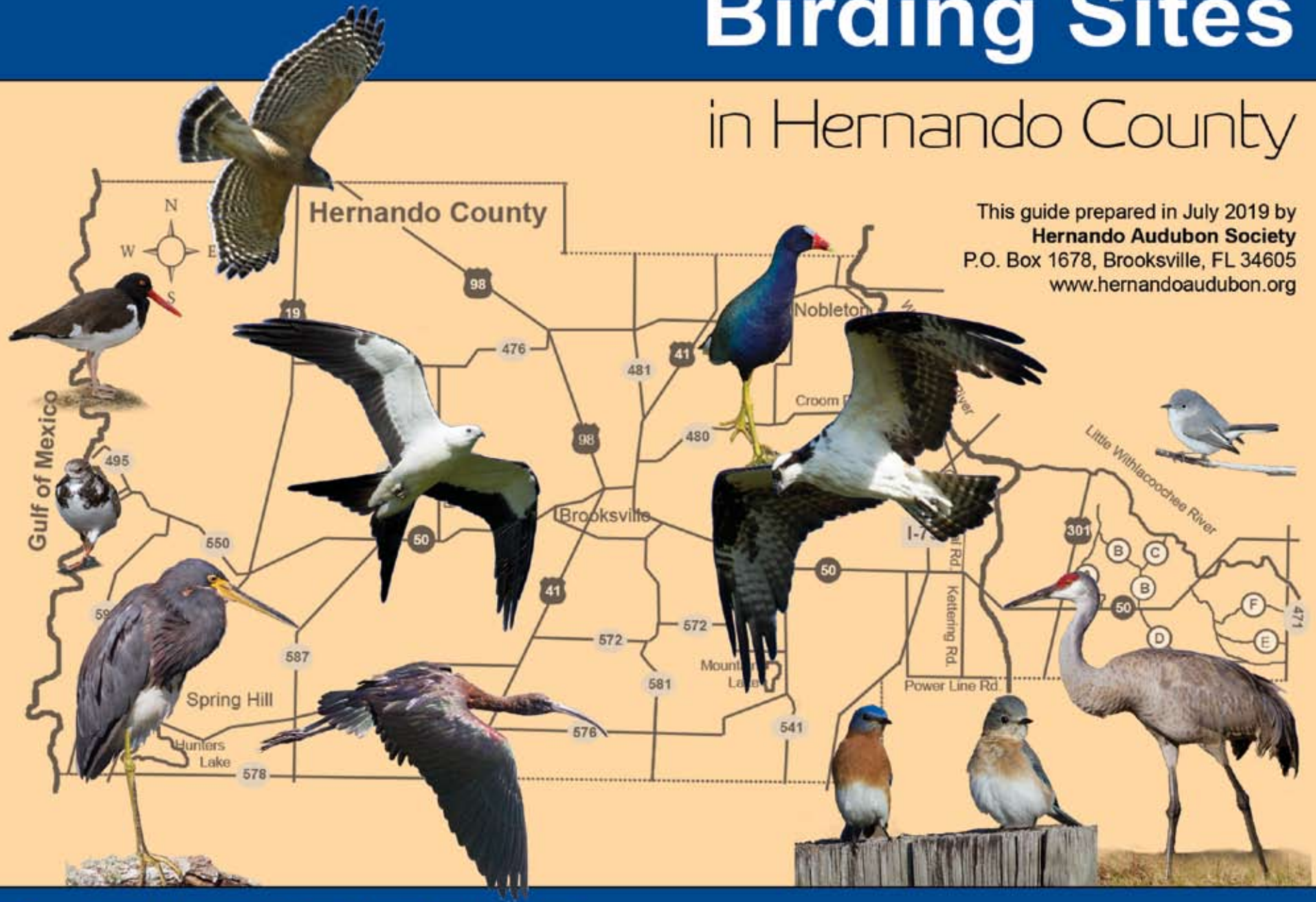


Birding Sites

in Hernando County

This guide prepared in July 2019 by
Hernando Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1678, Brooksville, FL 34605
www.hernandoaudubon.org



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This booklet is designed to help local and visiting birders by indicating the localities and times of year when birds are most likely to be found in Hernando County. The accompanying checklist indicates the seasonal distribution and probability of finding each species in suitable habitat.

BIRDING SITES IN HERNANDO COUNTY

This pamphlet is designed to help local and visiting birders by indicating the localities and times of year when birds are most likely to be found in Hernando County. The bird checklist that starts on page 17 indicates the seasonal distribution and the probability of finding each species in suitable habitat.

In addition to birds that live here year round, neotropical migrants pass through the area during the spring and fall, while other birds are resident here only in winter, and still other birds arrive for summer nesting. Spring migration begins in early March and lasts through mid-May. Fall migration starts in August and continues through October. The best time to look for birds is during the relatively cool early morning hours, when most birds are actively feeding.

Of the many locations for watching birds described in this pamphlet, the following are particularly recommended. **Pine Island** is the best area for birds that prefer saltwater. **Weekiwachee Preserve** attracts many resident birds, as well as spring and fall migrants. **Withlacoochee State Forest** has many resident birds, including Red-cockaded and Pileated woodpeckers, Barred and Great Horned owls, Eastern Screech-Owls, and Bachman's Sparrows. **Bystre Lake** draws a variety of waterfowl in the winter, and herons, egrets, Osprey, Bald Eagles, and Barred Owls much of the year.

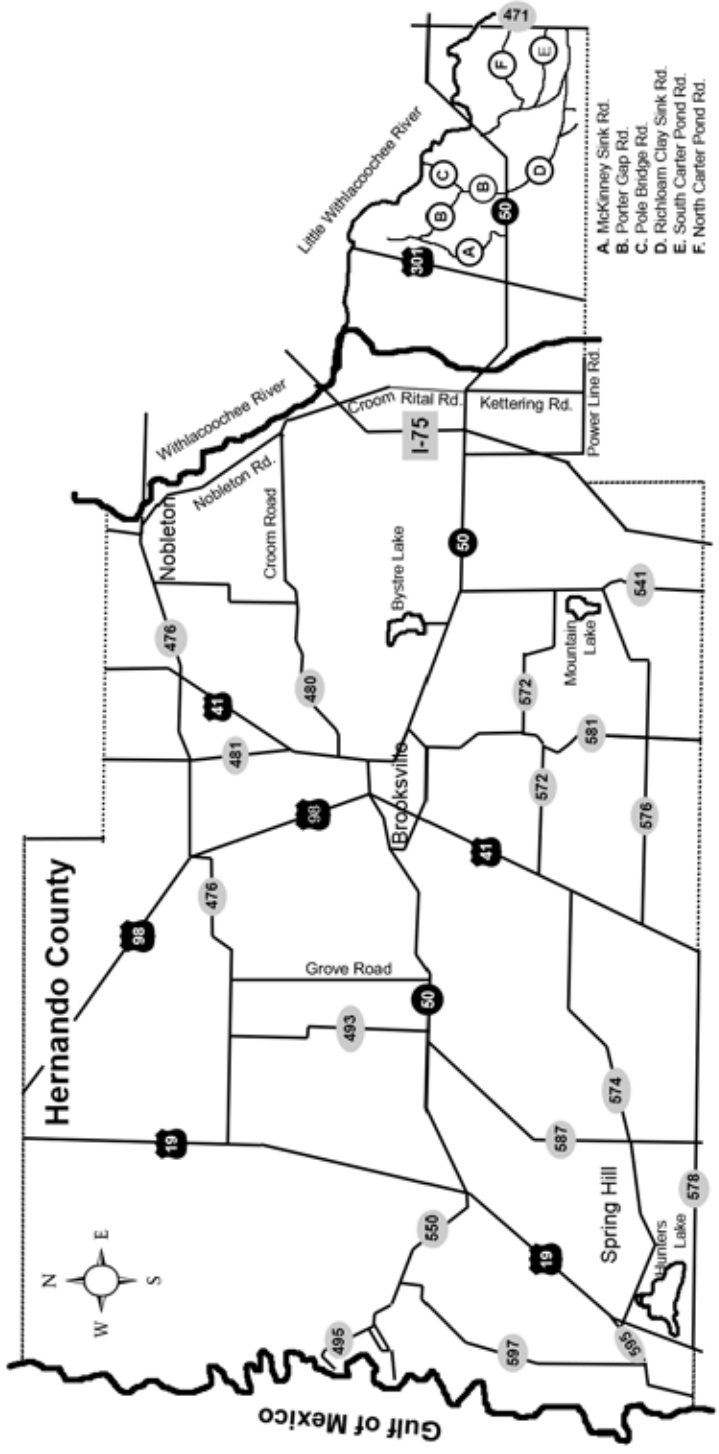
Suggested birding sites in close proximity have been grouped, with directions and mileage given from one site to the next in a continuous route. When you are deviating from this route to explore only one site or to pinpoint a search for a specific bird, it is suggested that you obtain a map of the county, so that you can plan a more direct route to the spot.

