



The Great Florida Birding Trail
is a project of the
Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission.



In partnership with :



Wildlife
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of Florida



Florida Department of
Transportation



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Service



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WEST SECTION

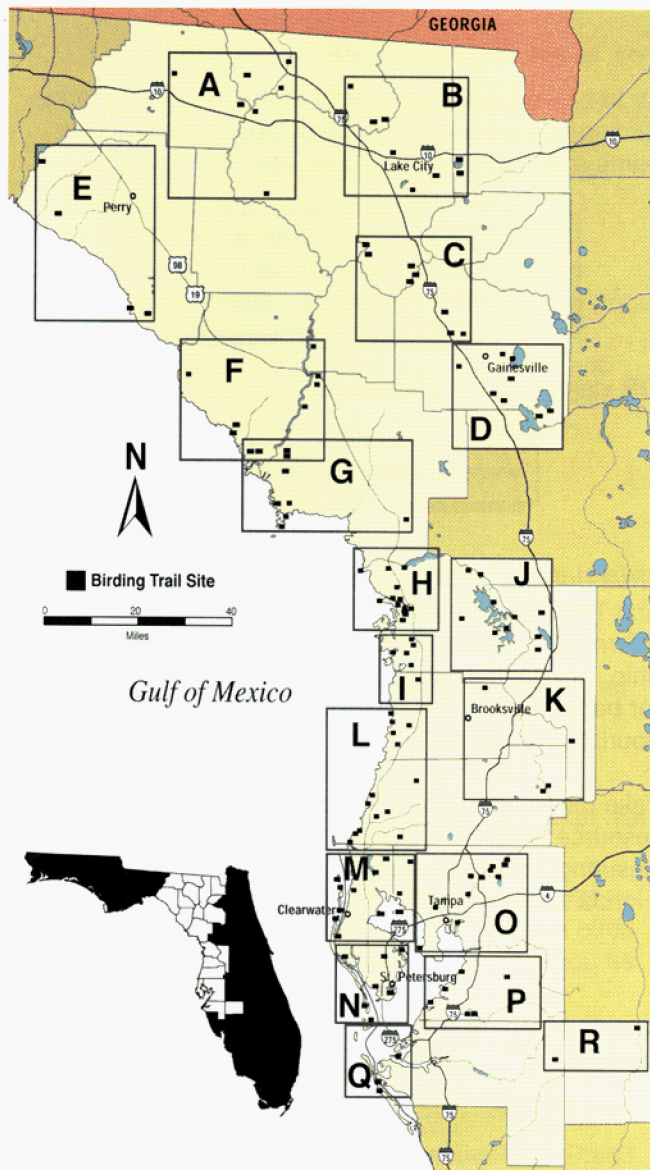
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

We hope this guide will help you quickly and easily identify West Section birding sites of interest to you. Sites have met criteria ensuring they are good for birdwatching, but also aren't too sensitive to withstand birder use.

Maps show "clusters" of 5-15 sites within an hour's drive of one another. The map at right shows the locations of these clusters; the letter in each box corresponds to the map for that cluster. Descriptions and directions for sites accompany each cluster map. You may want to use the maps in this guide along with a larger map book, such as a DeLorme *Florida Atlas & Gazetteer*.

MAP KEY (see page 2 for City Locator)

- | | |
|----------|---------------------------------|
| A | River Bluffs Cluster |
| B | Flatwoods and Falls Cluster |
| C | Warbler Woods Cluster |
| D | Arredondo Cluster |
| E | Aucilla Cluster |
| F | Lower Suwannee Cluster |
| G | Cedar Key Cluster |
| H | Crystal River Cluster |
| I | Eagle and Osprey Cluster |
| J | Red-cockaded Woodpecker Cluster |
| K | Green Swamp Cluster |
| L | Gulf Migrants Cluster |
| M | Oystercatcher Cluster |
| N | Reddish Egret Cluster |
| O | River to Bay Cluster |
| P | Bobwhite and Nighthawk Cluster |
| Q | Snowy Plover Cluster |
| R | Big Sky Cluster |



