An aerial photograph of a small motorboat with four people on a large body of water. The water is dark blue with ripples. In the middle ground, there are large, irregular patches of green and brown marshland. The background shows a line of trees under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. A green rectangular overlay is on the left side of the image, containing white text. A yellow square is in the top right corner, and a white square is in the bottom left corner.

THE
**NATURE &
TRAIL GUIDE**
CENTRAL FLORIDA'S
POLK COUNTY

 Visit
**CENTRAL
FLORIDA**



THE AUTHENTIC FLORIDA WHERE FUN IS IN OUR NATURE...

CENTRAL FLORIDA'S UNLIMITED NATURAL BEAUTY IS YOURS TO DISCOVER.

Explore ancient islands that provide refuge for rare plants and animals found nowhere else in the world. Cast away on one of our sparkling lakes. Enjoy watching feathered treasures at one of our many birding "hot spots."

Discover our beautiful parks, lakes, rivers, swamps, forests and natural areas—by hiking, cycling, boating, horseback riding, fishing our bountiful waters or through the lens of your binoculars or camera.

VIEWING THE WILD AND BEAUTIFUL

Learning safe viewing techniques and the best times to view wildlife will make any nature trek more enjoyable. Many animals are most active at dawn and dusk. This is when you're most likely to come across large mammals such as deer, fox and bobcat. When most people think of Florida, they think of the fearsome looking alligator. After being over-hunted in the early 20th century, gators are now abundant. They are generally wary of people, though visitors should always keep their distance while observing these amazing creatures and never disturb or feed them.

FLORIDA'S ANCIENT ISLANDS

Long ago, Florida as we know it today was almost entirely covered by water. The only land areas exposed were high sandy beaches formed by ocean currents. Now known as "Florida's Ancient Islands," these unique elevated Central Florida ridges remain to form the backbone of the Florida peninsula. The oldest of these ancient islands is the Lake Wales Ridge. The Island has one of the highest concentrations of threatened & endangered plants and animals in the country.



▲ Lake Kissimmee :: Lake Wales, FL

CIRCLE B BAR RESERVE AND NATURE DISCOVERY CENTER

Polk's Nature Discovery Center sits on one of Polk County's treasured environmental areas - Circle B Bar Reserve. Visitors are encouraged to explore the mysteries of the 1,267-acre reserve through exhibits, classes and workshops, and enjoy diverse trails, picnic pavilions, wildlife observation viewing platforms and boardwalks. In 2011, USA Today named Circle B Bar Reserve one of "51 Great Places to See Wildlife." The center is staffed Tuesday-Saturday 9 a.m.–4 p.m., Sunday noon–4 p.m. and is free of charge for visitors.

▼ Circle B Bar Reserve :: Lakeland, FL





POLK COUNTY ON THE WATER

NATURE CRUISES & GUIDED TOURS

With 554 lakes, Polk County is the place for boating and nature cruises. Public boat ramps and rental companies make it easy to get on the water. Enjoy a guided nature cruise or tour some of our many glistening lakes.

CANOEING & KAYAKING

Bring your own canoe or kayak to the Peace River Canoe Launch in Bartow to begin your river journey. It is roughly 11 river miles (a full day trip) to the Fort Meade Outdoor Recreation Area. This stretch has many "fingers" and may be difficult to navigate for novice paddlers. The Heritage Peace River Landing near Homeland, has a boat launch and fishing pier and offers a great halfway point for paddlers traveling downstream.

AIRBOAT ADVENTURES

Take an airboat ride and experience the Florida that few see. These fast, flat-bottomed boats can take you into shallow areas not usually accessible by other means. Spot alligators, turtles, birds and plant life as you glide across the water. Join an airboat tour with one of many tour operators located in our area.

