

Kite Tales



Summer 2015 Volume 7 Issue 1

Beat the Heat!

Most people try to avoid being outdoors during the hot summer months but if you keep a cool head and follow a few basic tips, birding and wildlife viewing at this time of year can be very rewarding. Wildlife is at its most active early in the morning when it's cooler, so head out on the trail early before the sun gets high. Visit the coast on windy days or hike well shaded forest. If that is not your cup of tea then stay at home, sit back and relax at home with a refreshing ice tea and watch hummingbirds and other wildlife visiting your garden. Birding and wildlife viewing does not have to be restricted to daylight hours, so go out at night; you will be surprised by how many animals there are for you to see and hear; Owls, nighthawks, rails, frogs, crickets, foxes...etc.

In this issue of Kite Tales we feature four wonderful birding trail sites that provide great experiences during the summer months, wonderful photographs from our first Great Florida



Northern Male Cardinal by Andy Wraithmell, FWC.

Birding and Wildlife Trail festival, as well as pictures sent in by our talented readers, and, we are delighted to introduce our new Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail Coordinator, Whitney Gray. We have two new feature articles which will appear in all future issues of Kite Tales; One highlights our Wings Over Florida program and includes tips on how you can increase your life list, and the other, the Birding Guru features

tips on bird identification and where to go see specific species.

We hope you enjoy reading this latest issue of Kites Tales, thanks for subscribing and supporting the Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail.

See you on the trail!

Andy Wraithmell and Whitney Gray - Office of Public Access and Wildlife Viewing



Visit our Facebook page at facebook.com/floridabirdingtrail

FloridaBirdingTrail.com



Featured Trail Sites (Summer)

Panhandle Section

Naval Air Station Pensacola:

Trout Point Nature Trail

The pleasant Trout Point Nature Trail follows a boardwalk for 0.5 miles through the interdune area, providing a unique view of sandy shoreline on one side and freshwater marsh and open water on the other. Wading birds like night-herons and Snowy Egrets work the marshes, while the beachfront attracts shorebirds, terns and gulls. Pines along the waterfront trail are worth checking for feeding songbirds and Brown-headed Nuthatches. This nature trail is part of Pensacola Naval Air Station and occasional noise from aircraft should be expected. At the entrance security gate,

tell the security officer you are visiting Trout Point Nature Trail. Heightened security levels may limit access, so call ahead for information.

http://floridabirdingtrail.com/index.php/trip/trail/Naval_Air_Station_Pensacola_Trout_Point_Nature_Trail/

West Section

Jennings Bluff Tract

Located in northeast Hamilton County near the Georgia border, the entrance road for the Jennings Bluff Tract leads gradually down through upland hardwood forest to a trail along the slow, tannic Alapaha River (emphasis on the 2nd syllable). Other habitats include hydric hammock, scrubby flatwoods, sandhills and open field. Northern Bobwhite, Acadian Flycatcher, Yellow-throated

Vireo, Hooded Warbler and Yellow-billed Cuckoo all breed here in summer. Migratory songbirds pepper the woods in spring and fall. Watch for Cooper's Hawk, Eastern Wild Turkey and Gopher Tortoise; botany enthusiasts will enjoy searching for Needle Palm and Atamasco Lily. Miles of administrative roads along the Alapaha River, Dead River and near the entrance road can be explored by foot, bicycle or horseback. A canoe launch is available to paddle the Alapaha River. This site is managed by the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD). http://floridabirdingtrail.com/index.php/trip/trail/Jennings_Bluff_Tract/

East Section

Honest John's Fish Camp

Honest John's Fish Camp offers unique access to the Mullet Creek Islands in the Indian River Lagoon. Wading birds use the mangrove-lined islands as roosts and rookeries. These can be viewed by small motorboat, kayak or canoe (available for rent on-site). As nesting and resting birds are particularly vulnerable to disturbance, this is an opportunity to view them while learning about responsible birding, which benefits birds and birders alike. A few of the species you're likely to encounter include Anhinga, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Tricolored Heron, Great Blue Heron, both Black- and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons, White Ibises and Roseate Spoonbill. Overhead, watch for Magnificent Frigatebird, Bald Eagle and



Prairie Warbler by Andy Wraithmell, FWC.



