

*The Great Florida
Birding Trail Update
Spring 2002*



Coordinator's Note

This spring, the American Birding Association's *Birding* magazine featured the field marks of birders, instead of birds. A follow-up to its study of a decade earlier, this investigation reinforced our knowledge of birders as ideal tourists: well-educated, financially comfortable individuals. More heartening however, were trends showing birding's fastest growing age group is 16-24 years old, and birding's growth is faster in the south than in any other region!

Kudos for these trends: for sharing your enthusiasm with youth in your area; for intriguing passersby who see you scoping roadside mudflats; or for interesting co-workers with a "window list" in your office.

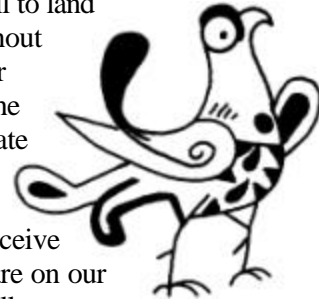
Spring welcomes myriad birding festivals across the state, offering another opportunity to expose friends and family to the wonders of Florida birding. I'll be at several, with bells on. Hope to see you there too!

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**COMING SOON TO A
WILDLAND NEAR YOU:
Progress on the Great Florida
Birding Trail**

East Florida: As you may have noticed, erecting highway signage in this section is taking longer than anticipated. Installation of signs along East Florida highways will hopefully begin this summer. They've been a lot of work, but should be well worth the wait!

WEST FLORIDA: Site acceptances are being distributed in April to land managers throughout this section. After development of the guide, we anticipate a festive kickoff in West Florida this fall. If you receive this update, you are on our mailing list and will automatically receive a copy of the West Florida guide as soon as it is available. Additional copies will be available at sites throughout the state and by request to Beverly at (850) 488-8755 or geistb@gfc.state.fl.us.



PANHANDLE: Site nominations will open for the Panhandle this May. At that time, you can download nomination forms off the Web site (www.floridabirdingtrail.com), or request a paper copy from Bev at the number above. Remember, anyone can nominate a site—ESPECIALLY you!

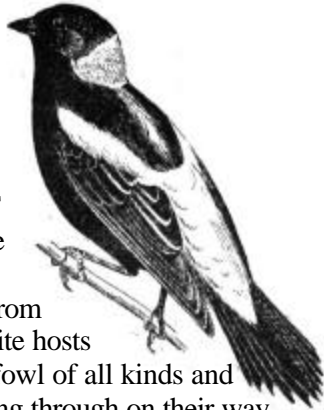
The Mission of the Great Florida Birding Trail is to conserve and enhance Florida's bird habitat by promoting birdwatching activities, conservation education and economic opportunity.

This is a project of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.



News from the East Florida Birding Trail

Fans of Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge's Black Point Wildlife Drive have a new, inland alternative, compliments of **Ocklawaha Valley Audubon, Lake County Commissioner Catherine Hanson** and the **St. Johns Water Management District**. For a limited time this spring, the water management district has agreed to open limited driving access to a portion of their **Emeralda Marsh Conservation Area** (EFBT site #38) near Leesburg. The drive will be open Saturdays and Sundays through April, from 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. This site hosts scads of least bitterns, waterfowl of all kinds and migrants like bobolinks passing through on their way north. Visit this remarkable site for a fun morning of birding by car, and learn about the ambitious restoration efforts being undertaken on this property. [NOTE: the Treasure Island Entrance of this property (EFBT site #39) will be closed due to extensive restoration work for at least 18 months. Please enjoy the balance of this large property in the interim.]



The Audubon Center for Birds of Prey in Maitland (EFBT site #54) recently celebrated its much-anticipated reopening, after extensive renovation and expansion work. The Center offers the opportunity to see rehabilitated raptors of nineteen species, as well as to learn about raptor rehabilitation, life histories and conservation. New hours for the facility are 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Tuesday-

Sunday. If you're in the Orlando area and have the time, indulge in a visit to this unique center. Congratulations to all the Audubon staff and volunteers who worked so hard to make this reopening a reality!

Congratulations to the staff of **E. Dale Joyner Preserve at Pelotes Island** in Jacksonville (EFBT site #6)! This February, they successfully completed the property's first prescribed burn, which removed a thick layer of flammable dead leaves and sticks that could have contributed to dangerous wildfires in the future. As you may know, fire is necessary in Florida ecosystems. Burning will keep this site and its birdlife healthy. The Preserve's Web site, www.pelotes.jea.com displays photos of the burn, and will be updated monthly with photos as the area regenerates! Special kudos to the Preserve's owners, the **Jacksonville Electric Authority**, the **St. Johns River Power Park** and **Florida Power and Light**, for their progressive, ecology-minded management of this site!



Faces of the Trail: Lannie Cardona

Anyone can nominate sites for the Birding Trail: birdwatchers, land owners, land managers... even tourism professionals. Of this last group, few compare with the energy, enthusiasm and environmental outlook of Lannie Cardona.

Tasked with economic development of the Nature Coast, particularly Levy County, Lannie has proven himself both a promotional dynamo and a community conservationist. He quickly recognized nature tourism offers his county its best chance for economic development while



retaining its gorgeous natural character. Since then, he has courted groups from birders to stargazers to enjoy his area's wilderness wonders.

Soft-spoken and insightful, he's as likely likely to ask "will this wildland be good for tourists" as "will tourists be good for this wildland."

For his dedication to sustainable nature tourism in the Big Bend, we recognize Lannie Cardona as one of the many faces of the Great Florida Birding Trail.

Springtime Florida

Birding Festivals

April 26-28 Tallahassee
Welcome Back Songbirds and
Wakulla Wildlife Festival at
Wakulla Springs State Park
(850) 48516

www.floridaconservation.org/festivals/wakulla/index.htm

Teeming with waterbirds, alligators and activities, Wakulla Springs comes alive for this festival celebrating the park's diverse wildlife. Note: reservations are recommended for some trips.

April 27 Lakeland
Welcome Back Songbirds at
Tenoroc Fish Management Area
(863) 6483203

www.floridaconservation.org/festivals/wbstenoroc.htm

A gateway to the Birding Trail, the Tenoroc festival boasts on-site events and off-site fieldtrips, exploring the Lakeland area.

April 11-14 Moore Haven
Big "O" Birding Festival
(863) 9460440

www.gladescountyedc.com/birding/index.htm

This first Okeechobee regional birding festival offers chances to see Florida grasshopper sparrows, burrowing owls, crested caracaras, snail-eating limpkins and more!

April 20 Brooksville
Welcome Back Songbirds at
Chinsegut Nature Center
(352) 754 6722

www.floridaconservation.org/festivals/wbschinsegut.htm

Ninety minutes north of Tampa, this nature center's property shelters woodland migrants galore and offers great educational programs for children and adults at this annual festival!

April 27 Titusville
Welcome Back Songbirds at Merritt
Island National Wildlife Refuge
(321) 8640667 www.floridaconservation.org/festivals/wbsmerritt.htm

Another gateway to the Birding Trail, Merritt Island NWR's festival offers likely sightings of reddish egrets, Florida scrub jays, roseate spoonbills and bald eagles, not to mention speakers and activities for kids and adults!

This update made possible, in part, by:

World Famous Dixie Crossroads Seafood Restaurant

Minutes from Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and Canaveral National Seashore. More than 40 Great Florida Birding Trail sites within a one-hour drive.

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