AIRBOAT RIDE CONTACTS

**ALLIGATOR COVE
AIRBOAT NATURE TOURS:**
Lake Wales, 863-696-0406
alligatorcovetours.com

**GRAPE HAMMOCK
FISH CAMP:**
Lake Wales, 863-692-1500
grapehammock.com

**ALLIGATORS UNLIMITED AIRBOAT
NATURE TOURS:**
Lake Wales, 863-696-0313
airboatnaturetours.com

**WESTGATE RIVER RANCH
RESORT MARINA:**
(Airboat & Swamp buggy)
River Ranch, 863-692-1321 x40000,
863-692-2909 or 888-779-4104
wgriverranch.com



▲ Westgate River Ranch :: River Ranch, FL

REEL 'EM IN

Considered the "Largemouth Bass Capital of the World," Polk County has a multitude of opportunities for both the beginner fisherman and the accomplished angler.

POPULAR FISHING SPOTS

Popular spots for bass fishing include the Winter Haven Chain of Lakes, the Tenoroc Fish Management Area and the Lake Kissimmee Chain, encompassing Lake Kissimmee, Lake Hatchineha, Lake Walk-in-Water, Lake Rosalie and Tiger Lake.

BANK & PIER FISHING

Many opportunities for bank and pier fishing are available at locations throughout Polk County. The county maintains fishing piers at Saddle Creek Park, Loyce Harpe Park, Mosaic Peace River Park, Peace River Canoe Launch and Heritage Peace River Landing — all popular destinations for fishermen.

FISHING LICENSES

Unless you are fishing with a cane pole, a fishing license is required to fish in our lakes and streams. You may purchase one at any local Walmart, marina or bait and tackle shop or call the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission at **888-347-4356, myfwc.com**

▼ Lake Hatchineha :: Lake Wales, FL



A BIRDING PARADISE

BIRDING IN POLK COUNTY

Polk County is a great place to see a wide variety of bird life due to its diversity of habitats. More than 300 bird species have been recorded in Polk County. Since Florida is an integral part of so many migrating birds' flight paths from Canada to South America, feathered treasures can be found year-round.

BIRDING "HOT SPOTS"

The Circle B Bar Reserve's 1,267 acres of marsh, cypress swamp and oak hammock are home to thousands of wading birds, ibises, ducks, shorebirds and bald eagles.

Saddle Creek Park is one of the finest fall birding sites in interior Central Florida, home to more than 36 different warbler species and is well known by birders statewide.

Most of all the birds found in the Green Swamp, such as summer tanager and Carolina chickadee, can be found at the **Gator Creek Reserve**.

Lakeland Highlands Scrub protects the largest remaining contiguous tract of the historic Lakeland Ridge and is home to a small population of red-tailed hawks and palm warblers.

In **Lake Kissimmee State Park**, be prepared to spot a wide variety of birds ranging from bald eagles to turkeys and bobwhites. Lake and picnic areas feature wading birds and snail kites, as well as songbird migrants and crested caracara.

Situated on Polk County's only state-designated "Outstanding Florida Water Body," **Crooked Lake Prairie** is home to the less common northern harriers and kingfishers.

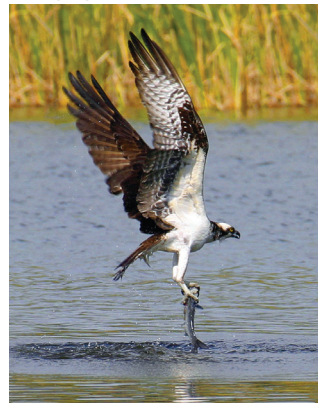
At **SUMICA**, a 4,031-acre wilderness preserve, expect to see Florida wild turkey, Bachman's sparrow, towhees, short-tailed hawks and Caracaras.

The **Lake Wales Ridge State Forest** hosts Florida scrub-jays and short-tailed hawks, towhees and migratory songbirds. Trails lead through songbird habitat to Lake Arbuckle for waders, eagles, limpkins and ducks.



▲ Circle B Bar Reserve :: Lakeland, FL

▼ Osprey



▼ Great Blue Heron



▼ Scrub Jay



FUN FACT:

Scrub Jays are the only bird endemic to the state of Florida.