LEGEND

Not a primary Trail site, but "Worth A Visit" if you're already in an area

Some viewing is barrier-free

B Sites good for beginners

Entrance fee required

Tours, educational signage and/or nature center on site

Seasonal hunting on site

Access by appointment only

This site is primarily accessed, and birded, by car

This site is accessed by boat

This site is only accessed by foot, and sometimes by bicycle

This site is good for seeing a variety of species

This site is good for a single sought-after species

Restroom available

Best time of day for birding:

morning, evening, both morning and evening, and all day

Recommended length of visit:

quick stop, a few hours, all day

CITY LOCATOR

City	Map	City	Map
Bradenton	Q	Madison	A
Brooksville	K	Micanopy	D
Cedar Key	G	New Port Richey	L
Clearwater	M	Perry	E
Cross City	F	Ruskin	P
Crystal River	H	Spring Hill	L
Dade City	K	St. Petersburg	N
Fanning Springs	F	Tampa	M, O
Gainesville	C, D	Tarpon Springs	M
High Springs	C	Wauchula	R
Homosassa Springs	I	White Springs	B
Inverness	J		
Lake City	B		
Largo	M		

How were these sites selected?

Each of the sites in this guide was chosen for its bird-watching characteristics, accessibility and ability to withstand birder use. This is not to say there aren't other places to watch birds, from traditional sites that have opened since this printing, to nontraditional sites such as landfills that did not meet the trail's criteria. In other words, keep your eyes peeled! Some of the best birding opportunities are fleeting and spontaneous. You never know what you may find!



Loaner optics are available free of charge at all Gateways, as well as at additional sites as marked in the site descriptions!

Gateways

Gateway sites provide more extensive Trail-related resources, have loaner optics available on-site, and act as hubs of regional birding information. The West Florida Section has two gateways: Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park (site #19) near Gainesville and Ft. De Soto County Park (site #91) in St. Petersburg. The East Florida Section has three gateways: Ft. Clinch State Park (Fernandina Beach), Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (Titusville) and Tenoroc Fish Management Area (Lakeland).

Each of these sites has staff on hand to answer questions about the Trail, kiosks with information about the Trail structure and their visitor centers offer information about birding classes and events occurring across the state. Hop on the Trail at a Gateway and get off to a flying start!

Trail Tips

When birding:

- Take sunscreen, water and bug spray.
- Make reservations in advance for "by-appointment only" sites.
- Check seasonality of site; are you visiting at the right time of year?

Birder Vocabulary

Some words used in this guide are specific to birders and birdwatching. Bone-up on the following lingo so you'll blend in at your next birding dinner party!

Birding by ear: the ability to identify birds by their song or call

Ecotone: the interface between two habitat types

Fallout: the sudden appearance of large numbers of migratory birds, usually songbirds, as a result of a storm or cold front

Forage: to look for food

Kettle: a dense group of birds circling in a warm-air thermal to gain altitude (typically raptors in migration)

Overwintering: describes any bird that spends the winter in Florida but breeds elsewhere

Peeps: slang for any number of small shorebirds that forage in mixed flocks

Scoping: scanning with a spotting scope

Stoop: to plunge dramatically in flight, as in hunting peregrine falcons

Stopover: a location where birds rest and feed before continuing on their migration

Wrack line: the line of seaweed and flotsam at the high tide line on beaches

Map A River Bluffs Cluster

1 Ladell Brothers Outdoor Environmental Center

Once inside this unlikely jewel, you'd hardly believe you're at North Florida Community College. Three, half-mile mulched trails and boardwalks crisscross the pine forest. They run past a marsh pond, through a black gum-red maple swamp and across a small stream whose gurgles draw seasonal songbirds. Open field and six pond habitats are also present. Loaner optics are available in the college library.

Directions: Located on the N end of North Florida Community College's campus, on US 90 1 mi. W of downtown Madison. Turn at NFCC's main entrance. Park and get specific directions at the administration building.

Open dawn to dusk. (850) 973-2288.
www.nfcc.edu/nature



J F M A M J J A S O N D

2 Twin Rivers State Forest

The Ellaville Tract borders the W shore of the Suwannee at its confluence with the Withlacoochee. Its sandhills are home to turkey and Cooper's hawks and lead down through xeric oak hammocks to the river: a pleasant hike with moderate bird diversity. Blue Springs Tract is a rare example of a longleaf-wiregrass community. This fire-dependent habitat is home to bobwhite and brown-headed nuthatches; also, it demonstrates what Florida's uplands looked like before the arrival of Europeans and the era of fire-suppression. Area is closed to birding during some managed hunts in fall and spring; call for dates.