Roseate Spoonbill. Photo by Tom Dunkerton.

Wood Stork. Manatees and dolphins are often present in the lagoon's canals. The islands are accessible by boat year-round. [http://floridabirdingtrail.com/index.php/trip/trail/Honest Johns Fish Camp/](http://floridabirdingtrail.com/index.php/trip/trail/Honest_Johns_Fish_Camp/) More information on responsible birding: http://floridabirdingtrail.com/index.php/conservation/birding_ethics/

South Section
Spirit-of-the-wild Wildlife Management Area (WMA)

With thousands of acres of restored pastures and grasslands, plus flatwoods, wetlands and hardwood/palm hammocks, Spirit-of-the-Wild WMA is another vital component in the region's mosaic of conservation lands benefitting the Florida Black Bear, Florida Panther and other species. This site is also one of four new GFBWT destinations in Hendry

County, making the Lake Okeechobee region one of the hottest up-and-coming destinations for wildlife watching in Florida. Miles of unpaved loop roads make this WMA a fun destination for car birding; roads are open to the public all year and are generally passable for two-wheel-drive vehicles. Hikers have lots of options on numbered trails on the eastern portion of the property as well. Visitors may encounter breeding Swallow-tailed Kite,

Crested Caracara, Northern Bobwhite, Snowy Egret, Eastern Meadowlark, and Loggerhead Shrike, plus Mottled Duck, Wood Stork, Sandhill Crane, Pileated Woodpecker, Common Ground-

Dove, and Sedge Wren. As you wander, also look for Osceola Wild Turkey and White-tailed Deer; lucky viewers may also see (or at least find evidence of) Bobcat, Northern River Otter, Big Cypress Fox Squirrel or Marsh Rabbit. Fireflies have been known to put on impressive shows here as evening falls, as hordes of Florida Cricket Frogs serenade you with their insect-like calls. Seasonal hunting (fall and winter) occurs at this site, go to web link below for dates, regulations and more information. Download or request a map of the property and a bird checklist from the FWC website, or pick them up from the kiosk at the main entrance on CR 832.

http://floridabirdingtrail.com/index.php/trip/trail/z119_spirit-of-the-wild_wildlife_management_area/



Northern Bobwhite. Photo by Tom Dunkerton.

They're Birding Trail Approved!



Purchase new GFBWT approved binoculars and a portion of the sale will support the trail program and conservation projects. Offered through a partnership with Opticron USA.

Opticron's T3 Trailfinder 8 X 42 is the most popular birding trail approved binocular, which is no surprise to us as it is the perfect all-round birding trail binocular for watching birds and wildlife in Florida's wooded habitats.



Opticron USA is staffed by a small but dedicated team of professional optics experts who stock, demonstrate and sell their equipment.
opticronusa.com/Pages/dealers.html

opticron
www.opticronusa.com

You can order birding trail approved binoculars today from the Wildlife Foundation of Florida:
wildlifefoundationofflorida.com/birding

OR in person at these locations:

Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary,
Naples. (239)-348-9151

Delray Camera Shop,
(561)-278-3331

Gumbo Limbo Nature Center,
Boca Raton. (561)-544-8605

Hobe Sound Nature Reserve,
(772)-546-2067

Meet Whitney Gray, the NEW Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail coordinator!

I'm a 5th generation Floridian originally from Clearwater in Pinellas County. My grandparents introduced me to nature viewing at an early age, teaching me trees, birds, and flowers in backyards and state and county parks nearby. As a kid, my idols were Jacques Cousteau, Eugenie Clark, and Jane Goodall. I dreamed of being a marine biologist, of watching and studying wildlife.

I received my Bachelor's degree in zoology from the University of Florida in 1985, and taught middle and high school for a few years before starting a family. I volunteered with the Junior League of Clearwater-Dunedin for many years with an emphasis on environmental projects and advocacy. I served on the City of Clearwater's Environmental Advisory Board, and eventually was elected to the Clearwater City Commission in 2001. I served one term before a job change for my husband took us to Ft. Myers.