When planning a birding trip, you may want to consider what birds you particularly want to see, and visit those sites early in the morning to maximize your chances of finding the desired birds. When looking for birds in areas that do not have parking spaces, it is recommended that you pull off the road completely before stopping.

Hernando County maps are available from Hernando County Tourism Bureau: 352-754-4405 or 800-601-4580. If any unusual birds are sighted, please report them to eBird.org, with details about the species, location, and date of the sighting. Contact the Hernando Audubon Society at P.O. Box 1678, Brooksville, FL 34605 or hernandoaudubonpresident@gmail.com. Visit the Hernando Audubon Society website: <http://www.hernandoaudubon.org/> and Facebook.

COASTAL SWAMP

Paralleling the Gulf of Mexico and extending inland 4 to 6 miles are tidal marshes, including the Aripeka, Weeki Wachee, and Chassahowitzka swamps. Aside from the residential developments in Hernando Beach and along the Weeki Wachee



Note: The only roads shown on this map are those that are mentioned in the text.

River, much of the county's coastal area is sparsely populated and relatively wild, with few roads, making access for bird watching difficult. The area is underlain by limestone with elevations up to 10 feet, covered by tidal marshes, many small springs, and drainage runs. The vegetation is primarily salt marsh grasses, with palms, pines, cedars, and mixed hardwoods in hammocks.

To reach **Pine Island Park**, 7.5 miles from the traffic light at the intersection of US-19 and SR-50, go west on CR-550. At a junction in 5 miles, veer right onto CR-495 (Pine Island Drive). Unfortunately, there are very few places you can safely pull off



Reddish Egret

this road, but as you drive, look and listen along the salt marsh for rails, waders, and shorebirds. When you reach the houses, check the power lines. At the end of the road (2.5 miles), 10800 Pine Island Drive, there is a 3-acre county park (open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.; \$5 parking fee until 5 p.m.). This is the only publicly accessible sand beach with an open view of the gulf in the county. Birding is best early in the morning, as soon as the park opens, before the birds are flushed by sunbathers. Check for rails, shorebirds, gulls, terns, herons and egrets, including an occasional Reddish Egret. At very low tide American Oystercatchers may feed just beyond the platform. There are restrooms and picnic tables here.

More information for Pine Island Park and all other Hernando County Parks can be obtained here: phone: 352-754-4027;

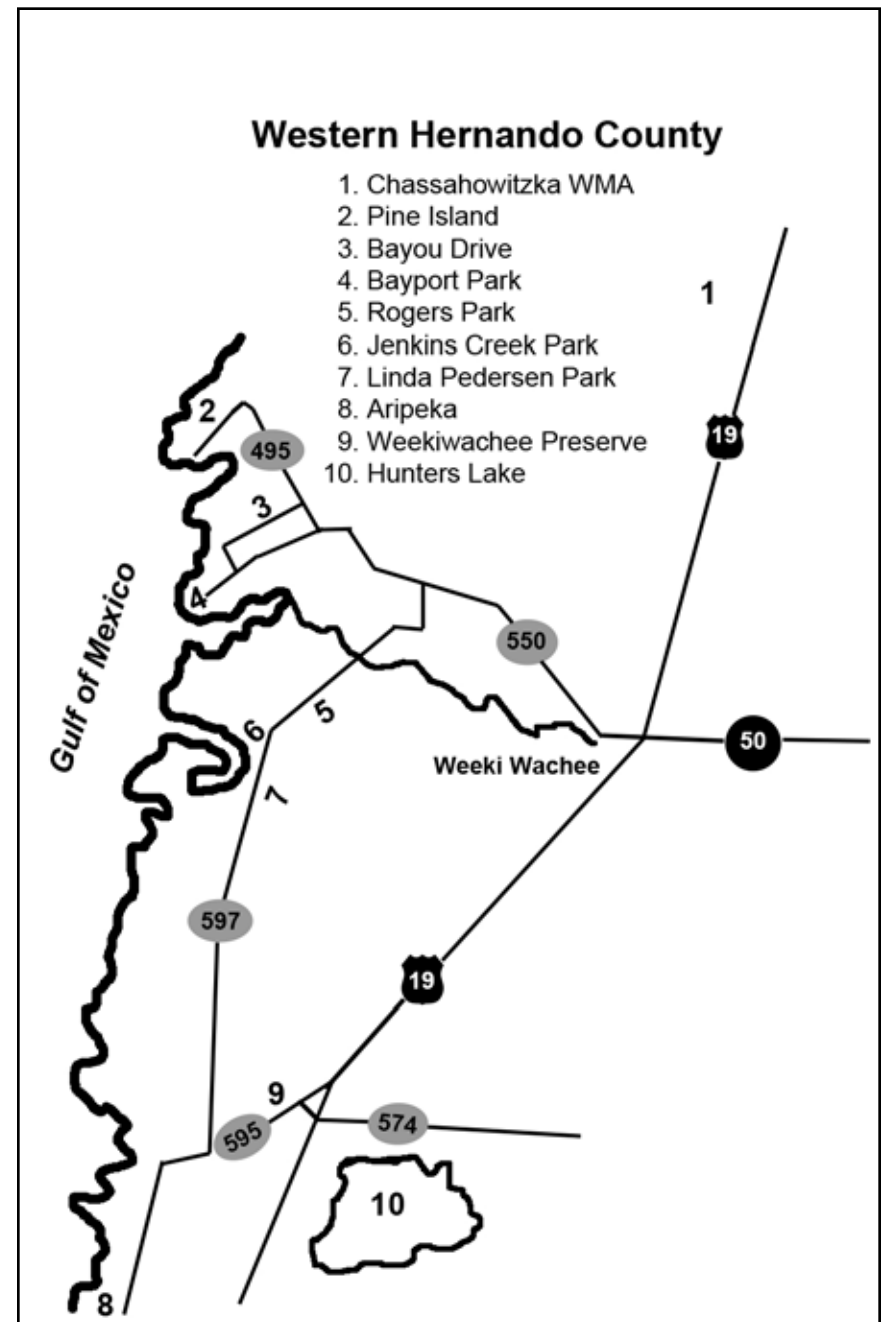
website: www.hernandocounty.us/departments/departments-n-z/parks-and-recreation/park-preserve

Reverse your route, and just before reaching the intersection with CR-550, turn right onto **Bayou Drive**, a one-mile loop that offers more views of salt marshes, before ending on CR-550. At dusk, Great Horned Owls sometimes perch on snags, and in daytime Bald Eagles or Ospreys are occasionally on the same snags. The wooded area on the left sometimes has migrants.

At the end of Bayou Drive, turn right onto CR-550 to **Bayport Park**, 4140 Cortez Boulevard (1.3 miles). In winter and early spring, look for Common Loons, Horned Grebes, Hooded and Red-breasted mergansers, and Bufflehead. At low tide, American Oystercatchers are occasionally seen feeding on the



American Oystercatcher



distant oyster bars. A Bald Eagle sometimes perches on the prominent snag across the river from the pier. Songbirds are found in the wooded area near the kayak launch and boardwalk. Occasionally manatees can be seen here. There are restrooms and picnic tables in this 7-acre park. Parking is free unless you are launching a boat.