DIRECTIONS: Ellaville (a): entrance is on the S side of US 90, 0.4 mi. W of the Suwannee River Crossing. Blue Springs Longleaf (b): located on the N side of CR 6, 0.4 mi. E of its intersection with CR 143.

Open dawn to dusk. (386) 208-1460.
www.fl-dof.com/state_forests/



J F M A M J J A S O N D

3 Suwannee River State Park

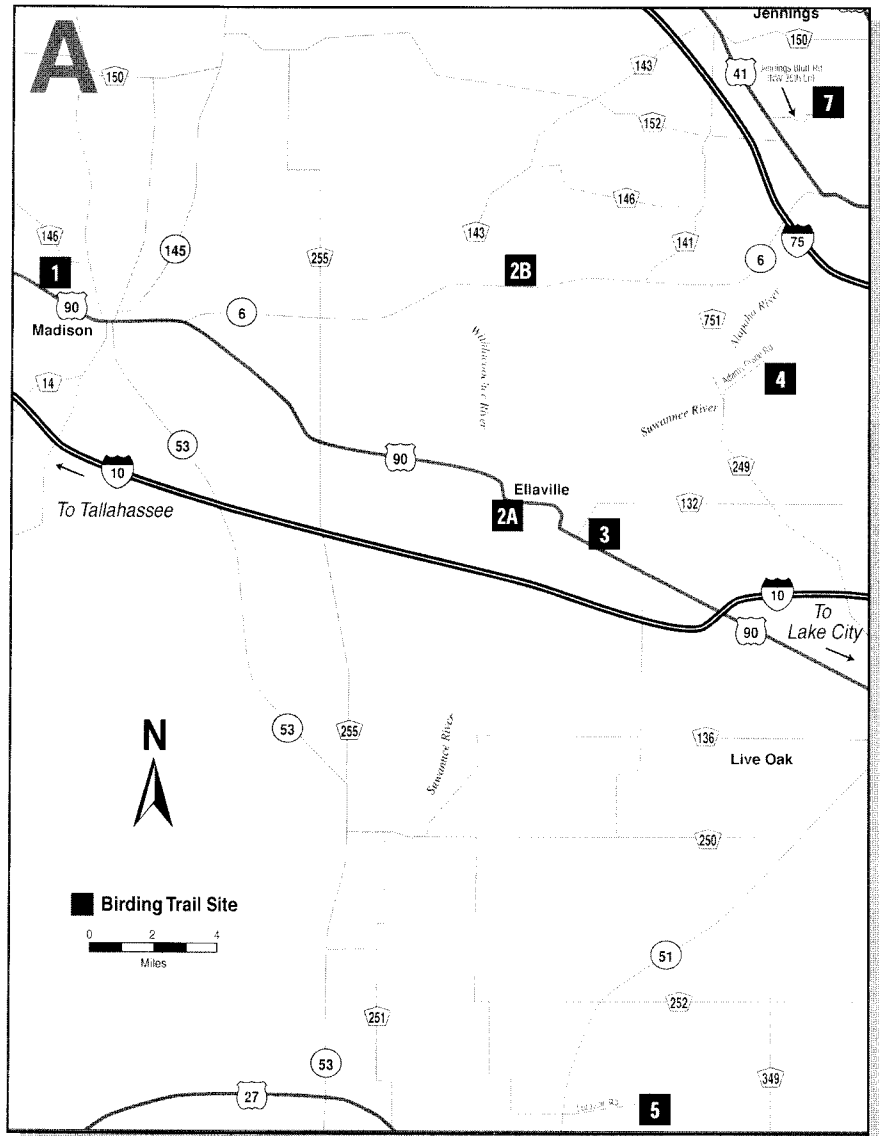
The best trails at this site parallel the bluffs of the Suwannee River, through hardwood hammocks laced with holly and obscure "cedar elms." Watch for songbirds in migration like magnolia warblers, ruby-crowned kinglets and hermit thrushes. Longer, more rustic trails are available across the river on the Big Oak Trail.

DIRECTIONS: Park is located 13 mi. W of Live Oak on US 90, just E of the Suwannee River.

Open 8:00 a.m. to dusk. (386) 362-2746; www.floridastateparks.org



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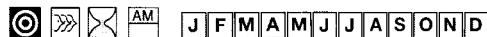


4 Holton Creek Conservation Area

The Florida Trail follows the Suwannee River through gorgeous old-growth bottomland forest, offering nice vantages from occasional bluffs. Songbirds like parulas and yellow-throated warblers breed here, and solitary vireos and hermit thrushes are sure to make an appearance in fall and spring. Limited hunting closes the area to other uses 12 mornings per year.