In Ft. Myers I "hit the reset button" and began the science career I had wanted since childhood. I studied wetland delineation and coastal ecosystems. I entered a graduate program and received a Master's degree in Environmental Engineering Sciences with an emphasis on Systems Ecology from the

University of Florida. I worked for 4 years for the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council as an Environmental Scientist/Planner on regional environmental studies and climate change.

In 2012, I took a position as Sea Level Rise Coordinator, shared between FWC and Florida Sea Grant and moved to Tallahassee. In this position, I was able to work statewide, bringing climate change to the forefront of long term planning for FWC and Florida Sea Grant. With my teammates, I produced an educational seminar series for FWC staff on the potential effects of climate change on Florida's ecosystems. I worked to help people – from wildlife and habitat managers to school teachers to the general public – understand how climate change might affect their lives and work.

All along the way, I have enjoyed being outdoors in my leisure, birdwatching, photographing wildflowers and butterflies, and looking at the connections



Brown Pelican by David Moynahan.

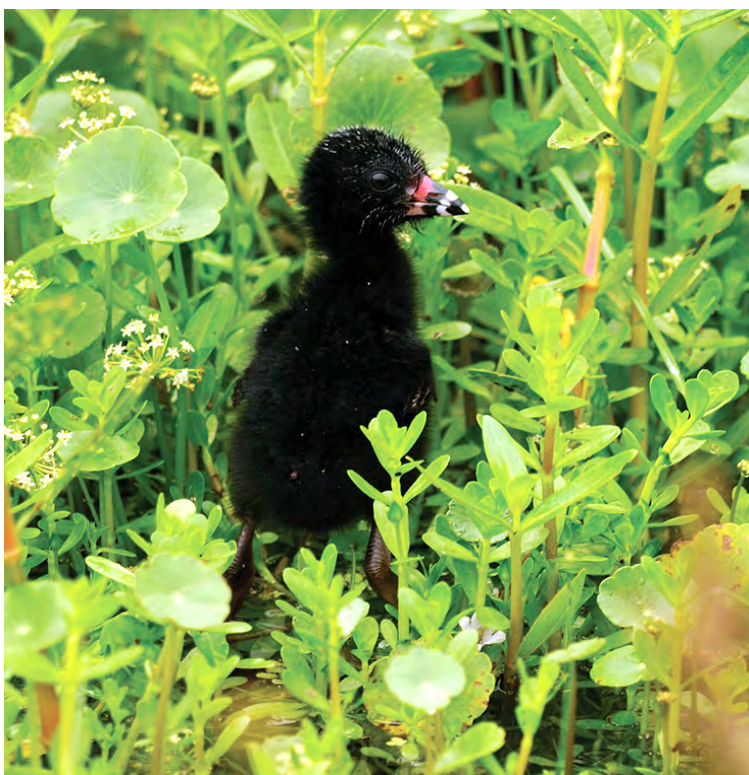
between what we typically see as disparate pieces of nature. These pieces are connected, parts of systems, that people are connected to as well. Not only do we influence nature, it influences us, recharges us, renews us.

"Keep close to Nature's heart... and break clear away, once in awhile, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean." John Muir



Experience the Trail

Thanks to all the photographers who contributed to this month's **Experience the Trail!**



Purple Gallinule by Tom Dunkerton



Burrowing Owl at Brian Piccolo Park in Cooper City by Jim Eager – Jim digiscoped this image during the Everglades Birding Festival in January 2015

Contact Us:

Anne Glick, section leader
Anne.Glick@MyFWC.com
850-922-0664

Whitney Gray, trail coordinator
Whitney.Gray@MyFWC.com
850-488-9478

Andy Wraithmell, wildlife viewing
program specialist
Andy.Wraithmell@MyFWC.com
850-488-9453