Return north on CR-550 1.6 miles to the junction with CR-495, bear right, and continue east on CR-550 another 1.6 miles to a right (south) turn onto CR-597 (Shoal Line Boulevard). **Rogers Park**, 7244 Shoal Line Boulevard on the left in 1.5 miles (\$5 parking fee), provides access to the Weeki Wachee River. The current is fast-running at 9 miles per hour, but it is possible to canoe or motor boat 7.5 miles upstream close to its source in Weeki Wachee Springs. En route birds that may be seen are Ospreys, herons, egrets, and occasionally Wood Storks



Wood Stork

and Limpkins, as well as alligators, river otters, and manatees. Alternately, canoes can be rented from the parking lot of Weeki Wachee Springs State Park, with a pick-up at Rogers Park. It is also possible to head downstream from Rogers Park to the boat ramp at Bayport Park, mentioned above, but fewer birds will likely be seen. There are restrooms and picnic tables in 3-acre Rogers Park.

Another 0.9 mile further south on CR-597 is 3-acre **Jenkins Creek Park** on the right, 6401 Shoal Line Boulevard (\$5 parking fee). Look for birds on both sides of the footbridge, and for waterfowl in the creek. Visit 135-acre **Linda Pedersen Park** at Jenkins Creek across the road, 6300 Shoal Line Boulevard (\$5 parking fee). There a forty-foot-high observation tower provides a panoramic view of the marsh. There is a second entrance to this park 0.2 mile further south. At low tide in winter, rails are sometimes seen in the marsh grass to the east of the road, after the U-turn, but before reaching the parking lot with restrooms. The oaks in this park sometimes attract songbirds. On cold days, manatees may be seen in the canal west of the swimming area. Both parks have restrooms and picnic tables.

Proceed south on CR-597 until it ends at the intersection with CR-595 (Osowaw Boulevard). Turn right and go 2 miles to the first of two bridges in Aripeka, at the Pasco County line. Watch for Ospreys and waders en route.

GULF COASTAL LOWLANDS

The Gulf Coastal Lowlands are a discontinuous area between the Coastal Swamp and the Brooksville Ridge, with an elevation of between 10 and 50 feet. The area is mostly palmetto and pine flatwoods with numerous small ponds in areas of broad, grassy sloughs. There is some patchy development.

Southwest Florida Water Management District (known as Swiftmud) has purchased over 11,000 acres west of US-19, known as **Weekiwachee Preserve**, 2345 Osowaw Boulevard. There is no charge to enter the preserve, which is open every day, sunrise to sunset, for hiking, biking, birding, and fishing. The second and fourth Saturdays of every month, cars are admitted only along the one-mile paved road, at the end of which is a restroom. This entrance is 1.1 miles east of the intersection of Shoal Line Boulevard and Osowaw Boulevard. If coming from US-19 and Spring Hill Drive (CR-574), turn west from the traffic light onto Osowaw Boulevard (CR-595), and follow the road through a right and left turn, then turn right to the parking area for the preserve (0.5 mile). A trail map is posted inside the gate. There is a 5.5-mile loop trail, as well as many trails through wooded areas.

Since the preserve was purchased in 1995, 250 species of birds and 77 species of butterflies have been seen there. Additional information is available on the Swiftmud website: www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/recreation/weekiwachee-preserve



Henslow's Sparrow

Because the lakes were created by mining, they are deep, with steep sides, and thus are not attractive to most birds. Mottled Ducks can be found on a few lakes. (Note: feral Mallard Ducks are interbreeding with Mottled Ducks with increasing frequency throughout the county, particularly in developed areas. A careful look is required to attempt to distinguish the resulting hybrids from Mottled Ducks.)

The surrounding wooded areas attract songbirds, especially during spring and fall migration. The best birding is often found by walking the paved road and turning left at the first trail. In December and January, American Woodcocks can be found displaying in open fields at dawn and dusk. Short-tailed Hawks and Swallow-tailed Kites have been seen in the preserve in summer, and a White-tailed Kite was seen briefly in October 2000. From 2008 through 2017, wintering sparrows, including Le Conte's, Henslow's, Grasshopper, and Swamp, were banded in the preserve. A small portion of these banded birds returned to the same site in subsequent years.

Hundreds of herons, egrets, ibis, blackbirds, and grackles roost at a lake inside the preserve. To reach that site, at sunrise or sunset walk 1.1 miles to the end of the paved road. Walk through the pass-through next to the metal gate, and continue on the road another 0.1 mile to the lake on the right.

A second entrance to Weekiwachee Preserve is off Shoal Line Boulevard (CR-597), but no parking is provided. From the main parking lot of Weekiwachee Preserve,

turn right onto Osowaw Boulevard, go west 1.1 miles, and turn right on Shoal Line Boulevard. Proceed 3.0 miles.

The entrance to 25,000-acre **Chassahowitzka Wildlife Management Area**, 13243 Commercial Way, is 6.7 miles north of SR-50, just north of the intersection with Centralia Road, on the west side of US-19. There is a fee of \$3 per person or \$6 per vehicle, which is waived for those with a Florida Wildlife Management Area permit or a sportsman's, lifetime, or disabled license. There are restrooms and picnic tables at the entrance.

It's possible to make a 6.6-mile driving loop by taking Rattlesnake Camp Road to Three Bridge Road to Thunder's Crossing Road and right on Gopher Road to return to the entrance. The diversity of habitat from swamps to upland pine forests and hardwoods attracts a wide range of resident and migrant birds. There are also numerous side roads throughout the area to explore. To date, 143 species have been found there, and more are possible with further exploration.

There are two walking trails that can be reached by continuing east on Three Bridge Road, 0.3 mile after the intersection with Thunder's Crossing Road. Cypress Circle, a 1.5-mile walk that passes through a wetland, can attract a few migrants in the spring and fall. On Wild Turkey Trace, a three-quarter-mile loop trail, upland resident songbirds can be seen. From Three Bridge Road, a 440-foot boardwalk provides access to Buford Springs, which is a very large dive-able cavern.

Caution: Various types of hunting occur in the Chassahowitzka Wildlife Management Area from late September through early January and in late March. Information about hunting dates can be obtained by calling 352-592-5715 or at: <https://myfwc.com/hunting/wma-brochures/southwest/chassahowitzka/>