HIKING & CYCLING IN THE SUN

▲ Fort Frasier Trail :: Bartow, FL

Whether you prefer to explore nature on two feet or two wheels, Polk County offers diverse hiking and cycling trails, in both urban and wilderness areas. Hikers will find a wide variety of options at more than 30 properties in this guide.

Lake Wales Ridge State Forest, Tiger Creek Preserve and SUMICA offer long hiking excursions, while shorter hiking trails include those at Crooked Lake Sandhill, Hickory Lake Scrub, Pine Ridge Nature Preserve, Babson Park Nature Center and North Walk-in-Water Creek.

Many city parks also offer paved walkways and fitness courses, including Lake Mirror Park, Lake Hollingsworth Park, Fort Meade's Outdoor Recreation Area, Patterson Park and Mary Holland Park.

Several parks include great trails for both hiking and cycling, such as Circle B Bar Reserve and Lake Kissimmee State Park, while dedicated cyclists may be most interested in visiting the General James A. Van Fleet State Trail (designated a National Recreation Trail), Fort Fraser Trail, TECO Auburndale Trail, Chain of Lakes Trail and Loyce Harpe Park, which features a seven-mile mountain biking course over varied terrain.

For a complete cycling guide to Central Florida's Polk County, contact Visit Central Florida at 1-800-828-7655.

FUN FACT:

Gopher tortoises share their burrows with more than 350 other species and are therefore referred to as a keystone species.

▼ Westgate River Ranch :: River Ranch, FL



TOP EQUESTRIAN TRAILS

- + Tenoroc Fish Management Area
- + Allen David Broussard Catfish Creek Preserve State Park
- + Green Swamp Wildlife Management Area - Hampton Tract
- + Gator Creek Reserve
- + Lake Wales Ridge State Forest - Walk-in-Water Tract
- + Hilochee Wildlife Management Area - Osprey Unit
- + Colt Creek State Park

The Top Equestrian Trails listing was provided by the Florida Sport Horse Club. The Florida Sport Horse Club is dedicated to trail riding and the preservation of the many riding areas in Central Florida. Rides are scheduled every weekend and a variety of special events such as barbecues and campouts are scheduled throughout the year. The group is family oriented and open to all breeds of horses. Please visit floridasporthorseclub.com for more information. Please call to verify if a special use permit is required at the property you plan to visit.

▼ Gopher Tortoise





POLK COUNTY
**OUTDOOR
RECREATION
CONTACTS**

BOAT RENTALS

**CAMP MACK, A GUY HARVEY
LODGE, MARINA & RV RESORT**
Lake Wales,
863-696-1108 or **800-243-8013**
guyharveycampmack.com

**FLORIDA FFA LEADERSHIP
TRAINING CENTER**
(Canoes, Kayaks)
Haines City,
863-439-7332
flaltc.org

GRAPE HAMMOCK FISH CAMP
(Motorboats)
Lake Wales,
863-692-1500
grapehammock.com

JENNINGS RESORT
(Rowboats, Motorboats)
Lake Wales,
863-439-3811
jenningsresort.com

MARINE SUPPLY
(Pontoons)
Winter Haven,
863-293-1156
marinesupplyboats.com

OAK HARBOR
(Canoes, Kayaks, Pontoons)
Haines City,
863-956-1341 or **877-956-1341**
oakharbor-rv.com

OFF THE WALL ADVENTURES
(Kayaks)
Lakeland,
863-709-9253
offthewalladventures.com

WATER'S EDGE FISH CAMP
(Pontoons)
Lake Wales,
863-696-1411
watersedgefishcamp.com

**WESTGATE RIVER RANCH
RESORT & RODEO**
(Pontoons)
River Ranch,
863-692-1321, x40000
863-692-2909 or **888-779-4610**
wgriverranch.com

CYPRESS INLET RENTALS
(Boat Rentals)
2435 7th St. SW, Winter Haven
863-940-0222
Cypressinlet.com

BIKE RENTALS

LEROY'S BIKEWORKS
(Hybrid, mountain and recumbent
bicycles. Bike racks also available.)
Lakeland,
863-937-9028
LeroysBikeworks.com

