pine, palmetto, hardwood hammocks, freshwater lakes, river and wetlands. The hammocks and wetlands are thick with everything from migratory songbirds and Painted Buntings to turkeys and wading birds. King and Clapper Rails and Soras, among others, can be found in the marshes where the property borders the St. Johns River. Certain areas within Seminole Ranch CA have a unique plant community supported by connate saltwater which flows from underground springs near Harney and Puzzle Lakes. The salinity of small lakes in the area sometimes approaches one-third that of seawater. Many salt-tolerant and marine-dwelling organisms present here are not found anywhere else in the St. Johns River, including the elusive Black Rail. A trail on the east side of Hatbill Rd. about two miles south of SR 46 leads to an observation tower.

Hatbill Park

Hatbill Road runs through the center of Seminole Ranch Conservation Area, ending at the St. Johns River and Hatbill Park, which can be good for sunrise and early morning birding before the airboaters arrive. Limpkins are possible here as well as Wood Ducks, Mottled Ducks and other waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds and raptors. There are bobwhites and meadowlarks, Red-winged Blackbirds, Boat-tailed and Common Grackles, Fish Crows and Anhingas. You can usually find cardinals, shrikes, Eastern

Towhees and vireos here. Working along the road, you may see Blue Jays, Tufted Titmice, robins, Cedar Waxwings, Sedge and Marsh Wrens, Swamp and Savannah Sparrows and four species of woodpecker (pileated, downy, red-bellied and flicker). Red-headed and Hairy Woodpeckers and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are occasionally seen. You can usually find Pine, Prairie, Black-and-white, Palm, Yellow-throated and Yellow-rumped Warblers in season. Many others may be found in migration. Blue-headed and White-eyed Vireos are here as well as Red-eyed Vireos in migration. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Brown-headed Nuthatches, Barred Owls, Great Horned Owls and Eastern Screech-owls can also be found.

Directions: The North Tract of Seminole Ranch is bisected by Hatbill Rd., which intersects SR 46 on the south side, 4.1 miles west of the I-95 and SR 46 interchange. Look for signs for Loughman Lake Lodge and the Seminole Ranch CA. The South Tract of Seminole Ranch is accessed via SR 50. The trailhead is directly south of the parking area for Orlando Wetlands Park (see directions for OWP). For camping information at Hatbill Park, call 321-264-5105. 407-893-3127

<http://sjr.state.fl.us/programs/outreach/pubs/recguide>

Little-Big Econ State Forest

A partnership project between the St. Johns Water Management District, the Florida State Conservation and Recreation Lands Program and Seminole County, this area includes a beautiful blackwater stream, the Econlockhatchee River. The property has two tracts that are good for birding.

The Demetree Tract has two entrances; the south entrance, off of Snow Hill Road and the northern Barr Street entrance, off of CR 426. The Snow Hill Road entrance has a parking area surrounded by improved pasture and a visitor center with maps and forest information. A trail snakes along and through the treeline that borders the Econ, offering excellent birding for a diversity of resident and migratory songbirds like Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, and Black-throated Blue Warbler. You may encounter Wood Duck, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Sandhill Crane, Barred Owl, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Pileated Woodpecker and Sedge Wren. With luck you might find Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, Wild Turkey, Blue-headed Vireo, Carolina Chickadee, Hermit Thrush, Orange-crowned Warbler, Ovenbird, Grasshopper Sparrow and Baltimore Oriole. Look for Swallow-tailed Kites in spring and summer.

The Kilbee Tract borders the St. Johns River

near its confluence with the Econ. Drive partway onto the property and then hike the entrance road one mile to the end where the floodplain opens to a view of the river and its waders, raptors, shorebirds and ducks in fall and winter.

Directions: To get to the Barr St. entrance, go south about 4.5 miles on CR 426 from SR 46 in Geneva. The entrance will be on the left. To get to the Snow Hill Rd. entrance, go south on CR 426 from SR 46 in Geneva. In just under a mile, Snow Hill Rd. veers off to the left. Go about 2.5 miles south on Snow Hill Rd. The parking area will be on the right. The entrance to the Kilbee Tract is off of SR 46, just west of the SR 46 bridge about 11 miles west of the I-95/SR 46 interchange. For hunt information, call 352-732-1225. 407-971-3500

www.fl-dot.com

Blue Heron Water Reclamation Facility

The City of Titusville's facility offers another outstanding opportunity for birding from a vehicle. The constructed wetlands are engineered from uplands that have been designed to utilize the natural processes of wetlands to assist in the polishing of wastewater effluent. This 292-acre site contains seven cells, or ponds, that are rich in wildlife. Outstanding diversity of plant species has encouraged an impressive number of wildlife species to utilize the wetlands. Deer, wild hogs, bobcats, alligators, birds, otters, turtles and frogs prowl the dikes. Least bitterns in particular are doing well here, nesting in early summer. American Bittern, Purple Gallinule, Hairy Woodpecker, Limpkin, Sandhill Crane, Roseate Spoonbill, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Black-necked Stilt, Gadwall, Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Bobolink and Gull-billed Tern are just a few of well over 100 bird species sighted here.

Directions: From Titusville, take SR 50 west. Facility is on the south side of SR 50, at the end of Deep Marsh Rd., about 1/2 mile west of I-95. Normally the gate is closed. Ring the buzzer on your left to have someone open it. The facility is open for birding from 7am-3pm on weekdays. Appointments must be made on weekends. It is advisable to call ahead. 321-383-5642.

Canaveral Marshes Conservation Area

This 6,741-acre property is owned and managed by the St. Johns River Water Management District. Most of the property borders the east side of the St. Johns River and is predominantly freshwater marsh. Hiking access is from SR 50, about a mile west of the Blue Heron Wetlands. The eastern portion of Canaveral Marshes near the Great

Outdoors RV Park can be very good for waterfowl, shorebirds and songbirds in winter, depending on the water levels. Volunteers who conducted monthly surveys in 2001 and 2002 recorded approximately 154 species of birds on this property.

The marsh west of the adjoining Great Outdoors resort has been especially productive, particularly in the fall. At a small pond just inside the property there are times when hundreds of Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, along with smaller numbers of Mottled Duck, Northern Pintail and Northern Shoveler may be found. The pond is part of the St. Johns River floodplain and, when water is low, there are many depressions and secondary channels that are attractive to shorebirds and other waterfowl. The higher marsh areas are good for Sedge and Marsh Wrens. Elsewhere on the floodplain, American Bittern, Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Long-billed Dowitcher, Stilt Sandpiper, Gull-billed Tern, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Crested Caracara, King and Virginia Rails, American Pipit, Wilson's Snipe and Peregrine Falcon may be found. This is a hiking area where you may get your feet wet.

Directions: Access is from a parking area

on the south side of SR 50 approximately three miles west of I-95.
407-349-4972

<http://sjr.state.fl.us/programs/outreach/pubs/recguide>

St. Johns River

If you're into birding, the St. Johns River is a paradise. In addition to numerous wading birds, raptors can frequently be seen soaring over the river or perched in snags along the floodplains. Toward evening, thousands of birds leave the floodplain and move to nighttime roosts.

The most exciting way to bird the river is from an airboat. Some large Indian middens are accessible by boat. Middens often provide resting space and feeding areas for neotropical migrant songbirds. You should see alligators, raptors and lots of wading birds at any time of the year. Birding is best, of course, during fall, winter and spring. Bald Eagle, Northern Harriers, American White Pelican, Mottled Duck, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Wood Stork, Sandhill Crane, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs are fairly common. Roseate Spoonbill, Peregrine Falcons, Merlin, Crested Caracara, Wild Turkey, Black Skimmer, Long-billed Dowitcher, Limpkin, Wood Duck, Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons,

Sora, King Rail and Marsh and Sedge Wrens are a possibility. Short-tailed Hawk and Snail Kite are rare, but occasionally seen.

There are two ways to take an airboat ride. One way is to spontaneously drop in at Lone Cabbage Fish Camp on SR 520. Small airboats offer a better quality experience. Reservations are required for small airboat tours. See the operator listings in the Outdoor Providers section of this publication.

www.stjohnsriveralliance.com or www.marshbunny.com

Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area

Sixty miles of trails wind through this 28,000-acre property, offering plenty of opportunity for birding, hiking, biking, primitive camping, nature study, horseback riding, and fishing. A road system offers the opportunity for birding from a vehicle. Shaped by alternating cycles of fire and flood, Tosohatchee WMA is a mosaic of marshes, swamps, pine flatwoods and oak hammocks.

The marshes are feeding areas for wading birds and, during winter months, host large numbers of migrating waterfowl. Forested uplands support deer, bobcats, gray foxes, Wild Turkeys, woodpeckers, hawks, owls and songbirds. Some of the threatened and endangered species found at the reserve

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include Bald Eagle, Wood Stork, eastern indigo snake, gopher tortoise and, on rare occasions, the Florida panther. Birds of interest include Bachman's Sparrow, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Eastern Bluebird, Red-headed Woodpecker and Sandhill Crane.

Directions: From Titusville, take SR 50 west to the town of Christmas. Look for a brown sign for Tosohatchee. Turn left and travel three miles south on Taylor Creek Rd. The entrance will be on the left. Make sure you have some dollar bills to put in the fee box located on the right just inside the entrance. There is some seasonal hunting on this property. 407-568-5893.

Orlando Wetlands Park

Orlando Wetlands Park (OWP) is a large treatment facility that uses water plants to polish already treated wastewater before discharging it into the St. Johns River. Visitors are sure to see numerous wading birds, and often Purple Gallinule, Least and American Bitterns, Red-shouldered Hawk and King Rail can be found foraging in the marshes. Ospreys and Bald Eagles feed throughout the wetlands complex, and Purple Martins nest in tree cavities each spring – one of the only places east of the Mississippi River where they nest in anything other than man-made houses! Sunset brings on a spectacular sight as thousands of wading birds move from daytime feeding areas to their nightly roosts. A trail that begins at the parking lot and winds east around Lake Searcy then north through a hammock can be good for migratory songbirds in season. Watch for ducks and shorebirds in the wetlands in fall and winter and large flocks of migratory tree swallows coming in to roost in late fall and early spring. Closed for seasonal hunting Oct. 31-Jan. 31.

Directions: From Titusville, take SR 50 west to the town of Christmas. Turn right (north) onto Ft. Christmas Rd. (CR 420) and go 2.3 miles to Wheeler Rd. Turn right on Wheeler and go east for 1.5 miles. The parking area will be on your left. 407-568-1706

www.cityoforlando.com, click on Parks

Hal Scott Preserve

The vast expanse of pine flatwoods and open prairies of Hal Scott Preserve straddles the Econlockhatchee River in eastern Orange County, protecting the resources of the river. Its big attraction for birders is an active colony of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers located in the northern third of the property. Best viewing time is at dawn when the birds awaken from their nesting cavities. White stripes around pine tree trunks identify trees with nesting cavities. Other common resident species include

Eastern Bluebird, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Bachman's Sparrow, Wood Duck, Sandhill Crane and Barred Owl. With some luck, visitors may find Wild Turkey, Whip-poor-will, Hairy and Red-headed Woodpeckers, Hermit Thrush, Orange-crowned Warbler, Sedge and Marsh Wrens, King Rail and Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks.

Directions: From Titusville, head west on SR 50, past the town of Christmas. Turn left and go east on SR 520 for about two miles. Turn right (west) into the Wedgefield subdivision on Macon Pkwy. Turn left on Bancroft Blvd., right on Meredith Pkwy., then left on Dallas Blvd. The parking lot is 1.6 miles south of the Meridith/Dallas intersection, on the right. 407-893-3127

<http://sjr.state.fl.us/programs/outreach/pubs/recguide>

Pine Island Conservation Area

The Pine Island Conservation Area is a dynamic landscape supporting a diverse plant community and abundant wildlife. Adjoining the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, the 879-acre conservation area is jointly owned by the Brevard County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program (EEL Program) and the St. Johns River Water Management District. Two hiking trails accessed from a trailhead 0.5 miles from the entrance parking area offer moderate 1.0 mile and 1.5 mile walks through pine flatwoods and hydric hammocks. Each trail features overlooks that provide visitors with panoramic vistas of shallow water feeding habitat of wading birds, shorebirds and waterfowl. Biking is allowed on established trails.