DIRECTIONS: From Live Oak, take CR 249 NW across the Suwannee River and make the first right onto Adams Grade Rd. Go approx. 0.5 mi. and turn right on dirt entrance road to the property.

Open dawn to dusk. (386) 362-1001; www.srwmf.state.fl.us

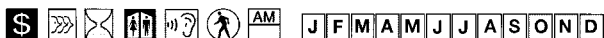


5 Peacock Springs State Park

The entrance road to this small state park winds through hardwood bottomland all the way to the springs. Popular for scuba diving and swimming, this site is best birded in the morning. Habitat is lovely for migrant songbirds like Swainson's thrushes, but height of the canopy can cause "warbler neck." Ability to bird by ear helpful.

DIRECTIONS: From Live Oak, drive 17 mi. SW on SR 51 and turn left (E) on Luraville Rd./ 180th St. Park is 2 mi. ahead on right (S).

Open 8:00 a.m. to dusk. (386) 497-4690; www.floridastateparks.org



6 PCS Waterfowl Management Area

Settling ponds at this industrial property near White Springs offer varying depths of water which attract everything from white pelicans to black-bellied whistling ducks, rafts of migratory ducks and occasional rarities like red-necked phalaropes and black terns. A bird extravaganza, access is available only to groups by advance reservation on the first and third Saturdays of October, February, March, April and May. Individual birders may call and ask to join a group with an existing reservation. Groups can drive/hike the dikes around the settling ponds.

DIRECTIONS: Given with reservations. (386) 397-8313



7 Upper Alapaha Conservation Area

Entrance road leads gradually down through hardwood forest to a trail along the slow, tannic Alapaha River (emphasis on the 2nd syllable). Bobwhite, Acadian flycatchers, yellow-throated vireos and yellow-billed cuckoos all breed here in summer. Migratory songbirds pepper the woods in spring and fall.

DIRECTIONS: From the intersection of SR 6 and US 41, drive NW 2 mi. to Jennings Bluff Rd./ NW 25th Ln. Turn right; follow road about 1.5 mi. to the entrance road on the left (N) side.

Open dawn to dusk. (386) 362-1001; www.srwmf.state.fl.us



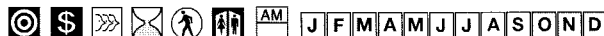
Map B Flatwoods & Falls Cluster

8 Big Shoals Public Lands

The main entrance offers access to some sandhill and hammock roads through the property, with trails down to the river. River entrance has best trail, leading along the river to some wet lowlands good for songbirds. The area around the river entrance, bordering the namesake Big Shoals, excludes hunting year-round.

DIRECTIONS: Main entrance (a) located 1 mi. NE of White Springs on the SE side of CR 135. Big Shoals river entrance (b): From White Springs drive NE on CR 135 4 mi. to Old Godwin Bridge Rd. Turn right and follow the road to the entrance at the end.

Open 8:00 a.m. to sunset. (386) 397-2733; www.srwmf.state.fl.us



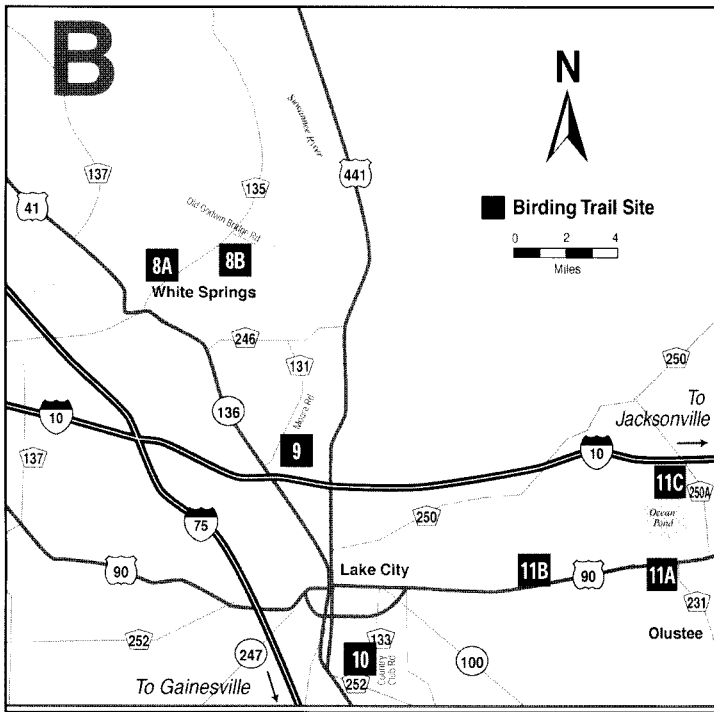
9 Deep Creek Conservation Area: Falling Creek