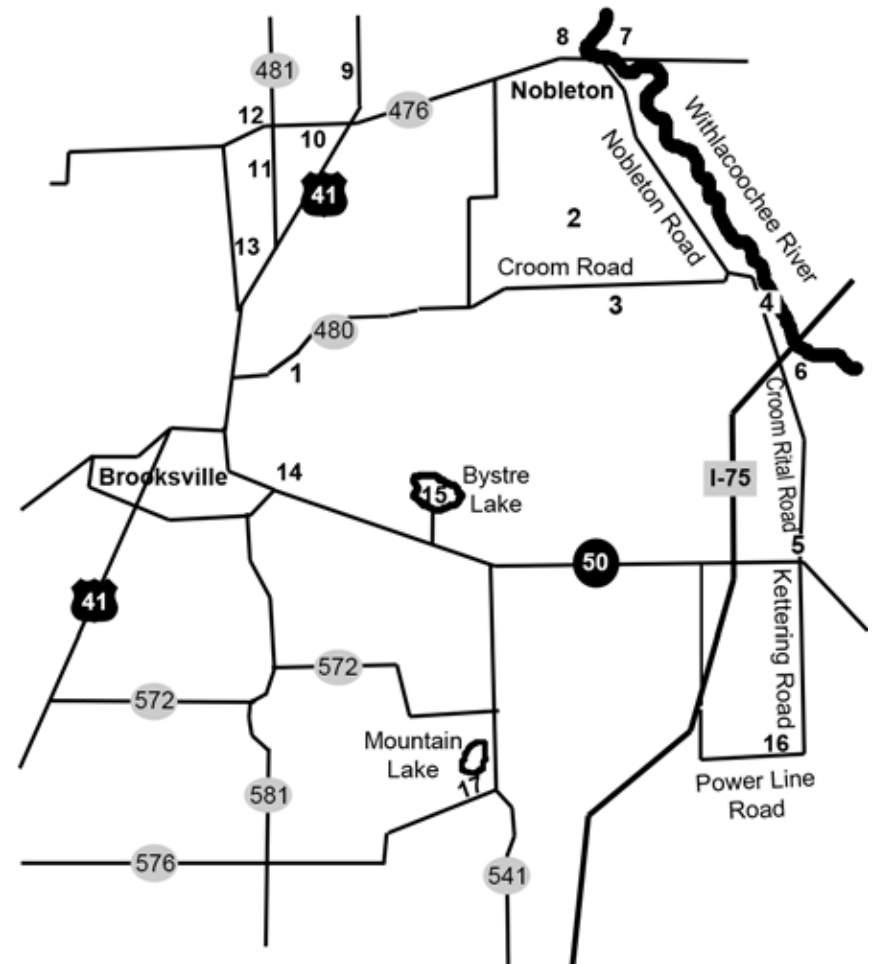
BROOKSVILLE RIDGE

The Brooksville Ridge, chiefly at an elevation 50 to 100 feet, with a portion climbing to 300 feet, occupies most of the county. It extends from US-19 eastward to US-301. This area is mostly rolling, deep, sandy ridges with numerous depressions and sinks. Natural vegetation is largely turkey oak, bluejack oak, post oak, scrub live oak, and scattered longleaf pines. In places there are sand-bottomed ponds. The highest areas support pine and hardwood stands, although portions have been cleared for crops and pastures. A large portion of this area is highly developed in two communities, Brooksville and Spring Hill.

While much habitat has been lost due to this development, a side effect has been the required construction of numerous retention areas to hold the runoff during heavy rains. The water level fluctuates in these many retention areas throughout the county, depending on the accumulated rainfall. These should be checked for ducks, waders, and shorebirds.

Central Hernando County

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Wallien Drive pond | 10. Chinsegut Conservation Center |
| 2. Croom Tract | 11. Lake Lindsey |
| 3. Forest Road 7 | 12. Lake Lindsey cemetery |
| 4. Trail to river | 13. Big Pine |
| 5. Ridge Manor trailhead | 14. Brooksville cemetery |
| 6. Silver Lake | 15. Bystre Lake |
| 7. Nobelton Wayside Park | 16. Power Line Road |
| 8. Lake Townsen Regional Park | 17. Mountain Lake |
| 9. McKethan Lake | |



Hunters Lake, like all other lakes in the county, recedes greatly during periods of drought. To reach it from the traffic light at the intersection of US-19 and CR-574 (Spring Hill Drive), travel south on US-19 0.3 mile to the next traffic light at Applegate Drive. Turn left on Applegate Drive, and go 0.4 mile to Kenlake Avenue.



Purple Gallinule

Turn right, then immediately left at the beginning of the ballpark. Terns, egrets, and herons are here year round, and ducks in winter. When the boat ramp is open, a canoe or small boat can be launched to explore more of the lake. Then it might be possible to see Least Bitterns and Purple Gallinules as well as other species that can't be seen from land.

The Brookridge sewage treatment facility on **Grove Road** attracts shorebirds and waders in season. It is one mile north of SR-50 on Grove Road, which is the first street west of the Suncoast Parkway. The ponds are across the street from the houses in the 8300 block of Grove Road. Park off the road and look through the chain-link fence. Entry into the facility is not permitted. A spotting scope is useful.

This concludes the loop of birding sites in the western part of the county. Below are sites near Brooksville.

From the intersection of US-41 (Broad Street) and SR-50A (Jefferson Street) in Brooksville, go north on US-41 1.2 miles and turn right onto CR-480 (Croom Road). To reach a pasture that is often flooded near the Brooksville Country Club, drive east on Croom Road 1.7 miles. Turn right onto Dogwood Estates Drive, then in 0.1 mile, turn right onto **Wallien Drive**. In 0.1 mile pull off the road and view the pasture on the right that often attracts waders and shorebirds, when flooded, and Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks in late summer.

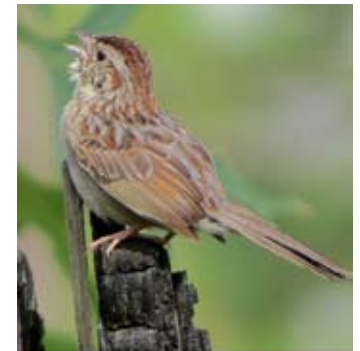


Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks

Backtrack to Croom Road and continue east for the beginning of the **Croom Tract of the Withlacoochee State Forest**. In 2.9 miles, American Woodcocks sometimes display in January in the pasture on the left. Park well off the road, on the south side, and watch the field from the gate a half hour before dawn or after dusk.

At the western edge of the Croom Tract, there are restrooms, trails, and picnic tables at Tucker Hill (26572 Croom Road), but the parking area doesn't open until 8 a.m. The parking fee is \$2 per person.

A good place to find Bachman's Sparrows is the north side of Croom Road from 0.7 mile east of Tucker Hill to the next intersection 1.1 miles to the east, as well as in areas with short vegetation further to the east. The sparrows sing from March to September. When singing, these sparrows are usually perched on a bare branch 6 to 15 feet above the ground, and are often closer than they sound, so approach them slowly. Other birds that nest in the Croom Tract include Swallow-tailed Kite, Wild Turkey, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Northern Parula, and Summer Tanager. All of the eastern woodpeckers can be found in the Croom Tract.



Bachman's Sparrow

Caution: there are many sand roads penetrating the forest that get very soft when it hasn't rained for a while. It is best to navigate these with a high-clearance or 4-wheel-drive vehicle to avoid getting stuck. "General gun" hunting occurs in Croom in November. Inquire about the specific dates at the Withlacoochee Visitor Center, 15003 Broad Street, Brooksville, FL 34601; 352-797-4140; www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/Our-Forests/State-Forests/Withlacoochee-State-Forest



Red-cockaded Woodpecker

In the 1990s, the Croom population of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker was in a steep decline, due to lack of controlled burning during the critical growing season. But with a renewed effort by staff of the Florida Forest Service, with assistance from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, to restore the habitat, and with the translocation of woodpeckers from other areas, the population is now increasing. In recognition of the significant advances that have been made, in 2005 this project received

the prestigious federal Red-cockaded Woodpecker Recovery Program Award for management of the Croom Tract. In 2012 the Croom and Citrus tracts of the Withlacoochee State Forest were nominated by the National Audubon Society for Global Important Bird Area status.

The woodpecker's active roosting cavity in a longleaf pine tree has clear fresh sap streams glistening near the cavity entrance. It is best to look for the woodpeckers at dawn, when the birds are just leaving their roosting trees, or an hour or two before dusk, when they are returning to those trees. Red-cockaded Woodpeckers usually leave the area soon after dawn to search for food, though they may still be located occasionally by listening for their soft call. Please take care not to disturb these woodpeckers during the nesting season.

To look for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, 7 miles east of US-41, at the intersection of Croom Road with **Forest Road 7**, park in the parking area on the south side. Cross to the northwest corner of that intersection and look for the trail going north. Continue north when another trail crosses. Soon afterward, look for RCWs roosting in the trees marked with white paint.



Swallow-tailed Kite

Drive 0.4 mile east of the intersection of Croom Road and Nobleton Road, for a walking trail that gives a view of the Withlacoochee River, with woodland birding along the way. Park near the power line and substation on the left (north) side of the road. Walk along the power line east to the river (0.4 mile). Limpkins have been found at the river, as well as at other viewpoints along the river. Scan the sky here and at other river sites, looking for Swallow-tailed Kites and Short-tailed Hawks in the spring and summer.