The coastal location and diversity of habitat provide many opportunities for viewing wildlife. Permanent blinds are accessible by foot or canoe. Wading birds are common, with fall migration bringing numerous species of waterfowl and shorebirds, as well as American White Pelicans. Pine flatwoods provide habitat for resident and migratory songbirds. Red-tailed Hawk, Osprey, Vulture and Bald Eagle are often sighted.

Directions: From the intersection of SR 520 and SR 3 on Merritt Island, go north on SR 3 for five miles to Pine Island Rd. Turn left and go west on Pine Island Rd. Follow it 2.5 miles to the parking lot at the end. A kiosk with a map shows the canoe trails. 321-255-4466

www.eelbrevard.com

Port Canaveral

Jetty Park is the last land that ships pass as they leave Port Canaveral, headed out to sea. This area is consistently productive for many gull and tern species. It is not unusual to see hundreds of birds standing on the beach south

of the jetty, providing a great opportunity for comparison of age and seasonal variations in plumages and molt sequences. As you bird the jetty area (a good place to look for Purple Sandpiper), look across the Trident Submarine turning basin for winter birds. Several avian rarities for this area have visited in recent years, including Common Eider and Red-necked Grebe. In addition to regular waterbirds, Magnificent Frigatebird, Northern Gannet, Jaegers, Sabine's Gull and other seabirds may be seen offshore in winter.

On the beach look for Sanderling, Willet, Piping Plover (rare), Black-bellied Plover, Red Knot, Ruddy Turnstone and many terns and gulls. Among them may be Lesser Black-backed Gull, Caspian and Sandwich Terns and Black Skimmer. You may see a shrimp boat dragging near the shore with hundreds of birds following. These should be scanned for rare oceanic birds.

The Port Canaveral Locks offer an abundance of manatees, dolphins and birds. Check the rocks for Ruddy Turnstone, Black-bellied Plover and Spotted Sandpiper. Numerous waders and other birds loaf around the pilings. Sunset brings on a gathering of Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons.

Directions: From north Cocoa, go east on SR 528 from I-95 or U.S. 1. Follow the signs for South Dock and exit into the south entrance to the Port. Turn right on George King Blvd. and follow the signs to Jetty Park. Entrance fee is \$5 per car. Full service camping available. To get to the Port Canaveral Locks from the south entrance to the Port, take the first left onto Dave Nisbett Dr., and turn left on Mullet Dr. The locks are at the very end of Mullet Dr. 321-783-7111

www.portcanaveral.org

Lori Wilson Park

Lori Wilson Park has the last large piece of maritime hammock and undeveloped coastal scrub remaining on Cocoa Beach. This hammock is a magnet for migratory songbirds and Painted Buntings. Springtime songbird migration fallouts occur in April when one may garner day lists of about 15 warbler species. Elevated boardwalks wind through the hammock, allowing close-up views of the songbirds as well as beach access for shorebirds and seabirds.

Directions: From SR 520 in Cocoa Beach, travel south on Highway A1A for 3.5 miles. The park is on the left (east) side of the road. 321-633-1874

www.brevardparks.com

Viera Wetlands

Viera Wetlands is a series of connected

ponds created to treat wastewater from the Central Brevard area. Since opening in 2001, this site has rapidly gained recognition as a premier birding destination. Raised dikes offer opportunities for birding from a vehicle and observation towers look out over the ponds. During fall and winter, a good diversity of bird species use these wetlands. An active Bald Eagle nest is visible from the dike road, two families of Crested Caracaras maintain territories around the wetlands, and Northern Harriers course above the marsh and pasture. Thousands of wintering ducks concentrate here, including Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mottled Duck, Mallard, Hooded and Red-breasted Merganser, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, Northern Pintail, Bufflehead and Ruddy Duck. Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks are regularly seen.

Two ponds on the north side of the complex are productive for shorebirds when water levels are low, especially during migration. Black-necked Stilts nest here in spring and summer. This site has become a hot spot for rarities. The first U.S. sighting of a Mangrove Swallow was recorded here in November 2002 when sharp-eyed field trip leader Murray

Gardler spotted the bird when he stopped by to investigate a flock of Mexican Cave Swallows (a Brevard County first record) that had been seen the day before on a birding festival field trip.

Directions: From I-95, take Exit 191 (Wickham Rd.) and go west to the end of the road. Go through the gate on the left and stop to sign in at the Administration Office before going to the dikes. To get to the north ponds, go back out through the gate and go north on the dirt road next to the power lines.
321-255-4328.

Turkey Creek Sanctuary


Turkey Creek Sanctuary, managed by Audubon of Florida, is well known as a hot spot for warblers and other neotropical migratory songbirds. More than 30 warbler species have been reported here, including Canada, Prothonotary, Golden-winged, Chestnut-sided, Nashville, Hooded, Worm-eating, Cerulean, Swainson's, Yellow-throated, Blackburnian and Tennessee as well as waterthrushes and Ovenbirds. Migration at this site is heavily concentrated in October and April. Its songbird counts receive statewide recognition during those months. Part of this area is viewed from a raised boardwalk.

Turkey Creek is a blackwater creek, and its surrounding hydric hammock supports Carolina Wren, American Redstart, Osprey, owls, hawks, egrets, Anhinga, herons and cormorants. Other species seen include Northern Bobwhite, Eastern Towhee, Blue and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Indigo and Painted Buntings, Red-eyed, Blue-headed and White-eyed Vireos, Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Baltimore Oriole.


Directions: From I-95, take Exit 176 (Palm Bay Rd.) and go east to Babcock St. Turn right and go south on Babcock. Turn left onto Port Malabar Blvd. and continue east one mile to the Palm Bay Community Center. Parking for the sanctuary is behind the Community Center.
321-952-3433.

Three Forks Marsh Conservation Area

The 52,000 acres of the Three Forks Marsh CA comprise a significant portion of the Upper St. Johns River Basin Project. Original floodplain communities of this area were severely impacted by diking and draining for agricultural uses. The project is designed to reduce flooding, restore and maintain natural hydrologic cycles, enhance native habitat for




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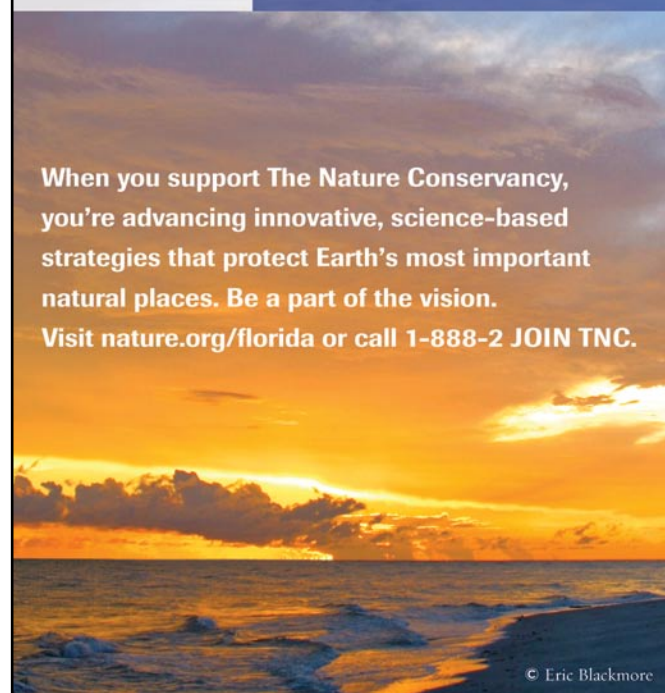
For more information, rates and availability call 321-254-9453 x 19 or visit www.brevardzoo.org. Brevard Zoo, located 1/4 mile east of I95, exit 191 on Wickham Rd.



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fish and wildlife and protect water quality. The Upper Basin Project is a model for the restoration of the Everglades. At Three Forks Marsh, a vast network of levees is being constructed to impound the water runoff from neighboring agricultural lands. Much of the work has been completed, and 15 miles of dike trails are open to the public. Restoration has already greatly improved habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, raptors, river otters and alligators. There is seasonal waterfowl hunting on this property.

Directions: From I-95, Exit 173, take CR 514 (Malabar Road) west until it dead ends (about eight miles) at the Thomas O. Lawton Recreation Area. Park entrance will be on your left. For hunting information call 352-732-1225. 321-676-6614

<http://sjr.state.fl.us/programs/outreach/pubs/recguide>,
www.marshbunny.com, www.outintheboonies.com/threeforks

T.M. Goodwin Waterfowl Management Area

Adjoining the southeast portion of Three Forks Marsh, the T.M. Goodwin WMA features ten impoundments managed intensively for waterfowl, wading birds and shorebirds and a semi-permanent flooded marsh. An observation tower overlooking Lake Goodwin offers unobstructed views of the surrounding marshlands. Walk the dikes between impoundments for looks at dabbling ducks in the winter, including Northern Shoveler, American Wigeon, teal, Northern Pintail and Gadwall as well as American Coot, Common Moorhen, Purple Gallinule, American Bittern, Sora and King Rail.

Look for wading birds such as Wood Stork, Limpkin, White and Glossy Ibises, herons and egrets, Black-necked Stilt, Wilson's Snips, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, dowitchers and other shorebirds. Northern Harriers fly regularly over the marshes in winter and, during hawk migration in October, join Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin and American Kestrel. Summer is the best time to spot Swallow-tailed Kites and Roseate Spoonbills. Seasonal hunting.

Directions: From I-95 in Palm Bay, take Exit 173 (Malabar Rd.) and go 0.25 miles east to Babcock Street (CR 507). Turn right and go south on Babcock for approximately 11 miles. Turn right onto Fellsmere Grade Rd. just after crossing the C-54 Canal. From the intersection of I-95 and CR 512 (Exit 156), head west for three miles to CR 507 (Babcock St.). Turn right (north) and, after five miles, turn left (west) onto Fellsmere Grade Rd., just south of the C-54 Canal. Go all the way to the end of the dirt road (about six miles). Follow signs to the site entrance from the Stick Marsh boat ramp. Goodwin Marsh is north of the Stick Marsh

across the C-54 Canal. The entrance to the north tract of St. Sebastian River Buffer Preserve is on the east side of Babcock St., just north of the C-54 Canal. 321-726-2862

www.fwc.state.fl.us/duck

St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park

This 22,750-acre property is the largest upland property in public ownership in the region. The open grassy forests of longleaf pine that once made up most of Florida can still be appreciated here today. This site also contains examples of scrub and the only undeveloped sandhill habitat in Brevard County. The sandhill area supports about 25 breeding pairs of Florida Scrub-Jays as well as gopher tortoises and indigo snakes. Many sought-after pinewoods specialties can be found here. Bachman's Sparrow, Eastern Bluebird, Brown-headed Nuthatch and Red-cockaded Woodpecker can all be found on the northeast portion of the horse trail accessed via Stumper Flats Trail on the east side of the property. On the west side, near the intersection of Buffer Preserve Drive and CR 507, the Green, Blue and Red Trails wind through hydric hammocks, which are excellent for migratory songbirds and Swallow-tailed Kites.

Bald Eagles nest on the property and American Kestrels and Loggerhead Shrikes are regularly spotted. Seasonal wetlands host a variety of wading birds, including Wood Stork and Roseate Spoonbill. Florida Sandhill Cranes breed on ponds in pastures and open pinewoods.