Check the boardwalk through lowland forest for migratory songbirds and visit the view of the creek's "whitewater." Rapids are so uncommon in Florida, these could be considered "waterfalls." Good for beginners to stroll in migration, this site is worth a quick stop if you're in the area.

DIRECTIONS: From Lake City, drive NW on US 41 under I-10 and turn right (E) onto Falling Creek Rd (CR 131). Site will be approx. two miles ahead on the right.

Open dawn to dusk. (386) 362-1001 www.srwmf.state.fl.us





of the intersection of US 441 and US 90 in Lake City, on the S side of US 90. Mt. Carrie Trailhead (b) is 4 mi. W of HQ on the north side of the road. To reach Ocean Pond Campground (c), drive 2 mi. E of HQ to CR 250A. Turn left (N) and continue 3 mi. to the N to FR 268. Turn left (S) and road will end at campground.

Open 24 hours/day. HQ open 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mon.-Fri. (386)752-2577
www.r8web.com/florida/forests/osceola.htm



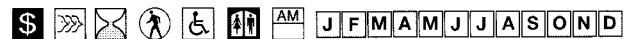
Map Warbler Woods Cluster

12 Ichetucknee Springs State Park

This site is popular for river tubing in warm weather, and can be very crowded on weekends. Regardless, this clear spring run winds through hardwoods past limpkins and Mississippi kites; Blue Hole Trail at the N entrance leads through flood-plain lowlands; the Trestle Point/Pine Ridge nature trails are a little higher ground, and the Westside sandhills hiking trail offers turkeys and singing Bachman's sparrows. S entrance also has trails; Tram Rd. is easy going, open only Oct.-Apr.

DIRECTIONS: North entrance (a): From Ft. White, take SR 47 N 2 mi., turn left (W) on CR 238 (Elim Church Rd.), go 3.5 mi., entrance is on left (S). South entrance (b): From Ft. White, take US 27 NW 4 mi.; entrance is on right (N) before the river.

Open 8:00 a.m. to sunset. (386) 497-4690
www.floridastateparks.org



13 O'Leno State Park and River Rise Preserve State Park

Main entrance: Trail traverses river through hardwood lowlands 1.5 mi. to a sinkhole where the river goes underground. Trails through mesic uplands off Bellamy Rd., esp. Paraner's Loop, showcase migrants like black-throated blue warblers and breeders like Acadian flycatchers. S entrance trail leads 1.5 mi. to where the river re-emerges.

DIRECTIONS: Main entrance (a) located 6 mi. N of High Springs on the E side of the road; Bellamy Rd. Trails (b): Drive approx. 1 mi. S of Main Entrance on US 441, and turn left (E) on Bellamy Rd. Parking area and trails on the left (N) side, 2 mi. ahead. South entrance (c) 4 mi S of Bellamy Rd (1 mi. N of the river) on the E side of US 441.

Open 8:00 a.m. to sunset (386) 454-1853
www.floridastateparks.org

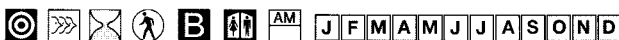


10 Alligator Lake

From the N end of the parking area, hike the 3 mi. perimeter loop trail. This dike passes fields that retain water and host shorebirds and sparrows. After 1 mi., the dike dives into hardwood hammock good for songbird migrants like Northern oriole, then follows the cypress-lined lake edge. Waterfowl hunters present on Tues. and Thurs. in fall/winter.

DIRECTIONS: Drive US 90 E out of Lake City and turn S on Old Country Club Rd. Parking area is marked approx. 3 mi. S on the W (right) side of the road.