Drive east another 1.5 miles on Croom-Rital Road, and turn left just after the I-75 overpass, onto Silver Lake Road, leading to the **Silver Lake Recreation Area**, where there is a boat ramp and camping. Drive

through the entrance gate (\$2 per person), and go straight to the day use area to check the river for birds. Limpkins might be found here, and Rock Pigeons used to nest under the I-75 bridge. The three separate campgrounds are restricted to registered campers, but there is a hiking trail along the edge of the river.

Driving 3.2 miles south on Croom-Rital Road, on the left you will find the **Ridge Manor Trailhead**. Here is a parking lot, picnic area, and restrooms for the 46-mile rails-to-trails paved biking trail called the Withlacoochee State Trail. There is also a hiking trail. To find the beginning of the hiking trail, walk past the picnic

tables, and through the gate. In the open pasture, Eastern Bluebirds, Red-headed Woodpeckers, and American Kestrels may be found. A flock of songbirds can occasionally be found in the woods as the trail follows alongside the Withlacoochee River. Some birders walk along the river a while before retracing their steps.

To end the tour now, continue south on Croom-Rital Road about half a mile to the junction with SR-50. Otherwise, retrace your route to the fork of Croom and Nobleton roads, and turn right onto Nobleton Road.

Continuing north, the forest ends 3.4 miles from the intersection of Croom and Nobleton roads. The road name changes to Edgewater Avenue, in the town of Nobleton. Edgewater Avenue soon intersects with CR-476 (Lake Lindsey Road).

Directly across the street is a 2-acre county park, **Nobleton Wayside Park**, 29061 Lamkin Drive, with a boat ramp and picnic tables. Stop briefly to scan the river edge. River Ratz Café and Nobleton Outpost (29295 Lake Lindsey Road), 0.2 mile to the east, rents canoes and offers drop-off transportation to launch sites. A pleasant birding experience is the 10-mile trip from Silver Lake downstream to Nobleton.

Lake Townsend Regional Park, 28011 Lake Lindsey Road, is on CR-476 0.9 mile west of Nobleton Wayside Park. The wooded area around the restrooms and picnic tables can be good for resident songbirds. The fishing pier and boat ramp provide a good view of a section of the Withlacoochee River where Limpkins are often seen. To drive there, pass the parking lot and continue right, crossing the bike trail, to the boat ramp parking area. The \$5 parking fee is only for launching boats. An extension of the park, on the west side of Lingle Road, is being restored to pineland to be used as a mitigation area for Gopher Tortoises.

Continue west on CR-476 1.5 miles to Daly Road. This 1.4-mile road through pastureland offers possible sightings of American Kestrels, Northern Harriers, and other raptors in winter, as well as Eastern Bluebirds, Eastern Meadowlarks, and other grassland birds.

Returning to CR-476, drive west 2.4 miles, turn right (north) onto US-41, and in 0.5 mile, turn left at the wooden gate across from the Withlacoochee State Forest sign (which is easy to miss) to enter **McKethan Lake** (open at 8 a.m., \$2 per person). A 2-mile nature trail winds through the woods, and a one-way paved road circles the lake. The combination of hardwood hammock, marsh, and open water provides



American Kestrel



Glossy Ibis

good habitat for a variety of birds. Herons, egrets, ducks, and songbirds can be found here, though the water level fluctuates with rainfall. There are picnic tables and restrooms.

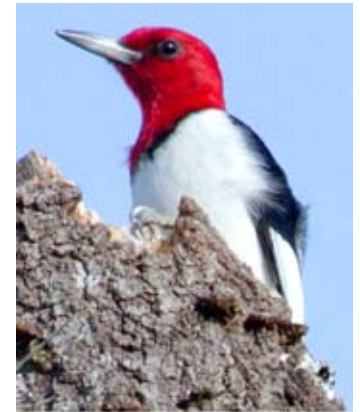
Return to the intersection of US-41 and CR-476, and turn right (west). In 1.0 mile, turn left at the sign for **Chinsegut Conservation Center** (23212 Lake Lindsey Road). This 408-acre tract is managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The center is open to the public every Friday and Saturday, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. There is a nature trail through turkey oak, longleaf pine, and hardwood hammocks circling a prairie. As a result of efforts to restore to pine habitat, Red-headed Woodpeckers might be seen here. Another 2-mile Prairie-to-Pines Trail links Chinsegut Conservation Center to nearby Big Pine (described below). This trail is open every day during daylight hours. Trailheads are located at Chinsegut Conservation Center, Big Pine, and midway at the parking area at the junction of US-41 and Snow Memorial Highway. The public is invited to attend the scheduled activities and talks held at Chinsegut Conservation Center every month throughout the year. For information about these events, call 352-754-6722, or check the website at: <https://myfwc.com/education/outdoor-skills/chinsegut/>

Turn left (west) onto CR-476, and drive 0.4 mile to the intersection with CR-481 (Snow Memorial Road). Turn left (south), and in 0.3 mile, turn right at Lake Village Lane. Proceed to the end, turn left, and immediately right, for the **Lake Lindsey** public boat ramp. A very few Purple Gallinules are resident on this lake. Though you can't get much of a view of the lake from the boat ramp, with a scope it may be possible to spot the birds walking on the lily pads.

Return to CR-481, and turn left (north). In 0.4 mile, turn left onto Lake Lindsey Road (CR-476). The cemetery on the right (0.4 mile) can attract songbirds in migration

and winter. Quickly scan the pasture to the west, as shorebirds and ducks are sometimes attracted when there is water at the low point of this pasture.

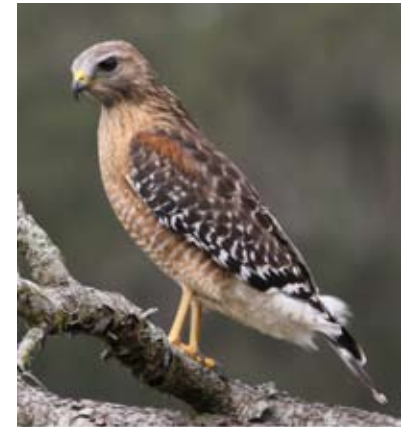
Continue south on CR-476 and turn left at the first intersection, Old Crystal River Road (0.9 mile). In 2 miles, you will see the parking area for 420-acre **Big Pine** on the left. Several miles of trails bisect this second largest contiguous tract of old-growth longleaf pine in Florida, which includes some trees that are over 250 years old. Typical pine woodland resident birds can be found there, including Red-headed Woodpeckers. If approached quietly, Wood Ducks may be found in the wetland in the far end along the 0.4-mile Burns Prairie Spur trail. A trailhead for the Prairie-to-Pines Trail (mentioned above) to Chinsegut Conservation Center is located at Big Pine.



Red-headed Woodpecker

Turning left from Big Pine parking area, you will reach US-41 in 0.5 mile.

To reach **Perry Oldenburg Mitigation Park** (13489 Government Road), head north 2.3 miles on US-41, from the intersection of Old Crystal River Road. Turn right on Deer Run Road and drive 1.2 miles to the intersection with Government Road. At this intersection go straight, following the sign for the park. Stay in the grassy right lane, since the left lane is a private driveway. This 385-acre park was established in 1995 as a gopher tortoise mitigation preserve. Both resident and migrant songbirds can be seen along the 1.5-mile loop trail winding through sandhills and hardwood hammocks. American Kestrels, Red-shouldered Hawks, and Eastern Screech-Owls reside here as well as passerines. There is a picnic table but no restrooms.



Red-shouldered Hawk

This concludes this birding route loop. The following birding sites are in other sections of the county.