Directions: The entrance to the north tract of St. Sebastian River Buffer Preserve is on the east side of Babcock St., just north of the C-54 Canal - see the directions above for T.M. Goodwin Waterfowl Management Area. The Buffer Preserve's south tract can be reached from the north tract by going south on Babcock St. (CR 507) through the town of Fellsmere. Take CR 512 east from Fellsmere, passing under I-95 (Exit 156). Go east from I-95 for 1.8 miles to W.W. Ranch Rd. Turn left and follow the road north into the preserve. 321-953-5004.

Blue Cypress Water Management Area

Headwaters of the St. Johns River, the 54,458-acre Blue Cypress Conservation Area is comprised of a mosaic of marshes, lakes and cypress swamps. Blue Cypress is the most pristine portion of the Upper St. Johns River Basin. From the parking lot of the Blue Cypress Recreation Area on CR 512, you may walk in several directions. One of the westbound dikes will offer more remote, sometimes higher quality birding. These paths

are narrower with irregular surfaces. A north-south dike offers a smoother walking surface, although the path is more exposed and birds are harder to spot.

This site, as are other sites that feature raised exposed dikes, is best in fall, winter and spring. The eastern portion contains foraging and nesting habitat for the endangered Snail Kite. Other wetland dependent species found here include all of the egrets and herons (including both night-herons), Glossy and White Ibises, Purple Gallinule, Limpkin and Wood Stork. Wood Duck and Mottled Duck are found year-round, and the marshes are used extensively in fall and winter by migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. Bald Eagle, hawks, vultures, Anhinga, Osprey, Crested Caracara, alligators and river otters are commonly seen. American and Least Bitterns, King Rail, Sora and Fulvous Whistling-Duck are possible.

Directions: From I-95, take the CR 512 Exit (Exit 156) and go west. Go through the town of Fellsmere and continue south on CR 512. The recreation area is 1.5 miles north of SR 60. You can also take the SR 60 (Vero Beach) exit from I-95. Go west on SR 60 for 7.5 miles and turn right onto CR 512 and travel north two miles. To access the western levees, parking is available on the north side of SR 60 two miles west of the CR 512 intersection.

321-676-6614

<http://sjr.state.fl.us/programs/outreach/pubs/recguide>

Sebastian Inlet State Park

Sebastian Inlet State Park is the best birding location on Brevard County's south beaches. The property includes three miles of beautiful Atlantic Ocean beach, unspoiled dunes, coastal hammocks, tidal pools, salt marsh, and plenty of wildlife. When approaching from



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the north, watch for a trail on the west side of A1A about 200 yards before you actually turn into the park. The trail winds through a lovely hammock, then circles back to the main trail. This area can be superior for migrant warblers and scaring up Chuck-will's-widows in late winter and spring. As you drive into the park, check the tidal pool northwest of the bridge for wading birds, shorebirds, gulls and terns. Some unusual species have been spotted here; Sandwich Terns frequent the area in winter. American Oystercatcher and Reddish Egret may be seen. Look carefully around the jetties and rocky area leading to the inlet for Purple Sandpiper.

West of the tidal pool is a grassy area edged by woods; check here for migrants, woodpeckers and raptors. Look in the mangroves at the water's edge for Black-whiskered Vireo in spring and summer. East of the tidal pool is the North Jetty; scope the beach for shorebirds, gulls and terns. Check the weedy edges along the dunes for buntings and sparrows. On northeast and easterly winds in winter, look for pelagic species such as jaegers, gannets and scoters; frigatebirds and tropicbirds are a possibility. On the southwest side of the bridge, past

the fishing museum, is a dock where Wood Storks congregate. West of the campground is a spit of land good for shorebirds. A trail 0.4 miles south of the fishing museum that winds through diked mangrove impoundments, is good for migratory songbirds.

Directions: From the intersection of U.S. 192 and A1A in Melbourne Beach go south on A1A for 17.5 miles. From I-95, go east on CR 512 (exit 156) 2.5 miles and turn right on CR 510, go through Wabasso, across the Indian River, all the way to A1A, then go north. You will pass the entrance to Pelican Island NWR before you get to Sebastian Inlet. \$5 entrance fee. 321-984-4852

www.dep.state.fl.us/parks

Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge

A National Historic Landmark, Pelican Island is America's first National Wildlife Refuge. New public facilities are providing the public with the first opportunity to view the Pelican Island rookery from land, without the use of a boat, and explore other areas of the National Wildlife Refuge. The new facilities include a quarter-mile boardwalk and 18-foot-high observation tower, two 2.5-mile saltmarsh impoundment foot trails, interpretive signs and information kiosks. Recreational

opportunities include hiking, birdwatching, wildlife observation and photography. Bird species possible include Brown and American White Pelicans, all of the egret and heron species, Wood Stork, Roseate Spoonbill, gulls and terns, cormorants and various shorebirds. In addition to Brown Pelicans and numerous species of egrets and herons, Wood Storks and American Oystercatchers nest on the island. Painted and Indigo Buntings are often seen along the road in the refuge's old orange groves and near the boardwalk.

Directions: From Melbourne Beach, take A1A south, cross Sebastian Inlet and continue south. Facilities are located on the west side of A1A on the north end of historic Jungle Trail, which is a great birding location itself, especially during migration. From I-95 Exit 156, see the above directions for Sebastian Inlet. Local boat, kayak and canoe tour vendors offer rentals or daily trips to view Pelican Island. Reservations are strongly suggested, as times and availability may vary due to seasonal demand and weather. 772-562-3909

<http://pelicanisland.fws.gov>

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FLORIDA TODAY is proud to support the efforts of the Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival.

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Bird's Eye View

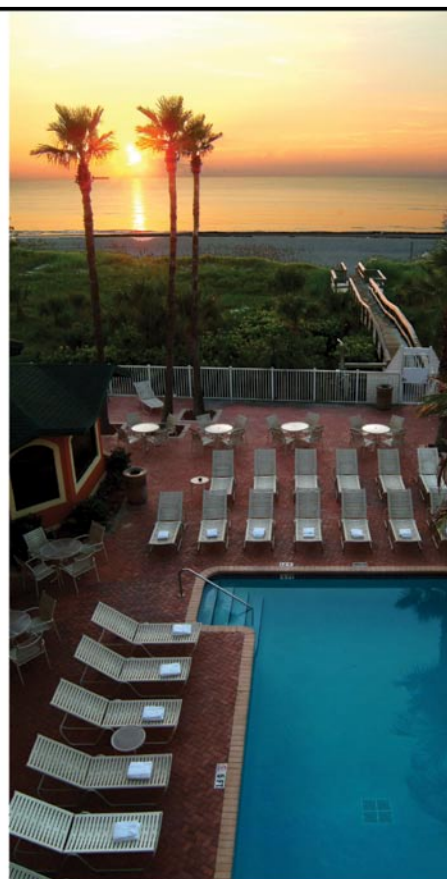
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paddling

Geographically located between the temperate and subtropical climatic zones, with two different watersheds and numerous ecological systems, Florida's Space Coast is home to an amazing collection of flora and fauna. A unique mosaic of ancient coastal dunes and wetland environs spans the landscape, however, water resources are among its most significant assets; the enthusiastic paddler has an abundance of rivers, creeks, lakes, estuaries and coastlines to explore. Sculpted by the sea, the Space Coast features more than 100 miles of high-energy beaches, two natural inlets and a man-made ocean entry, a national seashore, four national wildlife refuges, the nation's most biologically diverse estuary and Florida's longest freshwater river with its associated lakes and marshes. Many species of wildlife found here are threatened or endangered; paddling a canoe or kayak offers the best chance to move silently on our waters to see them. On another note, the Space Coast also offers spectacular opportunities for viewing Olympic and collegiate sculling teams who visit this area for training sessions.

Brevard Zoo

Join white rhinos, giraffes, antelopes or any number of passing birds at the new Expedition Africa exhibit at Brevard Zoo. A replication of the Nyami River Delta is constructed to raise awareness of Africa's magnificent animals and their rapidly disappearing habitat. The Nyami River meanders around a 10-acre African savannah built in lush, native Florida habitat that bears an uncanny resemblance to the African bush. Trips led by experienced river guides are available for \$5.00. You can also kayak native Florida habitat at the Wetlands Outpost for \$3.00. One of the country's most unique small zoos, Brevard Zoo is the world's only zoo with on-site kayaking.

Directions: Take Exit 191 (Wickham Rd.) off of I-95 and go east. Turn right on Murrell Rd. (first traffic light). \$9 Adult Admission. 321-254-9453
www.brevardzoo.org

Spruce Creek

Spruce Creek enjoys an Outstanding Florida Waterways designation due to its relatively pristine condition. There are few examples of this type of natural blackwater river left undisturbed in Florida. The term "blackwater" refers to tannic acid staining caused by swampy vegetation in the low-lying upper reaches of

the creek. The navigable portion of the creek itself begins in a shallow cypress swamp some 10 miles upstream from its confluence with the Halifax River. This swamp gives way to a narrow stream that very gradually broadens downstream into Strickland Bay. As the water courses toward the coast, the associated aquatic habitats gradually change from typical freshwater hardwood forest to freshwater marsh to mangrove shorelines and salt marsh in a classic estuarine ecosystem.

Directions: From the intersection of SR 44 and US 1 in New Smyrna, go north 4.8 miles on U.S. 1. There is a sandy beach on the east side of U.S. 1, just south of a bridge. From the launch area, go under the bridge and paddle west through Strickland Bay to enter Spruce Creek or south to enter Turnbull Bay, a large estuarine area. You can paddle east through the mangrove islands to reach the Halifax River, from which it is about a 1.5-mile paddle south to reach Ponce Inlet. Nestled under tall pines just northwest of the US 1 Bridge, Spruce Creek Park has rest rooms, picnic tables, nature trails and a camping area. 386-322-5133

Canaveral National Seashore - Shipyard Island Canoe Trail

"Mosquito Lagoon is one of my favorite places to paddle. I love the salt water and all of the

sensations that go along with breathing the salt air and feeling the warm sun on my face."

- Mike Mahan, A Day Away Outfitters
Outside Magazine described it as "one of the top 10 places to paddle in the U.S." With plenty of parking, restrooms and a sandy beach, the boat ramp immediately past the north entrance of Canaveral National Seashore is a great place from which to launch into the lagoon. The entrance to a marked canoe trail through Shipyard Island lies just to the west. You'll paddle around and over oyster beds. You can stop on islands with white, sandy beaches. Motorboats are unable to negotiate the shallow waters, leaving the islands virtually untouched. Wading birds, including Roseate Spoonbills and Wood Storks, shorebirds, Ospreys, Cormorants, Brown Pelicans, and in winter American White Pelicans may be seen. Bald Eagles are a good possibility. Look for a stunningly handsome, black-and-white shorebird with a big reddish-orange bill; oyster bars in Mosquito Lagoon are likely places to see American Oystercatchers. Look down in the water and you may see horseshoe crabs, redbfish, mullet and stingrays. The deeper waters between the boat launch and Shipyard Island are a good place to see manatees and bottle-nosed dolphins.

Directions: To reach the north entrance of Canaveral National Seashore, take SR 44 east to A1A from I-95 or U.S. 1 in New Smyrna Beach. Go south approximately seven miles on A1A. Entrance fee is \$5 per vehicle. Limited backcountry camping in the Seashore is allowed on the beach November 1 through April 30 and on designated islands all year, by permit only. 321-267-1110
www.nbbd.com/godo/cns

Callalisa Park

Ponce Inlet and Callalisa Creek are easily accessible from Callalisa Park. From the park it is a two-mile paddle north to reach Ponce Inlet. A restored lighthouse is located on the north side of the inlet. Completed in 1887, the old Mosquito Inlet Lighthouse, now known as the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse, is a National Historic Landmark. At 175 feet, it is the second tallest lighthouse in the U.S. and the



Photo courtesy of VISITFLORIDA

tallest open to the public. A climb to the top reveals a remarkable view of the inlet, estuary and beach. Low tide exposes large sandbars near the inlet, preferred loafing spots for impressive numbers of birds, especially in winter. Baitfish activity at the inlet's mouth attracts numbers of large seabirds like Northern Gannets, which put on a spectacular show as they crash into waters near the inlet's mouth. From the park, paddle south under the bridge to enter Callalisa Creek, a tidal stream through salt marsh and mangroves on the north end of Canaveral National Seashore. Wading birds are common, and encounters with manatees and dolphins possible.

