

## **Places to go to Photograph Birds**

By Tom Murray

### **Sweetwater Wetlands – Gainesville**

I have gone to Sweetwater many times. You can walk more than 3.5 miles of crushed gravel trails and boardwalks and experience the lush landscapes from viewing platforms.

Hours: Daily 7:00AM – sunset

Fee: \$5.00 per car or \$2.00 per person

### **Gatorland – Orlando**

There is a Bird Rookery with a wooden boardwalk through a breeding marsh

In spring, you'll see Cattle Egrets, Tri-colored Herons, Little Blue Herons, Anhinga, Cormorants, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, and Roseate Spoonbills

Hours: 10:00AM – 5:00PM

Fee: Seniors \$32.00

### **LaChua Trail – Payne's Prairie Preserve S.P. – near Gainesville**

This is a 2.9 mile out and back trail. Very popular area for birding and hiking.

You may see Limpkin, Snail Kites, Purple Galline, Common Moorhen, American Coot, and Sandhill Cranes

Fee: \$4.00 per vehicle

### **Circle B Reserve – near Lakeland**

Enjoy a 4.8 mile trail – generally considered an easy route that averages an hour and a half to complete. This is a popular birding trail - there are also smaller trails – 10 in all.

Fee: FREE

### **Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive**

11- mile one-way drive with lots of wildlife and birds

Open Fridays, Saturday, Sunday 7:00AM – 3:00PM

All vehicles must exit the drive by 5:00PM

Fee: FREE

### **Orlando Wetlands – Christmas, Florida**

650 acres with a new 2,200 foot Cypress Trail boardwalk. You walk over the wetlands and you'll see lots of birds and wildlife

Hours: Tuesday through Sunday sunrise to sunset

### **Alligator Farm – St. Augustine**

Hours: opens 9:00AM

Fee: \$35.00

There's a lot more to see than just birds.

Great Egrets arrive mid-February. Roseate Spoonbills as early as mid-January

Yellow-Crowned Night Heron during the winter and early spring months

Tri-Colored Herons – nests tend to be about 13 feet off the ground which is perfect eye-level in the swamp

The best time to see babies in end of April and first part of May

You don't need a long-lens to shoot birds at this location.

### **Ocala Wetlands Recharge Park**

2105 NW 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Ocala

Hours: sunrise to sunset

Fee: FREE

2 ½ mile boardwalk and paved walking trails with wildlife overlooks

There's a new pavilion and dome-shaped structure filled with photos and fascinating information

### **Tuscawilla Park – Ocala**

Situated just north of Ocala Square

There are walkways around Lake Tuscawilla which is full of ducks and other birds

Park is also home to both Reilly Arts Center and Discovery Science Center