Skinner Lake is 10 miles north of Brooksville. There is no public access to this lake that in the winter attracts hundreds of American Coots, as well as small numbers of other duck species. It can only be viewed from the private road to CEMEX (16301 Ponce de Leon Boulevard), 0.6 mile north of the intersection of US-98 and CR-491. The road to CEMEX is only open on weekdays from about 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Birders are tolerated if they park completely off the road. In addition to the lake, other bird species can be found in the surrounding pastures, as well as the wetland at the bottom of the hill on the south side of the road. Since the road is quite distant from the lake, most of the birds can only be identified with a spotting scope.



Bald Eagle (immature)

The **Northwest Waste Management Facility** (14450 Landfill Road) is located on US-98, 1.8 miles north of the road to CEMEX. The entrance is on the left, on Landfill Drive, and is well marked. Tell the operator at the scale house that you are birdwatching and ask where you are permitted to bird. They are accommodating, but please don't interfere with their work, and avoid the trucks and other equipment. Landfill birding is best in winter. Ring-necked Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, and other ducks frequent the small retention pond then, and gulls congregate around the garbage disposal area. The gulls are mostly Ring-billed and Laughing, with a few Herring, but a careful look might pick out something unusual from the thousands of birds present. The gulls and garbage attract Bald Eagles, which are present from December to February each year. As many as ten or twelve can be seen at one time by scanning the trees bordering the property.

The **Brooksville cemetery** (1275 Olmes Road), like many old cemeteries, can attract a variety of passerines. From the intersection of SR-50 and SR-50A, on the east side of Brooksville, drive north on Jasmine Road. Turn left onto Olmes Road, and immediately turn right into the cemetery.

To reach **Bystre Lake**, from the eastern intersection of SR-50 and SR-50A, head east on SR-50 2.8 miles. Turn north on Clayton Road, drive 0.5 mile to the end of the road, and turn right into the grassy field. This small, undeveloped county property provides a view of a portion of the lake. The rest of the lakefront is private property. Bystre Lake attracts waterfowl in winter, as well as White Pelicans and sometimes Glossy Ibis. Year-round residents include herons, egrets, White Ibis, Osprey, and Barred Owls. Limpkins can sometimes be seen or heard here, and Roseate Spoonbills are occasionally seen in the summer. Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks and Eastern Kingbirds are among the many birds that nest here.



Barred Owls

For birds attracted to pastures, from the intersection of SR-50 and Interstate-75, head east one mile and, at the traffic light, turn right onto Kettering Road. (Turning left would take you to Silver Lake via Croom-Rital Road, as described previously.) As you drive south of the Wal-Mart distribution center in the winter, scan for Eastern Meadowlarks, sparrows, and raptors. Kettering ends at Power Line Road. Turning right, you can look for the same species. Burrowing Owls used to nest here, but now a housing development is planned for the north side of this area. In June and early July Swallow-tailed Kites and occasionally Mississippi Kites are seen flying above pastures on Kettering Road, Power Line Road, and Lockhart Road (at the western end of Power Line Road), as well as pastures to the north along SR-50.



Eastern Meadowlark

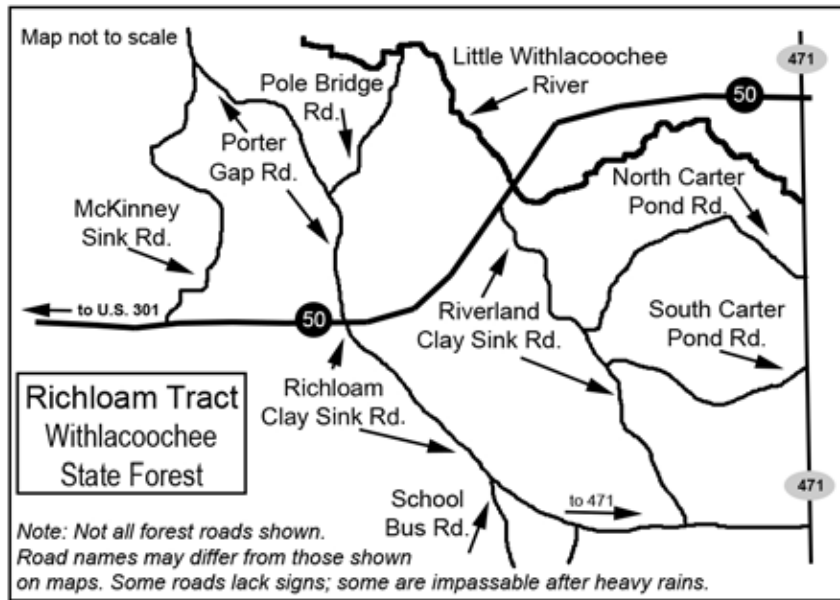
To reach a pond that attract waders year round and wintering ducks, return to SR-50 and turn west. At the traffic light at CR-541 (Spring Lake Highway), turn left. Drive south 2.8 miles, and turn right onto Mountain Lake Road. Drive 0.5 mile to the **Mountain Lake** boat ramp at the end of the road.

Cypress Lake Preserve (324 acres) provides a diversity of habitat for birding. From the traffic light at the intersection of Kettering and Croom-Rital roads with SR-50, drive east on SR-50 1.1 miles to a left turn onto Ridge Manor Boulevard. In 0.6 mile at the intersection with the first street, Olancha Road, park on the shoulder of Ridge Manor Boulevard well off the pavement. Do not block the preserve gate. The trail is marked with blazes. The cypress-lined lake attracts herons, egrets, and Limpkins, and the woods draw both migratory and resident songbirds, as well as Wild Turkey.

EASTERN PORTION

The portion of the county east of US-301 is a plain at an elevation of 75 to 85 feet, mostly covered by pine and palmetto flatwoods, with numerous ponds and depressions of broad, grassy sloughs. Most of the area is in natural vegetation and has been preserved for woodland and wildlife.

A map of the **Richloam Tract of the Withlacoochee State Forest** is on the following page. To make a loop route near the Little Withlacoochee River, which can be good during migration, from the intersection of SR-50 and US-301, head east on SR-50 1.4 miles to McKinney Sink Road on the left. Drive north on this road, parking and walking sections of the road that look promising. In 3.0 miles,



turn right onto Porter Gap Road. In 1.8 miles, if the road appears passable, turn left onto Pole Bridge Road and drive 1.5 miles until the road ends at the Little Withlacoochee River. Return to Porter Gap Road, turn left, and drive 1.2 miles to the junction with SR-50.

To reach habitat for Brown-headed Nuthatches, cross SR-50 (this intersection is 3 miles east of US-301) and continue on Richloam Clay Sink Road. After 1 mile, this paved road becomes a good graded road. In another 0.9 mile, School Bus Road will be on your right. Nuthatch habitat begins across from School Bus Road, on the left side of Richloam Clay Sink Road. In another 1.9 miles, the road forks. Keep to the left fork (eastbound) looking for Nuthatches. This road ends at SR-471.



Brown-headed Nuthatch

To search more for Nuthatches on South and North Carter Pond Roads, turn left onto SR-471. Unmarked South Carter Pond Road is 1.4 miles north, on the left, and North Carter Pond Road is 0.7 mile further north, on the left. At times both these sandy roads may not be passable without a high-clearance or 4-wheel-drive vehicle. SR-50 is 2.9 miles north of North Carter Pond Road.

Caution: Some Richloam forest roads are impassable after heavy rain. Vandals sometimes remove road signs. On some maps of Hernando County different names are used from those mentioned in this text There is “general gun” hunting in Richloam from November to early January, and Wild Turkey hunting in mid-March to mid-April. Inquire about the specific dates at the Withlacoochee Visitor Center, 15003 Broad Street, Brooksville, FL 34601; 352-797-4140; www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/Our-Forests/State-Forests/Withlacoochee-State-Forest.

BIRDING “HOT SPOTS”

There are several excellent parks for birding near Hernando County. Highly recommended during both migration and year round are Honeymoon Island State Park in Dunedin and Ft. De Soto County Park at the southern tip of St. Petersburg. Saddle Creek Park in Lakeland can be excellent for migrating warblers in September and early October and for Limpkins all year. Reports of bird sightings from throughout Florida can be found at eBird.org.