Directions: Take SR 44 east from either I-95 or US 1 in New Smyrna Beach. After you cross the high bridge, turn left at the first traffic light onto Peninsula Ave. Callalisa Park is immediately on the left. **Caution:** The areas around Ponce Inlet as well as inland waters in the north end of Mosquito Lagoon are tidal with sections that are exposed to wind and currents that can sometimes be rapid and dangerous. There is little, if any, tidal influence in the southern end of Mosquito Lagoon.

Riverbreeze Park

This is the closest launch for access to dozens of islands that fill the waterway from Oak Hill northward to the New Smyrna Beach Causeway and beyond. From the boat ramp, paddle south to get around a large spoil island and into mangrove-lined backcountry waters. Low tide exposes mud flats and oyster bars that in fall, winter and spring attract a wide variety of wading birds and shorebirds; American Oystercatchers are fairly easy to find. Dolphins and manatees are commonly seen in the deeper waters of the intra-coastal waterway. A compass is helpful as it is easy to become disoriented in the maze of waterways. This beautifully shaded park has bathrooms, picnic pavilions and several boat ramps. Camping is permitted.

Directions: Go north on US 1 two miles from the yellow caution light in Oak Hill. Look for a brown sign identifying the park. Go east to the park entrance on the left. 386-345-5525

Merritt Island NWR - Haulover Canal

The best location on Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge from which to view dolphins and manatees, Haulover Canal is a passageway between the Indian River Lagoon and Mosquito Lagoon. Just to the west lies one of the most significant colonial waterbird nesting islands in the state. Mullethead Island and its surrounding grass flats provide an opportunity to view a variety of birds from the water's level. In late spring, there's a good

chance you'll see Roseate Spoonbills and Reddish Egrets feeding their young. Other egrets and herons as well as Brown Pelicans and cormorants nest on the island.

Haulover Canal is part of the Intracoastal Waterway; you never know what kind of interesting vessels may pass by – everything from shrimp-boats to tugs with huge barges to multi-million dollar yachts. Bottle-nosed dolphins can be seen frolicking near the canal's approaches, and the deeper waters of the canal provide shelter for manatees in warmer months; they may be seen from a viewing platform near the drawbridge or in Bair's Cove boat launching area located southwest of the bridge. From the east end of the canal, look toward the southern end of Mosquito Lagoon, where Space Shuttle launch pads and the Vehicle Assembly Building stand as monuments to space exploration. Mosquito Lagoon is great for unobstructed views of space launches.

Directions: Cross the Titusville Bridge and head toward the Black Point Wildlife Dr. Go past the Drive to the stop sign at SR 3. Turn left and go 4.5 miles north, crossing the bridge over the Canal. Take the first left at the bottom of the bridge, across from the Manatee Viewing Platform sign. Follow the road around, turn right and pass through a gate at the ruins of the old Allenhurst Fish Camp. The road now parallels the canal. At the end is a sandy beach for launching.

Caution: Like many similar nesting islands in the state, Mullethead Island is protected and posted. Please stay offshore of the signs to avoid disturbing the birds. DO NOT go on the island. Paddling in the estuaries within Merritt Island NWR and Canaveral National Seashore is encouraged; however, due to disturbance to wading birds and waterfowl, paddling is not permitted within impound areas inside the dikes.

321-861-0667

www.abouttitusville.com/outdoors

www.nbbd.com/godo/minwr

WSEG Boat Ramp, Dummit Cove & Max Brewer Causeway

Merritt Island NWR has several other notable paddling areas. The WSEG Boat Ramp, located 3.7 miles north of Haulover Canal, provides access to Mosquito Lagoon. From the ramp, a 2.5-mile paddle across the lagoon takes you to a collection of islands and waterways within the most remote area of Canaveral National Seashore, accessible only by boat. If you like fishing, large schools of redfish that congregate in this part of the lagoon are legendary. Check out Dummit Cove, located 2.1 miles south of Haulover Canal. Providing access to the Indian River Lagoon, Dummit Cove is somewhat sheltered and can be an interesting place to visit on windy days when

paddling on the open waters of the lagoon becomes difficult. The east end of the Max Brewer Causeway in Titusville is another good place to launch from. Put in on the south side of the causeway to access Gator Creek, Brock's Point and Peacock's Pocket near the mouth of Banana Creek. This is the closest area on the water from which to view Space Shuttles take off and land; the launch pads are just nine miles from the mouth of the creek, and the landing strip is 2.5 miles away. Banana Creek itself is closed to the public.

Canaveral NS - Eddy Creek

At the southern end of Canaveral National Seashore, Eddy Creek provides access to the southernmost portion of Mosquito Lagoon, just four miles from the Space Shuttle launch pads. Eddy Creek is actually the site of an ancient inlet; the barrier island is very narrow here. When ocean surf is high, the sound of waves crashing on the other side of undisturbed dunes is a pleasurable complement to the peaceful tranquility of the lagoon's mangrove shorelines. Estuarine waters are usually crystal clear here, allowing great views of colorful sea grass beds and the marine life they support. Coastal birds are numerous and manatees, dolphins and alligators are commonly seen.

Directions: From US 1 in Titusville, take SR 406 east. Approximately 2 miles out, the road divides. Stay to the right and continue east on SR 402. When you reach the Seashore, turn left and travel north to the Eddy Creek boat launch area. There is a \$5 fee to access the Seashore.

Turnbull Creek

The vast Turnbull Swamp Basin is the northernmost point for fresh water drainage into the Indian River Lagoon, emptying into the lagoon through Turnbull Creek, thus forming its headwaters. The navigable portion of the creek itself begins in a remote wilderness area southwest of Oak Hill. Impassable in low water, the swamp gives way to a narrow waterway that very gradually broadens as it moves downstream. As the water moves toward the estuary, its aquatic habitats change from more typical freshwater vegetation beginning in the swamp with cypress, oaks and palm hammocks, then to wax myrtles, willows and cattails and, finally, to an endless sea of cord grass. This beautiful salt marsh is home to numerous coastal birds; when the water levels are low, every turn of the narrow winding creek offers a chance for close-up looks at a wide variety of egrets and herons.

Directions: Launch from the northeast side of the US 1 Bridge over Turnbull Creek, located approximately 12 miles north

of Mims. If you go over a big overpass, you've gone too far.

www.abouttitusville.com/outdoors

Lake Monroe Conservation Area

Protecting more than six miles of Lake Monroe and St. Johns River shoreline, the Lake Monroe Conservation Area between Geneva and Sanford contains 90 percent of the floodplain area for Lake Monroe. Wetlands make up 94 percent of the conservation area. Predominant natural communities here are floodplain marsh/wet prairie and floodplain swamp/forest. Native Americans hunted and fished in this area, as evidenced by the number of shell middens found here. A five-mile paddle northward from Cameron Wight Park will cover Thornhill Lake and Brickyard Slough within the Lake Monroe Conservation Area. Numerous wading birds and raptors can be expected. American Bittern, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Wood Stork, Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Short-tailed Hawk, Crested Caracara, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Purple Gallinule, King and Virginia Rails, Limpkin and Sandhill Crane are all possible. Alligators are common, and you may see deer and river otters.

Directions: Launch from Seminole County's Cameron Wight Park at SR 46 and the Lake Jessup Bridge. From I-95, go west on SR 46 for 21.1 miles. The park is on the northwest side of the bridge.

Caution: Airboat traffic is heavy on the St. Johns River, especially on weekends. It is recommended that paddlers use a bright, tall warning flag on boats in order to be more visible above tall grasses. Take along a loud horn. The river supports a HUGE alligator population. Avoid paddling in this area during alligator mating season in springtime, and don't bring small pets. 407-893-3127

<http://sjr.state.fl.us/programs/outreach/pubs/recguide>

Lake Jessup

If you want to see alligators, Lake Jessup is the place! More than 10,000 strong, Lake Jessup has Florida's highest population of the ancient crocodilians. In fact, no other lake in North America claims more gators per acre. A large, shallow water body in Seminole County, Lake Jessup and its floodplain extend over approximately 16,000 acres. Over 100,000 years old, the lake itself covers about 10,000 acres. Jessup is home to many eagles, Ospreys, wading birds, bobcats and river otters. Where alligators are present, you'll sometimes find bird rookeries (the birds know that gators keep predator populations in check) and Lake Jessup is no exception. Bird Island, a small island in the interior of Jessup is a significant wading bird rookery.

Directions: The north end of Lake Jessup is reached from Cameron Wight Park (see above). East Lake Jessup may be accessed from the Black Hammock Marina. Bird Island is located near the middle of the lake, about two miles northwest of Black Hammock. Go south from SR 46 at the traffic light in Geneva on CR 426 to Oviedo, 7.5 miles. Turn right on Broadway. Make an immediate right on Central Ave. (SR 434). Go 1.3 miles and turn right on DeLeon St. Go to Howard Ave., turn left. Go to Black Hammock Rd., turn right. The road ends at Black Hammock Fish Camp. There is a modest fee to launch.

407-365-1244

<http://sjr.state.fl.us/programs/outreach/pubs/recguide>

Econlockhatchee River

Between Orlando and the Atlantic Ocean lies an area of Florida that is almost as undisturbed as it was centuries ago. Officially designated as part of Florida's Statewide System of Greenways and Trails and a Florida Outstanding Waterway, here visitors can escape to enjoy the stunning natural beauty of an area just 45 minutes away from Disney World. Born in a large area of swamps southeast of Orlando, the serpentine Econlockhatchee River winds eastward through pristine wetlands and ancient forests of giant oaks and cypress, eventually feeding into the north-flowing St. Johns River. Wildlife is abundant; gray squirrels, river otters and white-tailed deer are often seen. You might see gray fox, wild hog or swamp cottontail. There's a good chance of seeing Turkey and Black Vultures, Bald Eagles, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, American Kestrels in winter and, in summer, Swallow-tailed Kites. The forests teem with birds -- the Econ is a corridor during songbird migration. Pileated, Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers are prolific; Northern Flickers are occasionally seen and, in winter, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers can appear. Wood Ducks, Barred Owls, Great Horned Owls and Wild Turkeys are possible. You'll see plenty of wading birds; in winter, Belted Kingfishers chatter and dart in front of the boats.

Check with Hidden River Park for updates on water conditions, 407-568-5346.

Upper Econlockhatchee River

SR 50/Hidden River Campground to CR 419: This section of the Econlockhatchee River will bring paddling force to the fore as sharp turns, cypress knees, deadfalls and moderately swift currents present a challenge. Check on stream conditions before attempting this trip. During low water the river twists and turns in a narrow channel, and the number of carry-overs can become intolerable. The river can be dangerous after major rainstorms. In

times of high water, the river leaves its banks, providing a unique chance to paddle through the woods. Towering cypress trees, blanketed in bromeliads and occasionally orchids, keep this part of the Econ in perpetual shade, which makes it attractive for summer paddling. The beauty of the cypress swamp and the lack of development provide a memorable trip; sights and sounds of civilization are few.

Directions: Launch from Hidden River Park (modest launching fee). Hidden River has rental boats available and will make shuttle arrangements. From the intersection of SR 50 and I-95 in Titusville, go west on SR 50 about 20 miles. Hidden River Park is on the right immediately after crossing the Econlockhatchee River, west of the town of Bithlo. Take-out is at CR 419, approximately eight miles downstream (see directions to CR 419 bridge below).