CLOSED: M, Tu; OPEN: W-F 11am-7pm; Sat - Sun 8am-7pm.
 Winter: closed 30 minutes before dark. (386) 719-2025



11 Osceola National Forest

Stop by Forest HQ for a map, road closures and hunting seasons (especially busy Nov.-Jan.). At Mount Carrie Trailhead, hike the trail through a well-maintained longleaf pine stand, watching for bluebirds, pine warblers and red-cockaded woodpeckers (cavity trees are ringed with white paint). At the Ocean Pond Campground, walk the shoreline, scoping for ducks and wading birds. A segment of the Florida National Scenic Trail crosses the campground entrance road and in both directions, leads through hydric hammock good for migratory songbirds in fall and spring.

DIRECTIONS: Forest Headquarters (a) is located about 11 mi. E





Rate the Trail!

Mail-In Response Form


 Your country, state and county of origin _____


 Where did you hear about the Trail? _____

 What is your goal in using the Trail? (eg: finding a specific species of bird, seeing a diversity of birds or simply enjoying the outdoors). _____


 How long have you had this guide? _____


 How many sites have you visited? _____


 Which site was best? Why? _____

 Which site was worst? Why? _____

 How many days have you spent birding in the last month? _____

 How long was your last birding trip on the East Florida Birding Trail? _____

 How much money did you spend on lodging, food and gas on the above birding trip? \$ _____

 Will you recommend the Trail to friends? _____

Please detach and mail us your valued response to the GFBT address on page 31. **Thank you!**

Birding Ethics

Don't you hate it when the doorbell or telephone rings just as you settle down to dinner or a nap? While mere nuisances to us, disruptions in feeding and nesting routines can spell disaster for birds, especially the cumulative effect of frequent disruptions, a common occurrence at busy sites. When a nesting bird is forced to fly, it may leave eggs or young exposed to temperature extremes or predators. A migratory bird may be exhausted and hungry from a long flight—it needs to rest and eat. With care and common sense, birders can help protect the birds they love to watch.

Consider these points:

- Stay back from concentrations of nesting or loafing waterbirds—a spotting scope may be a better choice than binoculars.
- Walk around groups of birds on the beach rather than forcing them to fly.
- Sit or crouch so that you appear smaller.
- Keep movements slow and steady rather than fast or sporadic.
- If viewing from your car, stay inside as long as possible. It acts as a viewing “blind” and the birds are less likely to fly if they don't recognize you as human.
- Stay on roads, trails and paths to minimize habitat disturbance.
- Do you occasionally use recordings to attract birds? If so, remember not to overuse them, or to try to attract rare or protected species.

Cut along dotted line



For more information...

Or to be added to the mailing list for the Great Florida Birding Trail, fill in the response form (including your name and address on reverse side) and mail to:

Great Florida Birding Trail (or GFBT)
620 South Meridian Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600

OR visit the Trail's Web site at:

www.floridabirdingtrail.com

"Trail Updates" include news on the Trail's progress and Trail-related birding events across the state. Information also is available regarding Trail sponsorship, site nominations for upcoming Trail sections, tips for better birding and the economic impact of this flourishing pastime.

Take part in the development of this great new resource for birders of all levels, while enjoying and ensuring continued concern for the conservation of Florida's fabulous avian treasures!

Birders! Flex your economic muscles!

Florida communities have long made land use choices to attract traditional tourists and their dollars. Birding is big business in Florida too... but communities will only recognize that if we're visible! Your visibility and economic impact can encourage wildlife conservation. Some ways you can make yourself more visible:

- 1) Wear bird t-shirts.
- 2) Take your binoculars into the restaurant with you.
- 3) Ask local residents in restaurants, hotels, gas stations etc. about where good birding locations might be in their area.
- 4) Leave birder calling cards whenever you spend money, helping vendors make the connection between healthy wildlands and healthy economies (cards may be downloaded from www.floridabirdingtrail.com).
- 5) Put a birding bumper sticker or window decal on your car or business. It speaks for itself, so you don't have to!

Conserve birds by watching birds! It's more than a hobby... it's a legacy.

For the Birds!

The Great Florida Birding Trail helps everyone enjoy and conserve Florida's wildlife and wildlife habitat. A donation to the Wildlife Foundation of Florida helps us expand and enhance the Trail experience. With your support, we can continue to protect Florida's natural resources for future generations to enjoy.

If you would like to make a donation, please mail your check to:

Wildlife Foundation of Florida
P.O. Box 6181
Tallahassee, FL 32314-6181

Note: Please write GFBT in the memo section of your check!