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS FOR HERNANDO COUNTY

The checklist on the following pages lists 321 bird species seen in Hernando County. The list is arranged taxonomically, and includes only those species recognized as countable by the American Birding Association.

Many birds have strict habitat preferences, small local populations, and/or irregular migration patterns. The symbols used in this checklist are defined as follows:

Seasons:	SP	Spring	March-May
	SU	Summer	June-July
	FA	Fall	August-November
	WI	Winter	December-February

Probability of Sighting:

- C Common: These birds should be seen or heard in suitable habitat.
- U Uncommon: These birds are present, but not certain to be seen or heard, because of their low numbers, behavior, habitat, or distribution.
- O Occasional: These birds are only seen a few times in a season. Many of them are only in the county during migration.
- R Rare: These birds are not expected to be seen every year. They occur in low numbers and may be unreported for a number of years. Also included are erratics, those birds that are common some years and scarce or missing other years.
- X Accidental: These birds were seen outside of their normal range.
- * Indicates breeding in the county.

	SP	SU	FA	WI
...Black-bellied Whistling-Duck *....	U	U	U	U
...Fulvous Whistling-Duck	R		R	R
...Snow Goose	R		R	R
...Greater White-fronted Goose	R			
...Canada Goose	R		R	R
...Muscovy Duck *.....	U	U	U	U
...Wood Duck *	U	U	U	U
...Blue-winged Teal	C		C	C
...Cinnamon Teal				R
...Northern Shoveler	U		U	U
...Gadwall	U		U	U
...American Wigeon	U		U	U
...Mallard *	U	U	U	U
...American Black Duck	R		R	R
...Mottled Duck *	C	C	C	C
...Northern Pintail	O		O	O
...Green-winged Teal	U		U	U
...Canvasback	O		O	O
...Redhead	U		U	U
...Ring-necked Duck	C		C	C
...Greater Scaup	O		O	O
...Lesser Scaup	C	R	C	C
...Surf Scoter				R
...Black Scoter				R
...Long-tailed Duck				R
...Bufflehead	C		U	C
...Common Goldeneye	O			O
...Hooded Merganser	C		C	C
...Common Merganser				R
...Red-breasted Merganser	C	R	C	C
...Ruddy Duck	O		O	O
...Northern Bobwhite *	U	U	U	U
...Wild Turkey *	C	C	C	C

	SP	SU	FA	WI
...Pied-billed Grebe *	C	U	C	C
...Horned Grebe	U		U	C
...Rock Pigeon *	U	U	U	U
...Eurasian Collared-Dove *	C	C	C	C
...Common Ground-Dove *	C	C	C	C
...White-winged Dove *	U	U	U	U
...Mourning Dove *	C	C	C	C
...Yellow-billed Cuckoo *	U	U	U	
...Black-billed Cuckoo	R		R	
...Common Nighthawk *	C	C	C	
...Chuck-will's-widow *	C	C	C	
...Eastern Whip-poor-will	U		U	U
...Chimney Swift *	C	C	C	
...Vaux's Swift				R
...Ruby-throated Hummingbird * ...	C	U	C	O
...Black-chinned Hummingbird				O
...Rufous Hummingbird	O		O	O
...Allen's Hummingbird				R
...Buff-bellied Hummingbird				R
...Yellow Rail	R		R	R
...Black Rail *	U	U	U	U
...King Rail *	U	U	U	U
...Clapper Rail *	C	C	C	C
...Virginia Rail	U		U	U
...Sora	U		U	U
...Purple Gallinule *	U	U	U	U
...Common Gallinule *	C	C	C	C
...American Coot	C	U	C	C
...Limpkin *	U	U	U	U
...Sandhill Crane *	C	C	C	C
...Black-necked Stilt *	U	C	U	O
...American Avocet			R	R
...American Oystercatcher *	U	U	U	U

	SP	SU	FA	WI
...Black-bellied Plover	U	O	U	U
...American Golden-Plover				R
...Snowy Plover	R	R	R	R
...Wilson's Plover *	U	U	U	O
...Semipalmated Plover	C	U	C	C
...Piping Plover	R		R	R
...Killdeer *	C	C	C	C
...Whimbrel	R		R	R
...Long-billed Curlew				R
...Marbled Godwit				R
...Ruddy Turnstone	C	U	C	C
...Red Knot	O		O	O
...Stilt Sandpiper	O		O	O
...Sanderling	U		U	U
...Dunlin	C	R	C	C
...Baird's Sandpiper			R	
...Least Sandpiper	C	O	C	C
...White-rumped Sandpiper	O	O	O	
...Pectoral Sandpiper	O		O	
...Semipalmated Sandpiper	U		U	
...Western Sandpiper	U	O	U	U
...Short-billed Dowitcher	C		C	C
...Long-billed Dowitcher	U		U	U
...American Woodcock *	U		U	U
...Wilson's Snipe	U		U	C
...Spotted Sandpiper	U		U	U
...Solitary Sandpiper	O		O	R
...Lesser Yellowlegs	C	O	C	C
...Willet *	C	C	C	C
...Greater Yellowlegs	C	O	C	C
...Wilson's Phalarope			R	
...Red-necked Phalarope				R
...Pomarine Jaeger				R

	SP	SU	FA	WI
...Parasitic Jaeger				R
...Razorbill				R
...Bonaparte's Gull	O		O	O
...Laughing Gull	C	C	C	C
...Franklin's Gull			R	
...Ring-billed Gull	C	O	C	C
...Herring Gull	U	O	U	U
...Lesser Black-backed Gull				R
...Glaucous Gull	R			
...Great Black-backed Gull				R
...Sooty Tern			R	
...Least Tern	O	O	O	
...Gull-billed Tern	O		O	O
...Caspian Tern	U	O	U	U
...Black Tern	O	O	O	
...Common Tern	O		O	
...Forster's Tern	C		C	C
...Royal Tern	C	C	C	C
...Sandwich Tern	O	O	O	O
...Black Skimmer	C	U	C	C
...Red-throated Loon				R
...Common Loon	U	R	U	C
...Wood Stork *	C	C	C	C
...Magnificent Frigatebird	O	O	O	R
...Northern Gannet	O	R	O	O
...Double-crested Cormorant *	C	C	C	C
...Anhinga *	C	C	C	C
...American White Pelican	U		U	U
...Brown Pelican *	C	C	C	C
...American Bittern	O	R	O	O
...Least Bittern *	U	U	U	O
...Great Blue Heron *	C	C	C	C
...Great Egret *	C	C	C	C

	SP	SU	FA	WI
...Snowy Egret *	C	C	C	
...Little Blue Heron *	C	C	C	C
...Tricolored Heron *	C	C	C	C
...Reddish Egret	U	U	U	U
...Cattle Egret *	C	C	C	C
...Green Heron *	C	C	C	C
...Black-crowned Night-Heron *	U	U	U	U
...Yellow-crowned Night-Heron *	U	U	U	U
...White Ibis *	C	C	C	C
...Glossy Ibis	U	U	U	U
...White-faced Ibis	R		R	R
...Roseate Spoonbill	U	U	U	U
...Black Vulture *	C	C	C	C
...Turkey Vulture *	C	C	C	C
...Osprey *	C	C	C	C
...White-tailed Kite			R	
...Swallow-tailed Kite *	U	U	U	
...Golden Eagle				X
...Double-toothed Kite			X	
...Northern Harrier	C		C	C
...Sharp-shinned Hawk	U		U	U
...Cooper's Hawk *	U	U	U	U
...Bald Eagle *	C	O	C	C
...Mississippi Kite *	U	U	U	
...Snail Kite			R	
...Red-shouldered Hawk *	C	C	C	C
...Broad-winged Hawk	O		O	R
...Short-tailed Hawk *	O	O	O	
...Swainson's Hawk			R	R
...Red-tailed Hawk *	C	U	C	C
...Barn Owl *	O	O	O	O
...Eastern Screech-Owl *	C	C	C	C
...Great Horned Owl *	C	C	C	C