Middle Econlockhatchee River

CR 419 to Snow Hill Road: This section of the Econ River is characterized by narrow, high-banked, riverine channels that alternate with broader river sections that flow through dense woods. Seasonal wildflowers add color and interest. Ancient cypress trees and hydric hammocks near the beginning of this stretch give way to mesic hammocks of live oaks and cabbage palms, then sand pines and xeric oaks on high sandy bluffs, remnants of ancient beach dunes that date back to the Pleistocene Era. Ancient scrub habitats atop the relic sand dunes are among the oldest habitats in Florida. During low to medium water levels, plenty of inviting snow-white sandbars are available for rest stops where the river's current has sliced through the dunes. The Florida Trail runs parallel to the Econ for several miles along this stretch.

Directions: Launch from the CR 419 Bridge. From I-95, take SR 50 west about 18 miles to CR 419 (Chuluota Rd.). Follow Chuluota Rd. north until just before the Econ Bridge. From the dirt parking area on the right, you can unload boats and drag them to the river. Take-out is at Snow Hill Rd., approximately 10 miles downstream (see directions to Snow Hill Rd. below).

Lower Econlockhatchee River

Snow Hill Rd. to SR 46/C.S. Lee Park: The paddling is easy on this 12-mile section from Snow Hill Rd. to SR 46 on the St. Johns River. The current is slow and no carry-overs are required. The riverbanks are high, sandy and shaded by oaks during the first part of the trip. Eventually the banks become lower and the oak trees are replaced first by cabbage palms and then by grassy prairie as the St. Johns River floodplain is entered. The final two miles are on the open waters of the St. Johns River.

Directions: Launch either from the Snow Hill Rd. Bridge or the Little-Big Econ State Forest recreation facility. From the intersection of SR 50 and I-95 in Titusville, go west on SR 50 about 18 miles to CR 419 (Chuluota Rd.). Turn right on Chuluota Rd. and go north through Chuluota. On the north side of Chuluota, the road makes a big sweeping curve to the west. Just beyond the curve, look for Snow Hill Rd. on the right. Turn right on Snow Hill Rd. and follow it to the Econ River. The Little-Big Econ State Forest recreation facility is on the left about a half-mile after you cross the bridge. Take-out is at C.S. Lee Park, where the St Johns River crosses under SR 46, 11 miles west of the intersection of I-95 and SR 46.

Pine Island Conservation Area

Two canoe trails, a 2.3-mile loop run and a 3.0-mile run, offer a relaxing way for visitors to observe area wildlife. Canoes may be launched from the Marsh Pond or Sam's Creek launch sites. During low water periods a natural channel connecting the north marsh ponds is impassable. A depth gauge located at the Marsh Pond canoe launch indicates when water depths in the ponds hamper navigation. Boating is restricted in the south end of South Borrow Lake. This area provides critical nesting habitat to a variety of wading and diving birds. Human disturbances, although unintentional, can result in the loss of young hatchlings. The coastal location and diversity of habitat types provide many opportunities for viewing wildlife that are enhanced by permanent blinds accessible by foot or canoe. Wading birds are common, with fall migration bringing numerous species of raptors, waterfowl and shorebirds. Alligators and aquatic turtles are also common inhabitants of the marshes and expansive open waters. Manatees frequently seek refuge in the waters of Sam's Creek/Rinker Canal and are often observed resting at the north end of the canal, particularly during winter and early spring.

Directions: From the intersection of SR 520 and SR 3 on Merritt Island, go north on SR 3 for five miles to Pine Island Rd. Turn left and go west on Pine Island Rd. and follow it 2.5 miles to the parking lot at the end. A kiosk with a map shows the canoe trails. 321-255-4466

www.eelbrevard.com

Kaboord Sanctuary

This is another one of the Brevard County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program properties. Central Florida is unique in that it lies in an area where temperate and subtropical climatic zones meet. This site represents one of the best examples of the mixture of tropical and temperate species of plants for which

Merritt Island is famous. The tidal creeks of Kaboord were once part of the Sykes Creek system before they were impounded. These beautiful wetlands are reminiscent of what much of Merritt Island used to look like, a "savannah" of salt grasses and low mangroves. The paddling route is down the main creek channel, with detours along side creek channels along the way, terminating at the dike at Canaveral Barge Canal. The return trip will retrace the same route, but don't

worry - wildlife moves around, the angle of the sun changes perspectives, and you won't be bored paddling back. This wetland is known for numerous birds - raptors, waders, shorebirds, gulls and terns and some early-arriving waterfowl. There is no motorboat access to this site.

Directions: From the intersection of Highway 528 and SR 3, proceed north on SR 3 for about two miles. Make a right on Hall Rd. at the Circle K. You'll see a sign for NASA's KARS Park. Go east on Hall Rd.



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to where the tree line ends at the western edge of the open marsh.

Port Canaveral

At Port Canaveral, you can enjoy the activity of North America's busiest port (second largest cruise ship terminal in the world) along with outstanding wildlife. Within the Port itself, large ships to be seen include some of the world's most elegant cruise ships, freighters and tankers from many countries, fishing boats of all types and a wide variety of U.S. Naval vessels. Wildlife is abundant, with manatees, dolphins and plenty of birds, especially in and around the locks, which connect the Atlantic Ocean to the Banana River estuary. Please observe security rules while in or near Port Canaveral. Stay 25 feet away from docks, and 100 feet away from moored vessels. Keep a 300-foot distance from all ships in transit. There is no access to the west turning basin when any cruise ships are in port. Canoes and kayaks may use the locks; however, the lockmaster will not open on demand for them. Paddlers must wait until a motor vessel approaches for the locks to open. Primitive camping is available on spoil islands west of the locks. A full service

campground is available at Jetty Park. A new, 1500-foot pier along the south jetty provides for both day and night fishing.

Directions: There are two boat ramps at the Port. Both are on the south side. From north Cocoa, go east on SR 528 from I-95 or U.S. 1. After you cross the Banana River, follow the signs for the South Dock and go into the south entrance to the Port (George King Blvd). To reach Freddie Patrick Park, go east on George King Blvd. to its intersection with Flounder Rd. Turn left on Flounder Rd. on go to the end. The park with boat ramps is on the right. To get to Port's End Park, turn left off of George King Blvd. onto Dave Nisbett Dr. Turn left again onto Mullet Rd. and follow it around to the park. You will reach the locks if you continue going west on Mullet Rd.

www.portcanaveral.org

Thousand Islands

Cocoa Beach's Thousand Islands are a flood-tide delta deposit, formed in the past by a breach in the barrier island by a strong storm surge. The natural movement of beach sand has since closed the inlet, but the islands remain. The canals provide shelter for manatees, dolphins and a wide variety of birds.

This area is rich in both tropical and temperate

plant species, some of which are found not much farther north than the Thousand Islands. The vegetation communities of the Thousand Islands include three habitat types: natural marsh, dredge-spoil and tropical hammock associated with shell middens. Middens are trash piles of clam and oyster shells; all that remains of Florida's original inhabitants -- pre-Columbian Native American Indians. These unique tropical hammocks provide resting space and feeding areas for neotropical migrant bird species; the wetlands and ponds are a haven for many wading birds and migratory waterfowl. Salt marsh in the Thousand Islands is somewhat different than salt marsh found in other areas of the Banana River Lagoon. Instead of the typical temperate cord grass/needle rush plant community found on Merritt Island (a good example is Kaboord Sanctuary), Thousand Islands saltmarsh is dominated by tropical saltmarsh plant species such as glasswort and saltwort and is fringed by all three species of mangrove.

Directions: Launch from the end of Ramp Rd. in Cocoa Beach. From the intersection of SR 520 and Highway A1A, go south on A1A for several miles. Just past the Minuteman Cswy., turn right on 5th St.



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South. Go one block west to North Brevard Ave. and turn left. Take the first right on Ramp Rd. and go to the park.

Oars and Paddles Park & the Grand Canal

This brand new facility is home to the Space Coast Crew Rowing Club (www.spacecoastcrew.org) and a popular area for non-motorized recreational activities. The nearby Grand Canal is a popular training location for Olympic and collegiate sculling teams. The four-mile long canal is bordered on the west by a long strip of spoil deposit, which is divided into three islands. The central island is a nature sanctuary known as Samson's Island. Some of the area's finest homes border parts of the Grand Canal. The Canal is a great place to paddle when it is too windy to paddle on the open waters of the lagoon. Access from the park to the Banana River is through Whiting Waterway. To reach the Grand Canal, go north in the Banana River and under Mathers Bridge. Entrance to the Grand Canal is on the right a few hundred yards beyond Mathers Bridge. Watching sculling teams practice in the Grand Canal requires a boat, unless you're lucky enough to view them leaving the park or passing under Mathers Bridge on their way to the Grand Canal. The best place for viewing collegiate sculling teams from land is from locations along Crane Creek in Downtown Melbourne.

Directions: From I-95 or US 1 in Melbourne, go east on Eau Gallie Cswy. (SR 518). Just after crossing the bridge over the Indian River, turn left and proceed north on South Patrick Dr. (SR 513) for .9-mile. Turn west on Banana River Dr. 321-952-4650

www.brevardparks.com

Turkey Creek

The trip begins in a wide estuary, a no-wake manatee zone, where the gentle creatures are often seen munching on aquatic vegetation. Upstream from the wide mouth of the creek, the waterway moves through a broad region of braided channels. Central channels through Willow Swamp are recommended to avoid residential development on the north and south banks. The character of the creek changes dramatically upstream as residential development and salt-water influence is left behind. The channel narrows and the flow quickens as the creek winds through dimly lit, lush hardwood forest. Precipitous high sandy bluffs, the remnants of an ancient coastal ridge, are encountered at the upper reach of the creek. From the tops of the relic beach dunes -- leftovers from the Pleistocene Era -- classic scrub habitat descends into lush hydric hammock that surrounds the dark

waters of the creek. Desert inhabitants like gopher tortoise, eastern indigo snake and scrub lizards are right at home in the xeric habitat found on the ancient dunes.

Directions: Launch from Alex Goode Park in Port Malabar. From the intersection of US 1 and US 192 in Melbourne, go south on US 1 for about 5.5 miles to Port Malabar Blvd. Turn right and go over the railroad tracks to Bianca Dr. Turn right on Bianca Dr. and follow it to the park. 321-952-3433

Mullet Creek & Honest John's Canals

Mullet Creek and Honest John's Canals offer an opportunity to experience a true old-Florida fish camp, one of the last ones remaining, complete with an 1890s Florida pioneer home. A visit to Honest John's really is like traveling back in time. The mile-long drive into the camp winds through old citrus groves and into a beautiful tropical hammock where the fish camp settles into the shore of Mullet Creek. Peacocks, guineahens, ducks, chickens and dogs are likely to greet you upon your arrival. The Smith Home rests under centuries-old oaks and orchid-laden red cedars; the old Malabar train depot serves as a storage shed nearby. Never one to be wasteful, decades ago Honest John Smith floated the depot across the Indian River on a barge to save it from being torn down and replaced. Like the Thousand Islands in Cocoa Beach, Honest John's Canals are the product of dredging of historic saltmarsh areas for mosquito control in the 1940s and '50s, resulting in a myriad of winding canals and dozens of mangrove-lined islands that have become a haven for wildlife. The canals provide shelter for manatees, dolphins and a wide variety of coastal birds.

Directions: Go south from Melbourne Beach on A1A for about 10 miles. Turn right in the driveway one half-mile south of the yellow caution light in Floridana Beach. Look for a sign for the camp. Canoe and kayak rentals available. Launch fee is \$5. 321-727-2923

www.honestjohns.net

Sebastian Inlet State Park

Florida's # 1 State Park, Sebastian Inlet offers access to the Indian River Lagoon as well as the Atlantic Ocean. The park includes three miles of ocean beach, unspoiled dunes, coastal hammocks, world-class fishing and plenty of wildlife. Watch for manatees and green and loggerhead sea turtles feeding on sea grass in the lagoon's shallow waters and dolphins frolicking as they pursue baitfish. Paddle north to experience mangrove shorelines and small islands. Pelican Island is approximately three miles to the south.