Michael Overstreet,
publications
Michael.Overstreet@MyFWC.com
850-488-8755



Roseate Spoonbill in flight at J. N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge by Alex Chester



Above - *Blue Dasher dragonfly* by *Melissa James*

Below Left - *Yellow-crowned Night Heron* by *Angelina Thompson*

Below Right - *Green Heron* (the 2015 American Birding Association Bird of the Year) taken in Pensacola by *Pamela Beasley*



Have a picture to contribute to this quarterly feature? Send a high resolution jpeg (1MB or larger) to Wildlifeviewing@myfwc.com by October 15th, 2014 for inclusion in our winter issue, and include where you took the picture and a short caption. Native Florida wildlife only please! We can feature up to six images per issue; all unused images will be kept on file for future issues.

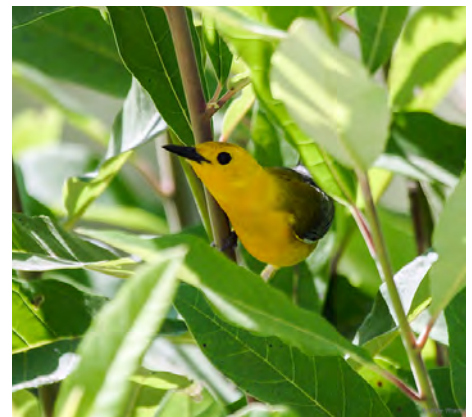
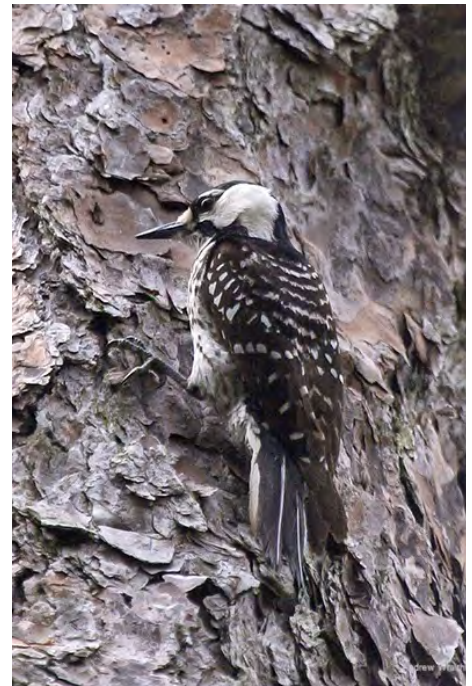
Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail's inaugural Chipola Feather Fest

The Chipola Feather Fest took place from Friday, April 24th to Sunday, April 26th 2015. We offered a variety of field trips, workshops and social activities to birders and wildlife viewers from all over Florida and beyond! We enjoyed Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Bachman's Sparrow, Swallow-tailed Kite, Mississippi Kite, Swainson's Warbler, Least Bittern, Purple Gallinule, Gopher Tortoise, Fox Squirrel, American Alligator, and much, much more. There were some stand out experiences during the festival, which included a Coyote chasing White-tailed Deer at Apalachee Wildlife Management Area, Cliff Swallows feeding their young at the Jim Woodruff Dam on Lake Seminole and one field trip found Jackson County's first ever White-faced Ibis, a rare visitor to Florida from the western United States.



The festival was organized and supported by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Wildlife Foundation of Florida, Jackson County Tourist Development Council, Chipola College, and Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce.

Next year's Chipola Feather Fest will take place between April 15th and 17th 2016. Be sure to visit the festival website and Facebook page for more information and for details on how to register (registration will go live in October 2015).



Birding Trail Merchandise

Trail Guides in the palm of your hand

The Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail now fits in the palm of your hand! This 2 GB flash drive is perfect for the traveling birder and wildlife viewer. It comes loaded with all four GFBWT guidebooks and Bird Watching Basics, and has plenty of extra storage room. Get yours today and start planning your next Florida birding and wildlife adventure!