	SP	SU	FA	WI
...Burrowing Owl *	U	U	U	U
...Barred Owl *	C	C	C	C
...Short-eared Owl				R
...Belted Kingfisher	U	O	C	C
...Red-headed Woodpecker *	C	C	C	C
...Red-bellied Woodpecker *	C	C	C	C
...Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	U		U	U
...Downy Woodpecker *	C	C	C	C
...Red-cockaded Woodpecker *	U	U	U	U
...Hairy Woodpecker *	U	U	U	U
...Northern Flicker *	U	U	U	U
...Pileated Woodpecker *	C	C	C	C
...Crested Caracara				R
...American Kestrel *	C	C	C	C
...Merlin	O		O	O
...Peregrine Falcon	O		O	O
...Monk Parakeet	R	R	R	R
...Ash-throated Flycatcher			R	
...Great Crested Flycatcher *	C	C	C	R
...Western Kingbird	O		O	O
...Eastern Kingbird *	U	U	U	R
...Gray Kingbird *	O	O	O	
...Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	R		R	R
...Eastern Wood-Pewee	U		U	
...Acadian Flycatcher	O	R	O	
...Least Flycatcher	O		O	
...Eastern Phoebe	C		C	C
...Say's Phoebe			R	
...Vermilion Flycatcher			R	
...Loggerhead Shrike *	U	U	U	U
...White-eyed Vireo *	C	C	C	C
...Yellow-throated Vireo *	C	C	U	
...Blue-headed Vireo	C		U	C

	SP	SU	FA	WI
...Philadelphia Vireo	R			
...Warbling Vireo	R			
...Red-eyed Vireo *	C	C	C	
...Blue Jay *	C	C	C	C
...Florida Scrub-Jay *	R	R	R	R
...American Crow *	C	C	C	C
...Fish Crow *	C	C	C	C
...Purple Martin *	C	C	C	U
...Tree Swallow	C		U	C
...N. Rough-winged Swallow *	U	U	U	R
...Bank Swallow	U		U	
...Cliff Swallow	O		O	
...Cave Swallow	R		R	
...Barn Swallow *	C	C	C	R
...Carolina Chickadee *	C	C	C	C
...Tufted Titmouse *	C	C	C	C
...Red-breasted Nuthatch	R		R	R
...White-breasted Nuthatch	R		R	R
...Brown-headed Nuthatch *	U	U	U	U
...Brown Creeper				R
...House Wren	C		C	C
...Winter Wren				R
...Sedge Wren	C		C	C
...Marsh Wren *	U	U	U	U
...Carolina Wren *	C	C	C	C
...Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *	C	C	C	C
...Golden-crowned Kinglet				O
...Ruby-crowned Kinglet	C		C	C
...Eastern Bluebird *	C	C	C	C
...Veery	O		O	
...Gray-cheeked Thrush	O		O	
...Swainson's Thrush	O		O	
...Hermit Thrush	U		U	U

	SP	SU	FA	WI
...Wood Thrush	O		O	
...American Robin	C		C	C
...Gray Catbird	C	R	C	C
...Brown Thrasher *	C	C	C	U
...Northern Mockingbird *	C	C	C	C
...European Starling *	C	C	C	C
...Cedar Waxwing	U		O	U
...House Sparrow *	C	C	C	C
...American Pipit	U		U	U
...House Finch *	U	U	U	U
...Purple Finch				R
...Pine Siskin	R		R	R
...American Goldfinch	U		C	C
...Eastern Towhee *	C	C	C	C
...Bachman's Sparrow *	C	C	C	U
...Chipping Sparrow	C		C	C
...Clay-colored Sparrow			R	R
...Field Sparrow	O		O	O
...Vesper Sparrow	U		U	U
...Lark Sparrow	R		R	R
...Savannah Sparrow	C		C	C
...Grasshopper Sparrow	U		U	U
...Henslow's Sparrow	U		U	U
...Le Conte's Sparrow	U		U	U
...Seaside Sparrow *	U	U	U	U
...Nelson's Sparrow	O		O	O
...Saltmarsh Sparrow				R
...Song Sparrow	U		U	U
...Lincoln's Sparrow			O	O
...Swamp Sparrow	C		C	C
...White-throated Sparrow	O		O	O
...Harris's Sparrow				R
...White-crowned Sparrow			O	O

	SP	SU	FA	WI
...Dark-eyed Junco	R		R	R
...Yellow-breasted Chat	R		R	
...Yellow-headed Blackbird	R		R	R
...Bobolink	O		R	
...Eastern Meadowlark *	C	C	C	C
...Orchard Oriole	O	O	O	R
...Baltimore Oriole	O		O	O
...Red-winged Blackbird *	C	C	C	C
...Shiny Cowbird	R			
...Brown-headed Cowbird *	C	C	C	C
...Rusty Blackbird				R
...Brewer's Blackbird	R			R
...Common Grackle *	C	C	C	C
...Boat-tailed Grackle *	C	C	C	C
...Ovenbird	U		U	U
...Worm-eating Warbler	O		O	
...Louisiana Waterthrush	O	R	O	
...Northern Waterthrush	O		O	R
...Golden-winged Warbler	O		O	
...Blue-winged Warbler	O		O	R
...Black-and-white Warbler	U	O	U	C
...Prothonotary Warbler	U	U	U	
...Swainson's Warbler	R		R	
...Tennessee Warbler	U		U	
...Orange-crowned Warbler	O		O	U
...Nashville Warbler			R	R
...Connecticut Warbler	R			
...Kentucky Warbler	O		O	
...Common Yellowthroat *	C	C	C	C
...Hooded Warbler	U		U	
...American Redstart	U		U	O
...Cape May Warbler	O		O	R
...Cerulean Warbler	O		O	

	SP	SU	FA	WI
...Northern Parula *	C	C	C	O
...Magnolia Warbler	O		O	
...Bay-breasted Warbler	R		R	
...Blackburnian Warbler	O		O	
...Yellow Warbler	U		U	R
...Chestnut-sided Warbler	O		O	
...Blackpoll Warbler	U		R	
...Black-throated Blue Warbler	O		O	R
...Palm Warbler	C		C	C
...Pine Warbler *	C	C	C	C
...Yellow-rumped Warbler	C		C	C
...Yellow-throated Warbler *	C	U	C	U
...Prairie Warbler	C	O	U	U
...Black-throated Green Warbler ...	O		O	O
...Wilson's Warbler	O		O	
...Summer Tanager *	C	C	C	O
...Scarlet Tanager	O		O	
...Western Tanager				R
...Northern Cardinal *	C	C	C	C
...Rose-breasted Grosbeak	U		U	
...Blue Grosbeak *	U	U	U	
...Indigo Bunting *	U	O	U	O
...Painted Bunting	O		O	O
...Dickcissel	O			



Wood Ducks



Hernando Audubon Society, Inc.

Established 1959

501 (c)(3) organization

Our mission is to promote an awareness and appreciation of nature, to preserve and protect wildlife and natural ecosystems, and to encourage responsible environmental stewardship.

Hernando Audubon organizes scheduled trips to local and regional birding sites, and holds regular meetings that feature experts who share information about birds, wildlife in general, and the habitats on which they depend. Meetings and field trips are open to the public.

For more information about the Hernando Audubon Society,
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www.hernandoaudubon.org

www.facebook.com/HernandoAudubonSociety/

P.O. Box 1678 - Brooksville, FL 34605

The unique birding experiences available in Hernando County attract visitors from throughout the United States and many foreign nations.

We appreciate the support of the Florida's Adventure Coast Visitors Bureau in the printing and distribution of this pamphlet.



(clockwise from top left)
Wild Turkey, Pileated Woodpecker, Limpkin, Hooded Merganser, Bufflehead.