Cold Light - Black Night

Haulover Canal is the best place in Florida to experience a wonderful phenomenon while paddling on moonless summer nights. Shortly after sunset, you will slowly begin to see swirls from your paddle produce a glow in the water that is caused by bioluminescence -- living lights in the water. As it gets darker you will discover that you can see almost everything from schools of darting fish to manatees and dolphins. Even the flow of water generates a ghostly radiance as tiny luminous organisms scattered through the shimmering sea grass sparkle like flickering stars. In bioluminescence, electrons are excited by a very efficient chemical reaction that generates no heat at all, hence the name "cold light." Bioluminescent creatures are beautiful, fascinating, and critical to the very existence of most marine life. They are also little known and under appreciated because so few people have the opportunity to see them with their own eyes.

As soon as you leave the canal and paddle out over the shallow flats, schools of mullet explode all around the boats -- it looks like popcorn on the surface and fireworks down below. Mullet hurtle through the air, colliding with kayaks, leaping over bows and sometimes smacking right into paddlers. The combination of pitch-black darkness and the emerald green splashes from airborne mullet, the meteoric streaks of fish that choose to swim instead of fly, the profusion of multi-colored light-sticks dangling from exuberant paddlers, the reflections of stars in the mirror-still water, persistent distant flashes of lightning, low rumbling thunder, and the taste and smell of salt-laden air is a marvelous cornucopia for all five human senses. It is a pleasure to just sit still and listen to shrieks of joy and laughter coming from delighted kayakers -- few, of course, have ever experienced anything like that this.

www.biolum.org

Directions: From the U.S. 192/A1A intersection in Melbourne Beach, go south on A1A for 17.5 miles. From the CR 512 Exit on I-95 (Exit 156), go east 2.5 miles and turn right on CR 510, which goes through Wabasso and crosses the Indian River. Go to Hwy. A1A and then go north. You will pass the entrance to Pelican Island NWR on the left before you get to Sebastian Inlet. There is a \$5 entrance fee.

Caution: The areas around Sebastian Inlet, as well as nearby inland waters in the Indian River Lagoon, are tidal with sections that are exposed to wind and currents that can sometimes be rapid and dangerous.

321-984-4852

www.dep.state.fl.us/parks

Pelican Island

Pelican Island can be accessed via a 2.5-mile paddle from the Wabasso Causeway. The waters around the island are shallow and clear; it is not uncommon to see dolphins frolicking and gentle manatees loafing. The area between Sebastian Inlet and Pelican Island is a nursery ground for juvenile green sea turtles. At the turn of the 20th century, the island became the last known nesting site for Brown Pelicans on Florida's East Coast. Paul Kroegel, a German immigrant, defended the last pelican outpost and convinced President Teddy Roosevelt to declare the island a federal bird sanctuary. In 1903, President Roosevelt established Pelican Island as the first National Wildlife Refuge, using the tiny island to inspire the nation's wildlife conservation movement. In spring and summer, hundreds of brown pelicans nest on the island, as well as endangered Wood Storks, several species of threatened wading birds, Anhingas, cormorants and American Oystercatchers.

Directions: Launch from the east end of the Wabasso Cswy. From I-95 and CR 512 (Exit 156), go east 2.5 miles and turn right on CR 510, which goes through Wabasso and crosses the Indian River. Look for a boat ramp on the south side of the road, near the east end of the causeway. Launch from the boat ramp and then go under the relief bridge to head north.

Caution: Like many similar nesting islands in the state, Pelican Island is protected and posted. Please stay offshore of the signs to avoid disturbing the birds. DO NOT go on the island.

772-562-3909

<http://pelicanisland.fws.gov>

Sebastian River

The Sebastian River is a three-prong system. The North Prong and South Prong share a common mouth into a wide bay that empties into the Indian River Lagoon. Aside from sharing a common mouth, the two natural prongs are distinct in character. The Sebastian River North Prong flows out of St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park. The intimate nature of the North Prong is a welcome contrast to the open expanse of Sebastian Bay. Vegetation changes from salt-water mangrove habitat to scrubby pine and oak flatwoods to freshwater marsh. The narrow stream meanders through dense vegetation with a wide variety of water birds. At its upper extreme, the North Prong is like a tunnel through vegetation. There are several choke points where paddlers must negotiate tree branches.

From Dale Wimbrow Park, the Sebastian River South Prong starts out several hundred feet wide. The very steep north bank ranges from 5 to 15 feet high, with sandy bluffs that are all that remains of relic sand dunes along an ancient shoreline. As you paddle upstream, the waterway narrows considerably and vegetation changes dramatically as you leave brackish waters near the river's mouth. Some parts of the waterway are covered over by trees, creating green tunnels. Numerous dead-end false channels await unwary paddlers. A compass and topographic maps are helpful for avoiding them.

Directions: Both Prongs as well as Sebastian Bay can be reached from Dale Wimbrow Park on Roseland Rd. (CR 505). The park is accessed from either I-95 or US 1. Take the CR 512 exit (Exit 156) when coming by I-95. Drive east on CR 512 to Roseland Rd. Turn left on Roseland Rd. and follow it to the park, which is on the left. If coming by US 1, turn west on CR 505 at the town of Roseland (just north of the city of Sebastian after you cross the Sebastian River) and drive to the park, which is on the right. Camping is available at nearby Donald McDonald Park.

Stick Marsh & Farm 13 Reservoirs

Located near the headwaters of the St. Johns River, the reservoirs are world renowned for their trophy bass. Since they opened in 1991, more 10-pound bass have been caught in these two impoundments than in any other lake in the world. Over 6500 acres of stump-filled shallows hold what may be the largest average weight largemouth bass population available to anglers fishing in public waters. An east-west levee splits the waters with the Stick Marsh to the north and Farm 13 on the south. A small canal connects the two

lakes. Bass fishing here is limited to catch and release only. Hydrilla prairies in the nutrient-rich waters of the impound areas support not only a world-class fishery; they are also home to a gamut of ducks in late fall and winter.

Directions: From I-95 in Palm Bay, take Exit 173 (Malabar Rd.) and go 0.25 miles east to Babcock St. (CR 507). Turn right and go south on Babcock for approximately 11 miles. Turn right onto Fellsmere Grade Rd. just after crossing the C-54 Canal. From the intersection of I-95 and CR 512 (Exit 156), head west for three miles to CR 507 (Babcock St.). Turn right (north) and, after five miles, turn left (west) onto Fellsmere Grade Rd., just south of the C-54 Canal. Go all the way to the end of the dirt road (about six miles).

Blue Cypress Water Management Area

Another great place for fishing and exceptional wildlife viewing, this WMA is a rectangular impounded marsh area designed to filter agricultural run-off before being released into the pristine headwaters of the St. Johns River. The southern end of the management area is off limits to airboats and boats with motors greater than 10 HP. The area supports several wading bird rookeries and the eastern portion contains foraging and nesting habitat for the endangered Snail Kite. Other wetland dependant species found here include all of the egrets and herons (including both night-herons), Glossy and White Ibises, Purple Gallinules, Limpkins and Wood Storks. Wood Ducks and Mottled Ducks are found year-round and the marshes are used extensively in fall and winter by migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. Bald Eagles, hawks, vultures, Anhingas, Ospreys and Crested Caracara are commonly seen. American and Least Bitterns, King Rails, Soras and Fulvous Whistling-Ducks are a possibility. Primitive camping is allowed at designated sites.

Directions: Public access can be reached from the CR 512 and SR 60 exits off I-95. From I-95, take Exit 156 (CR 512) and go west. Go through the town of Fellsmere and continue south on CR 512. The recreation area is 2 miles north of SR 60. You can also take the SR 60 (Vero Beach) exit from I-95. Go west on SR 60 for 7.5 miles. Turn right onto CR 512, then go north 2 miles.

321-676-6614

<http://sjr.state.fl.us/programs/outreach/pubs/recguide>
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With a variety of habitats to explore, from coastal scrub and floodplain forest to open prairies and tropical hammocks, hikers can enjoy an amazing diversity of ecosystems along the hiking trails of the Space Coast. Florida's prime hiking season is from October through March, when temperatures are cooler, the weather is drier, and insects are less persistent. During the summer, hikes on the barrier islands are a good destination, since coastal breezes tend to temper the heat and insects.

Hikers should carry a map of the area and adequate water for the length of the hike, and should utilize sun protection and insect repellent as conditions dictate. Hikes in wilderness areas may involve getting your shoes wet or wading short distances across sloughs. For safety's sake, it's best to hike with a companion. Always let someone know where you're planning to hike and when you plan to return. Some lands are open to hunting (as noted), so check www.floridaconservation.org before planning your hike. If you hike during hunting season, wear an orange vest.

*One of only eight National Scenic Trails in the United States, the Florida Trail, provides hiking opportunities through all of Florida's habitats. Stretching 1,300 miles across the state, the Florida Trail has numerous segments and loop trails (designated [FT] on the following listings) that pass through portions of the Space Coast. For information, contact the Florida Trail Association (877-HIKE-FLA; www.floridatrail.org), 5415 SW 13th St, Gainesville FL 32608. Additional resources that cover hiking in this region include the books *50 Hikes in Central Florida* and *The Florida Trail: The Official Hiking Guide*.*

Spruce Creek Park

A 1.5-mile combination of boardwalk and pathways through cedars and pines borders the Rose Creek estuary. The trail leads to an observation tower, where you'll find a rugged loop into the woods and a spur trail that takes you out on forest roads to Rose Bay.

Directions: Located between Port Orange and New Smyrna on U.S. 1, north of Spruce Creek on the west side of the highway. The trail starts at the playground. Free. 386-322-5133

Smyrna Dunes Park

Enjoy this 1.4-mile boardwalk around the tip of this scenic cape along the Mosquito Lagoon at Ponce Inlet, traversing maritime hammock, massive coastal dunes, and mangrove marshes. Spot a variety of birds without leaving the boardwalk. Watch for gopher tortoises as you pass over pristine coastal scrub habitat.

Directions: Take Peninsula Blvd. north from SR 44 in New Smyrna Beach. The park is at the end of the road on the right. Fee. 386-424-2935

Canaveral National Seashore

Showcasing the maritime forest and coastal habitats of a barrier island, the Turtle Mound, Eldora Hammock, and Castle Windy nature trails of Canaveral Nat'l Seashore provide 1.5 miles of pleasant hiking. The middle section of the Seashore has no vehicular access, but a 12-mile dike trail connects the north and south ends, allowing for a wilder experience viewing the lagoon and its wildlife. A hike down the beach reveals the coast of Florida as it looked when early Spanish explorers arrived - a wilderness of endless sand and dunes.

Directions: Take SR 44 east from New Smyrna to A1A. Go south 7 miles to the park entrance. Ask for a trail map at the entrance station. Fee. 386-428-3384

www.nps.gov/cana

Lake Ashby Park

A network of 1.5 miles of nature trails meanders through hardwood hammocks and floodplain forests along the shores of Lake Ashby, leading to a boardwalk that passes through impressive cypress trees and along the open waters of the lake.

Directions: Follow SR 44 west 4.5 miles from I-95 (or east 10 miles from I-4) to its junction with CR 415 in Satsuma. Turn south and drive 4.2 miles on CR 415 to Lake Ashby Rd; turn left. After 0.7 mile, turn left on Boy Scout Camp Rd. Continue to the park entrance on the right. Free 386-428-4589

Lyonia Preserve

Nowhere else in Florida will you get as up close and personal with Florida scrub-jays as along the 2.5 miles of loop trails through the scrublands of Lyonia Preserve. The hilly terrain (rising up to 50 feet above sea level) provides challenging hiking with great views across the wetlands and forests of the preserve.