MyGFBT - Our Facebook page has 10,400 fans, who enjoy regular features such as Species Spotlight, Fans Photo Albums, Trail News and Trail Site of the Week. Visit our page and click the Like icon to receive MyGFBT posts on your Facebook wall.
facebook.com/floridabirdingtrail



MyGFBT - As of writing we are over 3,000 followers on twitter. Follow MyGFBT for tweets on conservation news, trail news, anecdotes, birding news and more.
twitter.com/mygfbt



MyGFBT - We now have an Instagram account.
instagram.com/greatfloridabirdingtrail

Kite T-Shirt

Adorning this new GFBWT t-shirt are two majestic Swallow-tailed Kites soaring above the Peace River. This shirt is the first in a new “Wild About Florida” series. Don’t miss out on this one! Color: Sky Blue. You can order the flash drive or t-shirt at wildlifeFlorida.com/catalog18.



Mark Kiser, FWC



**“WHOO”
needs
a room?**

**Help
support
wildlife
conservation!**

wildlifeFoundationofFlorida.com/birding

Help us keep Kite Tales aloft.

Please consider sending a tax-deductible donation to the Wildlife



Foundation of Florida on behalf of the Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail.

Please make checks (in U.S. funds only) to the Wildlife Foundation of Florida, with “GFBWT/Kite Tales” written in the memo section of your check. Please send to:

**Wildlife Foundation of Florida
Attention: GFBWT**
P.O. Box 6181
Tallahassee, FL 32314-6181

Wings Over Florida: Bird Listing Recognition Program

Wings Over Florida is a free bird listing recognition program open to birders from Florida and beyond. Its purpose is to encourage you, your friends and family to explore Florida looking for new native birds to enjoy and add to your list. As your list grows and you gain experience we hope that your birding skills will improve and, you will earn increasing levels of recognition. We award full color certificates at seven levels; six life list certificates and one big year certificate.

For more information on this fun program, visit our website. <http://floridabirdingtrail.com/index.php/resources/wings/>.

New Mangrove Cuckoo certificate coming soon! Artwork by Rafael Glavez.

In this issue of Kite Tales we would like to recognize the following Wings Over Florida participants who were awarded certificates between April and June 2015.

Northern Cardinal level (50 to 149 species)

Keith Richardson
June Scroggin
Bonnie McKnight
Sigurd Olsen
Dan B

Florida Scrub-Jay level (150 to 249 species)

Ted Yeatts
Emily Angell
Marie Lauzau
Marlo Hill
Michelle Dent

Black Skimmer level (250 to 299 species)

Roy Peterson

Reddish Egret level (300 to 349 species)

Harry Hooper

Congratulations to you all!



Mangrove Cuckoos (Coccyzus minor) in Red Mangrove (Rhizophora mangle)

Wings Over Florida Application Form

See instructions and official rules before completing. Please print or type all information CLEARLY.

NAME: _____ AGE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____ COUNTRY: _____

EMAIL: _____ BIRDING EXPERIENCE (YEARS): _____

CERTIFICATE LEVEL YOU ARE APPLYING FOR (check all that apply)*

*Qualifying limits in parentheses

NORTHERN CARDINAL (50 – 149) FLORIDA SCRUB-JAY (150 – 249)

BLACK SKIMMER (250 – 299) REDDISH EGRET (300 – 349)

SWALLOW-TAILED KITE (350 – 399) MANGROVE CUCKOO (400+)

2015 BIG YEAR (200+) only species seen in 2015 qualify for this certificate

NUMBER OF SPECIES CHECKED OFF ON YOUR CHECKLIST? _____

(Remember exotic species do not count for Wings Over Florida)

I state that all of the birds I have marked in my "Checklist of Florida's Birds" booklet were observed by me and all information included in this application is true and correct. In making this application for recognition of bird species I have observed and indentified, I authorize the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to use this information for research, informational and other public purposes.

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE: _____

PARENT OR TEACHER'S SIGNATURE: _____

(applicants age 12 or younger)

DATE OF APPLICATION: _____

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT WINGS OVER FLORIDA?