Directions: From I-4 Exit 114 drive 2.5 miles south on SR 472 to Providence Blvd; turn right. Continue 0.7 miles to Eustace Ave., and turn right. The entrance and parking for the preserve is shared with the Deltona Public Library. Free. 407-736-5927

<http://echotourism.com/parks/lyonia.htm>

Kratzert Tract, Lake Monroe Conservation Area

This property features 4.5 miles of hiking trails, with a primitive campsite set in a palm hammock near Lake Monroe. The trails wander through dense hammocks of tall cabbage palms decked in ferns, with meandering tannic sand-bottomed streams flowing towards the lake.

Directions: From SR 46 east of Sanford, follow SR 415 north for 2.5 miles. Turn left onto Reed Ellis Rd. Continue 0.6 miles to the trailhead parking on the left. Hunting permitted. Free. 904-529-2380



Photo courtesy of
Florida's Space Coast

hiking

Lake Jessup Wilderness Area

A 2.7-mile trail system provides access to this lakeside wilderness, where you can slosh through wetlands and along a canal en route to a high and dry palm-lined berm that was once used for flood control.

Directions: From I-4 exit 98 follow Lake Mary Blvd. east past SR 417 to Sanford Ave. Turn right, go to the end of the road, which enters the park. Free. 407-665-7352

Spring Hammock Preserve [FT]

This enchanting preserve along Lake Jessup, is home to some of Florida's oldest cypress trees. More than 5.2 miles of trail, including part of the Florida Trail, meanders through palm hammocks, pine flatwoods, and floodplain forests. Kids will love the Mud Walk. There is an on-site education center and natural history museum with environmental programs. Nearby, on the Big Tree Park site, stands a majestic 3,500-year-old cypress tree that is one of the world's largest known living cypress trees.

Directions: From US 17-92 just north of the city of Longwood, go east 0.6 miles on SR 419 to the Soldier's Creek Park entrance on the left. Enter the gates and park on the right. Start at the "Pine Woods Trail" sign to access the trail system. Big Tree Park is located west of 19-92 on General Hutchinson Parkway, just north of Longwood. Free.

For informational regarding programs at the education center, call (407-320-0467). 407-665-7352

Little-Big Econ State Forest [FT]

Rated one of America's top family friendly trails, the Florida Trail along the Little-Big Econ Trail takes you on a 4.6 miles (each way) scenic riverside hike through pristine wetlands and ancient forests of giant oaks and cypress. Wildlife is abundant along the Econlockhatchee River, a stunningly beautiful Florida Outstanding Waterway.

Directions: From downtown Oviedo, follow SR 426 east past Lockwood Rd. to Barr St. Turn right and park in the grassy parking area on the left for the designated trailhead. Fee. 407-971-3500

Geneva Wilderness Area

A 1.8-mile trail circles lily-dotted ponds amid an array of native Florida plant communities, from mixed hardwood swamp and mesic hammocks to xeric oak scrub, all supporting an equally diverse collection of wildlife. A 1.4-mile connector (the Flagler Trail) leads to the Florida Trail in Little-Big Econ State Forest.

Directions: From downtown Oviedo, drive east on SR 426 for 6.1 miles (passing the Barr St. trailhead for the Florida Trail); the park entrance is on the right. From the intersection of SR 46 and CR 426 in Geneva, go south on CR 426. Look for the park entrance on the left just after passing Snow Hill Rd. Free. 407-665-7352

Lake Proctor Wilderness Area

More than six miles of trails loop around ponds surrounded by sand pine scrub, pine flatwoods, sandhill, and bayhead swamps along wetlands south of Lake Proctor. You might see a white-tailed deer, gray fox, Wood Duck, Sandhill Crane, gopher tortoise or Florida worm lizard.

Directions: From Sanford, follow SR 46 east through Geneva. Just beyond the intersection of SR 426 and SR 46, keep alert for the trailhead parking area on the left. Free. 407-665-7352

Orlando Wetlands Park [FT]

Circling around vast man-made wetlands and slipping through dense hardwood hammocks, OWP's 6 miles of trails provide numerous options for easy day hiking loops. Marsh birds, wading birds, waterfowl, and raptors are common. The Florida Trail follows the perimeter of the park.

Directions: From SR 50 in Christmas, take Fort Christmas Rd north. At the sharp left curve, turn right onto Wheeler Rd. into the park. Continue down the road to the parking area on the left. Note: closed to hiking October 1 through January 31. Free. 407-246-2288

Seminole Ranch Conservation Area [FT]

Between SR 50 and Orlando Wetlands Park, nearly 5 miles of the Florida Trail winds its way through jungle-like hydric hammocks and dense oak hammocks along the floodplain forests of the St. Johns River.

Directions: Follow directions for Orlando Wetlands Park, but park on the right and follow the blue blazes farther down Wheeler Rd. to intersect the orange-blazed trail at the hunt check station. Hunting permitted. Free. 904-529-2380

Econ River Wilderness Area

Four loop trails totaling 4 miles traverse vast pine flatwoods and shady oak hammocks en route to the floodplain forests of the Econlockhatchee River.

Directions: From the intersection of SR 434 (Alafaya Trail) and SR 50 near the Univ. of Central Florida, drive south on SR 434 and turn right on E. McCulloch Rd. Drive 2 miles and turn left on Old Lockwood Rd. The trailhead is on the right. Free. 407-665-7352

Hal Scott Regional Preserve [FT]

Experience the open prairies of Central Florida amid the palmetto thickets and grasslands in this preserve along the Econlockhatchee River, with its 5.1-mile hiking loop and a shaded primitive campsite sheltered in an oak hammock. Look closely, and you'll spy pitcher plants growing in seepage bogs, and glistening sundews along the footpaths. Watch for mature long leaf yellow pines with white stripes painted around their trunks. These marked pines have red-cockaded woodpecker cavities in them.

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Directions: Leaving the Orlando Int'l Airport area, go east on SR 528 (Beeline Expwy.). Take exit 24, Dallas Blvd. Turn left at the end of the ramp, go 2.4 miles to the park entrance on the left. Free.
904-529-2380

Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area [FT]

More than 11 miles of the Florida Trail and side trail loops (60 miles in all) provide backpackers with a wilderness experience in this wild and vast preserve. Wild turkeys, white-tailed deer, wild hogs, alligators, woodland birds, wading birds and raptors abound. Tosohatchee is beautiful in spring and fall when wildflowers bloom profusely.

Directions: From SR 50 in Christmas, follow Taylor Creek Rd south to the park entrance on the left. Stop and pick up a park map, and drive in to the trailhead parking on Powerline Rd. The trail can also be accessed from the end of Yates Rd off SR 520; do not block the gate. Hunting permitted. Fee.
407-568-5893

Canaveral Marshes Trail [FT]

Following a series of dikes across the broad open freshwater marshes of the St. Johns River floodplain, the 3.9-mile round-trip trail leads you past former cattle ranches and a puzzle of marshlands along the Brevard County line.

Directions: From I-95 exit 215, drive 2.8 miles west on SR 50 to the conservation area entrance on the left, just before the bridge over the St. Johns River. Free.
904-529-2380

Wuesthoff Park

A mile of shady trails through natural Florida forest offers three distinct woodland habitats in this 25-acre community park: a wetland area, hardwood hammock, and upland pine forest. A short boardwalk leads across the wetland from the rustic Homer Powell Nature Center and onto the sandy trails.

Directions: From I-95 exit 215 (SR 50) Titusville, drive east a little over a mile to the second traffic light. Turn right on Barna Ave. Look on the right, between the drugstore and apartment buildings for the sign for Wuesthoff Park and turn right. For information about nature programs, call 321-264-5105. Free.

Enchanted Forest Sanctuary

A 2.5-mile network of interpretive trails leads you through a variety of habitats along the Atlantic Coastal Ridge, including a dense forest of ancient oaks and magnolias and open coastal scrub. An on-site education center showcases universal design, providing accessibility to outdoor natural areas for all people, regardless of age or ability.

Directions: From I-95 exit 215 (SR 50), Titusville, go east on SR 50 to the first traffic light, FL 405. Turn right and drive 2.5 miles to the park entrance on the left. Free.

321-264-5185

Merritt Island NWR

Look for Florida scrub-jays along the 0.9-mile Scrub Ridge Trail loop, or watch wading birds along the 5-mile Cruickshank Trail loop. You'll get wet feet on the 2-mile Palm Hammock Trail, and the 0.7-mile Oak Hammock Trail leads through a tropical hammock. At the visitor center, a 0.4-mile boardwalk overlooks a large pond.

Directions: Take I-95 exit 220 and follow SR 406 east to Merritt Island. Stop at the visitor center for a comprehensive map of trail locations. Free.
321-861-0667

Pine Island Conservation Area

Not for the timid, 2.5 miles of trails in the North and South Loops splash out into wet flatwoods and marshes along the Indian River Lagoon, providing observation decks with scenic views of shallow water feeding habitat of wading birds, shorebirds, and waterfowl. Manatees frequently seek refuge in the quiet waters of Sam's Creek/Rinker Canal.

Directions: From I-95, follow SR 528 east 7 miles to SR 3; drive north on Merritt Island for 5.5 miles to Pine Island Rd. Turn left and follow the road to the end. Access both trails via a 0.5-mile walk along the Pine Island Canal. Free.
321-255-4466

Rotary Park, Merritt Island

A half-mile family friendly elevated boardwalk with interpretive signage passes through hardwood hammock. A nature center designed as a Florida Cracker style schoolhouse offers displays, hands-on activities, group programs and children's classes.

Directions: From Cocoa, take SR 520 onto Merritt Island. Turn right (south) on Courtenay Parkway and travel 2.5 miles to the Park entrance on the right. For information about the nature center and programs, call 321-455-1385. Free

Wickham Park

Start at the "Multi-Use Trail" sign to access a network of nearly 4 miles of narrow trails that meander through oak hammocks, scrub, pine flatwoods, and along marshy streams.

Directions: From I-95 exit 183 (SR 518) go east to Wickham Rd. Turn right and follow Wickham Rd south 7.3 miles to Parkway Drive. Turn left. Continue another 0.5 mile to the park entrance on the left. Make a right when entering the park, and stop at the office for a map. Free.
321-255-4307

Erna Nixon Park

This community park features a half-mile of elevated boardwalk and trail that winds through three different ecosystems where native plant species and small animals can be viewed. Grand old live oaks festooned with moss and fern, an open wetland area, and a wild grape arbor highlight the walk. Exhibits and scheduled guided tours are available at the on-site nature center.

Directions: From I-95 exit 180 (SR 192), go east on SR 192 (New Haven Ave.) for 3.2 miles to Evans Rd. Turn left and go north on Evans Rd. approximately .75 miles. Park will be on the left. Free.
321-952-4525

Bull Creek WMA [FT]

Providing a 20.5-mile backpacking loop as well as a linear hike, this popular section of the Florida Trail crosses cypress swamps along Crabgrass Creek, traces the course of Bull Creek, and winds through expanses of open palmetto prairie beneath the pines.

Directions: The trailhead is along US 192, 2 miles west of Deer Park on the south side of the highway. Hunting permitted. Sign in at the register and follow the orange blazes south. Free.
407-846-5275

Turkey Creek Sanctuary

A 1.6-mile trail leads along boardwalks through sand pine scrub, hydric hammock, and along high bluffs above scenic Turkey Creek, with shorter loop options available. Gentle manatees are sometimes seen munching water plants along the creek banks.

Directions: From I-95 exit 176, take CR 516 (Palm Bay Rd.) east 2.3 miles to CR 507 (Babcock St.) Turn right and drive 1 mile to Port Malabar Blvd. Turn left and continue 1.1 miles to Santiago Dr. Turn right. Parking is on the right, across from the park entrance. Free.
321-952-3433

Coconut Point Sanctuary

Few trails in Florida showcase coastal ecosystems as well as this 1-mile loop, which traverses six different habitats on its short course and provides an overlook on the Indian River Lagoon.

Directions: The trailhead is 6.1 miles south of US 192 on ATA in Melbourne Beach, on the west side of the road just beyond Publix shopping center. Free.
321-255-4466

Maritime Hammock Sanctuary

A 2.5-mile loop along the Indian River Lagoon, this trail treats you to maritime hammocks dense with bromeliads, shady mangrove forests, and views of the lagoon.

hiking

Directions: Follow A1A south 10.3 miles from US 192 in Melbourne Beach; watch for the trailhead on the right. Free. 321-255-4466

Sebastian Inlet State Park

A half-mile trail winds through tropical hammock and mangrove forest along the Indian River shoreline. This area can be superior for migrant songbirds in late winter and early spring.

Directions: Follow A1A south 17.5 miles from US 192 in Melbourne Beach. Watch for the trail on the west side of A1A about 200 yards before you actually turn into the park. Fee. 321-984-4852

Pelican Island NWR

Two five-mile loops offer superb birding along mangrove-lined pools on Indian River Lagoon, while short family-friendly Centennial Trail and observation tower offer views of the pelican nesting area on Pelican Island.

Directions: From the junction of CR 510 and A1A, follow A1A North 3.5 miles to the park sign on left; turn left onto "Jungle Trail" and follow it to the trailheads. Free. 772-562-3909

Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area

3.5 miles of trails through this jungle-like preserve lead to fun discoveries like the Old Quarry, the Awesome Pine, and an observation deck above the mangroves. Bring the kids and expect to get a little muddy!

Directions: From I-95 exit 147, follow SR 60 east to US 1 in downtown Vero Beach. Turn right and drive south 3.8 miles to CR 606 (Oslo Rd). Turn left onto the dead-end road; the parking area is immediately on the left. Free. 904-529-2380

Explore Florida's Scrub: Hike South Brevard

On the palmetto prairie, you can see forever – or so it seems. Early Florida settlers found it difficult to traverse the vast open spaces of Florida scrub where saw palmetto creates a thick understory beneath scattered pines, and they lamented about how hard it was to make any progress through the prairie. Yet these prairies are home to threatened species like the gopher tortoise, sandhill crane, indigo snake, burrowing owl and the Florida scrub-jay, who are drawn to ancient sand dunes that create islands of desert-like oak scrub amid the wetter prairies. Unlike early settlers, your pathways are in place – visit these special scrub preserves and hike their trails to sample Florida's scrub. Some of the best scrub trails on the Space Coast lie within the town of Malabar's city limits or nearby.

Malabar Scrub Sanctuary

Highlighting the interdependence of wetland and upland habitats, this trail system leads you across boardwalks through bayheads, diminutive oak scrub, and around vast wetlands and prairies with white sand beaches. Watch for gopher tortoises along the Gopher Trail, and listen for rufous-sided towhees and Florida scrub-jays in the oak scrub along the Acorn Trail. Hiking is a little rough where the sand is soft.

Directions: From I-95 exit 173, go east on CR 514 (Malabar Rd) for 2.4 miles; watch for a fire station on the left. Turn left immediately after the fire station and follow the unmarked road up to the preserve entrance. Turn left and park by the restrooms at the county park. Free. 321-255-4466

Micco Scrub Preserve

This is a hiking-only 3.2-mile Flatwoods Loop through vast palmetto prairies where wildlife sightings are likely - from armadillos in the pinewoods to gopher tortoises on the prairie. Passing through pine plantations, the trail then takes you into a sea of saw palmetto and follows the Sottile Canal along the edge of scrubby flatwoods.

Directions: Take I-95 exit 173, and drive east on Malabar Rd to the first traffic light. Turn right on Babcock St and drive south for 8.5 miles to Micco Rd. Turn left on Micco Rd and drive 0.5 mile to the trailhead on the left side. Free. 321-255-4466

St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park

The trails here are primarily for equestrians, so footing can be a bit uneven. Learn about scrub habitat on the interpretive trails at the visitor center. Further into the preserve, white blazes lead you into forests of longleaf pine and wiregrass savanna; the red-blazed loop circles a colony of red-cockaded woodpeckers, where trees with nests are ringed with white paint. The sandhill area supports about 25 breeding pairs of Florida scrub-jays as well as gopher tortoises and indigo snakes. Forty miles of trails offer plenty of opportunity for visitors to enjoy the diversity of this large wild property.

Directions: From I-95 exit 173 (Palm Bay), go east on Malabar Rd 0.25 miles to Babcock St (CR 507) and turn right. Go south for about 11 miles. Turn left on Buffer Preserve Rd just before crossing the C-54 Canal. A visitor center is on-site. Free. 321-953-5004



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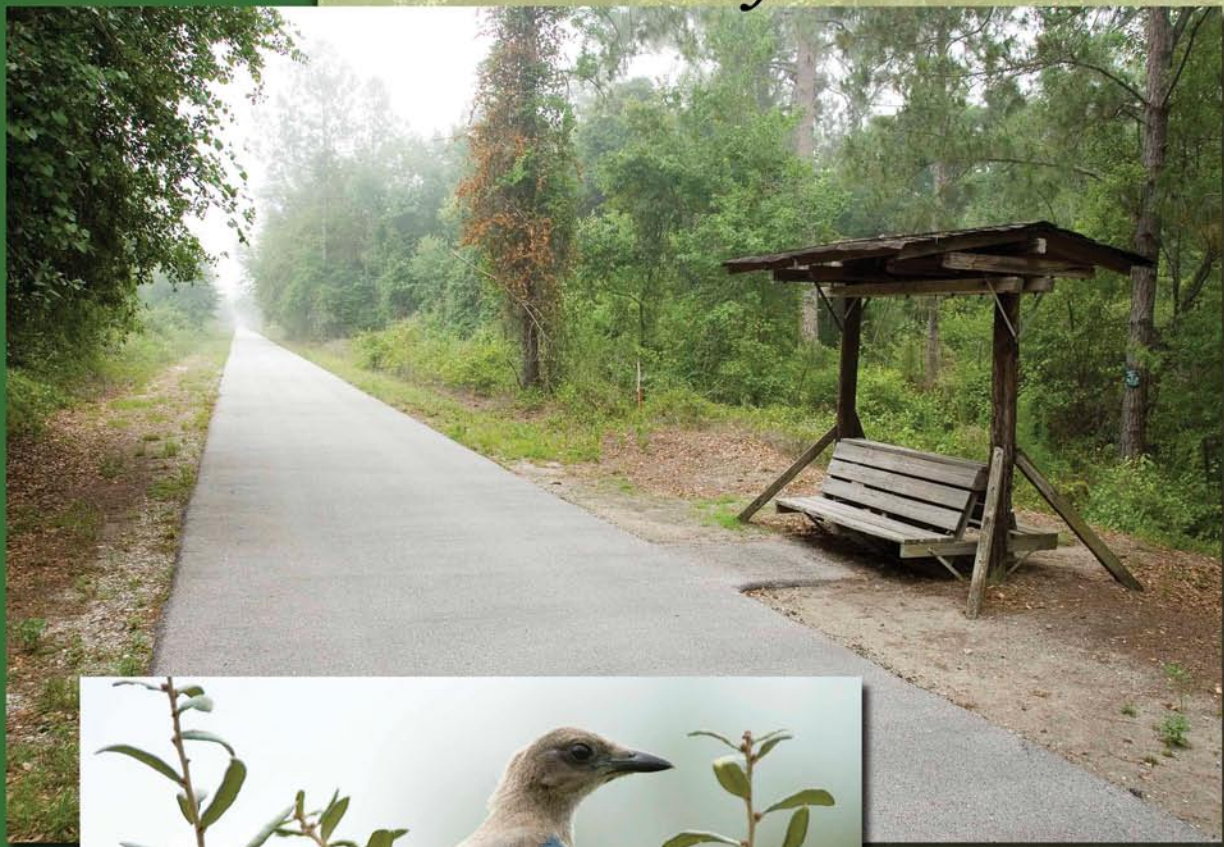
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Florida's Greenways & Trails



Bird watch on the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway and along state trails. An online trail guide at FloridaGreenwaysAndTrails.com provides printer-friendly maps, trail descriptions and directions. Brochures are also available. Call 877-822-5208.



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the space coast



Birding and Wildlife Sites

- 1 Smyrna Dunes Park
- 2 Canaveral National Seashore-North
- 3 Canaveral National Seashore-South
- 4 Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
- 5 Haulover Canal and Mullethead Island
- 6 Riverbreeze Park
- 7 Buck Lake
- 8 Seminole Ranch Conversation Area
- 9 Hatbill Park
- 10 Little Big Eon State Forest
- 11 Blue Heron Water Reclamation Facility
- 12 Canaveral Marshes Conservation Area
- 13 Orlando Wetlands Park
- 14 Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area
- 15 Hal Scott Preserve
- 16 Pine Island Conservation Area
- 17 Port Canaveral
- 18 Lori Wilson Park
- 19 Viera Wetlands
- 20 Turkey Creek
- 21 Three Forks Conservation Area
- 22 T.M. Goodwin Marsh
- 23 St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park
- 24 Blue Cypress WMA
- 25 Sebastian Inlet State Park
- 26 Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge

2007 Space Coast Birding Festival Headquarters

Kayak and Canoe Sites

- 1 Spruce Creek
- 2 Callalisa Park/Ponce Inlet
- 3 Canaveral National Seashore/Shipyard Island Canoe Trail
- 4 River Breeze Park
- 5 WSEG Boat Ramp
- 6 Haulover Canal/Mullethead Island
- 7 Dummit Cove
- 8 Eddy Creek
- 9 Max Brewer Causeway/Parrish Park
- 10 Turnbull Creek
- 11 Lake Monroe Conservation Area
- 12 Lake Jessup/Black Hammock Fish Camp
- 13 Upper Eonlockhatchee River/Hidden River Campground
- 14 Middle Eonlockhatchee River/CR 419
- 15 Lower Eonlockhatchee River/Snow Hill Road
- 16 Pine Island Conservation Area
- 17 Kaborod Sanctuary
- 18 Port Canaveral
- 19 Thousands Islands
- 20 Oars and Paddles Park
- 21 Turkey Creek
- 22 Mullet Creek/Honest John's Fish Camp
- 23 Sebastian Inlet State Park
- 24 Pelican Island Wabasso Causeway
- 25 Sebastian River/Dale Wimbrow Park
- 26 Stick Marsh/Farm 13
- 27 Blue Cypress WMA

Hiking Sites

- 1 Spruce Creek Park
- 2 Smyrna Dunes Park
- 3 Canaveral National Seashore
- 4 Lake Ashby Park
- 5 Lyonia Preserve
- 6 Kratzer Tract, Lake Monroe CA
- 7 Lake Jessup Wilderness Area
- 8 Spring Hammock Preserve
- 9 Little-Big Eon State Forest
- 10 Geneva Wilderness Area
- 11 Lake Proctor Wilderness Area
- 12 Orlando Wetlands Park
- 13 Seminole Ranch Conservation Area
- 14 Eon River Wilderness Area
- 15 Hal Scott Regional Preserve
- 16 Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area
- 17 Canaveral Marshes Trail
- 18 Wuesthoff Park
- 19 Enchanted Forest Sanctuary
- 20 Merritt Island NWR
- 21 Pine Island Conservation Area
- 22 Rotary Park at Merritt Island
- 23 Wickham Park
- 24 Erna Nixon Park
- 25 Bull Creek WMA
- 26 Turkey Creek Sanctuary
- 27 Malabar Scrub Sanctuary
- 28 Micco Sanctuary
- 29 St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park
- 30 Coconut Point Sanctuary
- 31 Maritime Hammock Sanctuary
- 32 Sebastian Inlet State Park
- 33 Pelican Island NWR
- 34 Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area

indicates Great Florida Birding Trail sites

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