Checklist of Florida's Birds Facebook Twitter Google

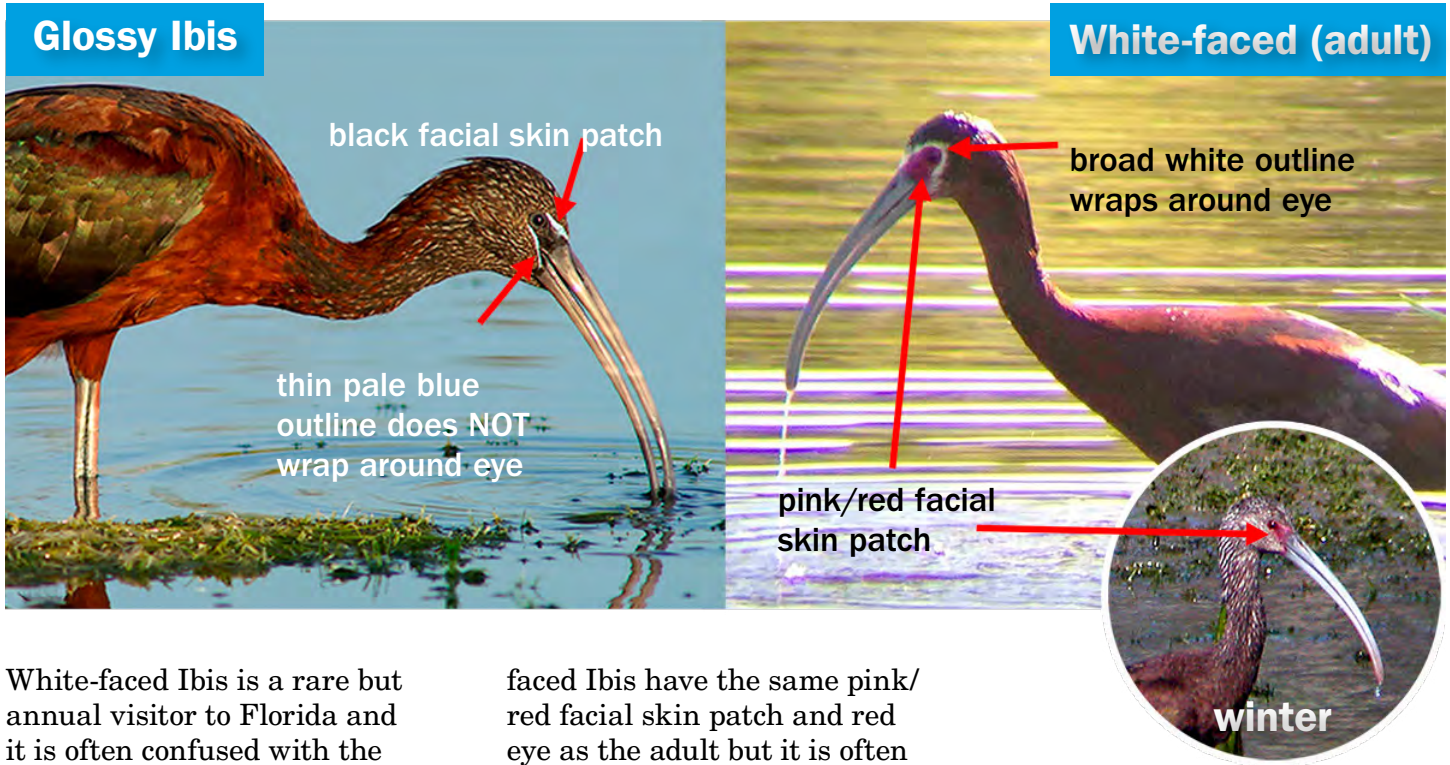
Festival/Event Kite Tales Gov Delivery Friend/Family

Website Other (Please indicate) _____

The Birding Guru

Andy Wraithmell has been a birder for over 30 years. In this feature he will provide birding tips that will help improve your birding skills and help you find Florida's most sought after species.

Identification challenge – Glossy Ibis versus White-faced Ibis



White-faced Ibis is a rare but annual visitor to Florida and it is often confused with the more common and very similar looking Glossy Ibis. Both of these species have nearly identical plumages but the color of the skin patch and the thin pale border that surrounds it, differs dramatically. Adult Glossy Ibis have a black skin patch with a thin pale blue outline above and below, but not behind the eye. Adult White-faced Ibis have a pink/red skin patch with a broad white outline, which wraps completely around their red eye. Glossy Ibis have a dark eye. In the winter White-faced Ibis lose the white outline. Immature birds can be difficult to tell apart without good scope views in good light. Immature White-

faced Ibis have the same pink/red facial skin patch and red eye as the adult but it is often darker and can be difficult to see, especially if the bird is feeding and has a wet face. A majority of Florida's White-faced Ibis records are from St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge in the panhandle, between October and April.

Focus Point – Florida Scrub-Jay

We often get asked where specific species can be found on the trail, it is a question we are always happy to help with. Let's take a look at the best sites around the state where one can find our only endemic bird, the Florida Scrub-Jay (endemic means that it occurs nowhere

else). Florida Scrub-Jays can be found year-round throughout much of the peninsula from Ocala National Forest down to the Lake Okeechobee region. Scrub-Jays are specialists and are only found at trail sites that have well-managed oak scrub or shrub-scrub habitats. The jays form cooperative family groups, working together as a team to raise their young. Family members take turns as sentinel, their job is to perch at the top of a high vantage point and watch out for predators (such as Cooper's Hawks), while the rest of the family forages for acorns, berries, lizards, and insects. If a predator should appear the sentinel issues an



Photo by Tom Dunkerton

Florida Scrub-Jays are federally endangered with a population of approximately 8,000 individuals.

alarm call and the jays take cover until danger has passed. Scrub-Jays are hoarders! When oak acorns are plentiful they collect and stash them in the ground so that they can return and eat them when other food supplies are low. Naturally, the jays cannot remember where they have stashed all their acorns. The ones that remain buried eventually grow into an oak tree. Scrub-Jays are scrub habitat gardeners! However, if the scrub becomes too dense and tall, it becomes less attractive to the jays and in areas with large tracts of scrub, the jays will move to a more suitable area. For thousands of years scrub has been shaped by the weather. During

thunderstorms lightning strikes would cause the scrub to catch fire thinning it out. Now that much of Florida's scrub habitat is close to where people live, land managers replicate natural fire, often called prescribed fire, to maintain healthy habitat, as well as to prevent wildfires in populated areas.

Here is a sample of trail sites where Florida Scrub-Jays can be found. Visit our website for more information www.floridabirdingtrail.com

Scrub Jay Hot Spots

Cedar Key Scrub State Reserve

Ocala National Forest: Salt Springs

Seminole State Forest

Lyonia Preserve

Lake Monroe Conservation Area: Brickyard Slough Tract

North Peninsula State Park

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

Buck Lake Conservation Area: East Entrance

The Nature Conservancy's Disney Wilderness Preserve

Malabar Scrub Sanctuary

St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park

North Sebastian Conservation Area

Wabasso Scrub Conservation Area

Indrio Savannahs Preserve

Oscar Scherer State Park

Tippecanoe Environmental Park

Lake Wales Ridge State Forest: Arbuckle Tract

Hickey's Creek Mitigation Park

Jonathan Dickinson State Park

Create Habitat for Wildlife

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are already heading south from their breeding grounds; in Florida peak migration is from mid-July to late August. This is the perfect time to experience them visiting your flower garden and/or your hummingbird feeder. Hummingbirds are attracted to colors with a red hue; so use a feeder or plant native plants that have red, purple, and/or orange flowers. There are hundreds of different plants you can put in your garden that will attract these beautiful and fascinating birds. My favorites are the Firebush and the Pineapple Sage. We recommend that you plant natives as these provide greater benefit to Florida's wildlife. For more information on gardening for hummingbirds and other wildlife, visit our Create Habitat for Wildlife at Home page. MyFWC.com/viewing/habitat/



Photo by Judy Lyle



Photo by Judy Lyle



Photo by Judy Lyle