ROAD & TRAIL BICYCLES
Lakeland,
863-937-8058
roadandtrailbicycles.com

WHIZ ELECTRIC CYCLES
1482 N. Wilson Ave.
Bartow, 33830
863-398-2257

HORSEBACK RIDING

WESTGATE RIVER RANCH RESORT
River Ranch,
863-692-1321
wgriverranch.com

KAYAK TOURS

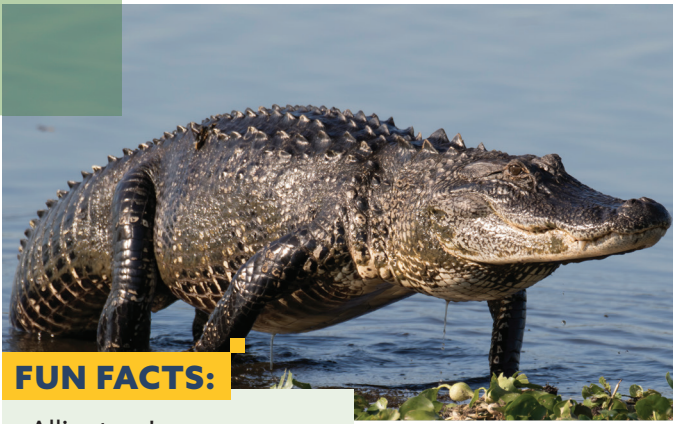
LAKELAND KAYAK TOURS
(Lessons, half-day and full-day
tours.)
Lakeland,
863-660-4610
lakelandkayaktours

**OFF THE CHAIN KAYAK
COMPANY**
Kayak equipment rentals and tours
on the Chain of Lakes.
Winter Haven,
863-225-0934
otckayak.com

PONTOON BOAT CRUISES

MEMORY MAKIN' GUIDES
Lake Wales,
800-749-2278
or **863-632-0304**
memorymakinguides.com

**THE LIVING WATER
PONTOON BOAT CRUISES**
Winter Haven Chain,
877-257-1529
livingwatercruises.com



FUN FACTS:

Alligators!

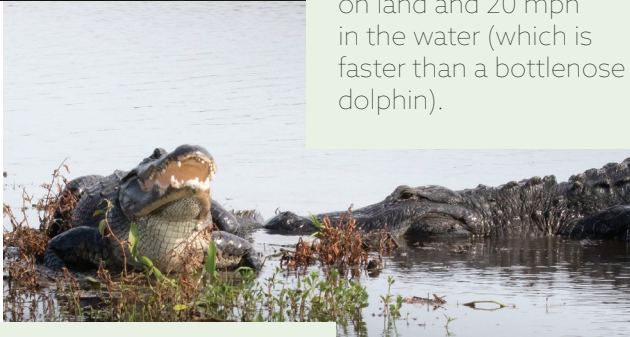
The biggest alligator recorded was 19ft 2in.

The heaviest alligator recorded was 1043lbs.



Alligator breeding season is between May and June. (Some trails may be closed during their courtship).

They are quick! Alligators can reach speeds of up to 35 mph on land and 20 mph in the water (which is faster than a bottlenose dolphin).



Alligators live an average of 35-50 years in the wild. However, they have been known to live 60-80 years in captivity.

CHECKLIST

Central Florida has a very diverse selection of plant and animal life. Many species are endangered; several are unique and found nowhere else on earth and others are breathtakingly beautiful. One thing is for certain, all are well worth your efforts in seeking them out. The checklist below is by no means exhaustive, but provides some of the "must see" species to be on the lookout for as you travel the trails of central Florida:

BIRDS

- Anhinga - *Anhinga anhinga*
- Great Blue Heron - *Ardea Herodias*
- Snowy Egret - *Egretta thula*
- Swallow-Tailed Kite - *Elanoides forficatus*
- Red-Shouldered Hawk - *Buteo lineatus*
- Bald Eagle - *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*
- Florida Scrub Jay - *Aphelocoma coerulescens*
- Pileated Woodpecker - *Dryocopus pileatus*

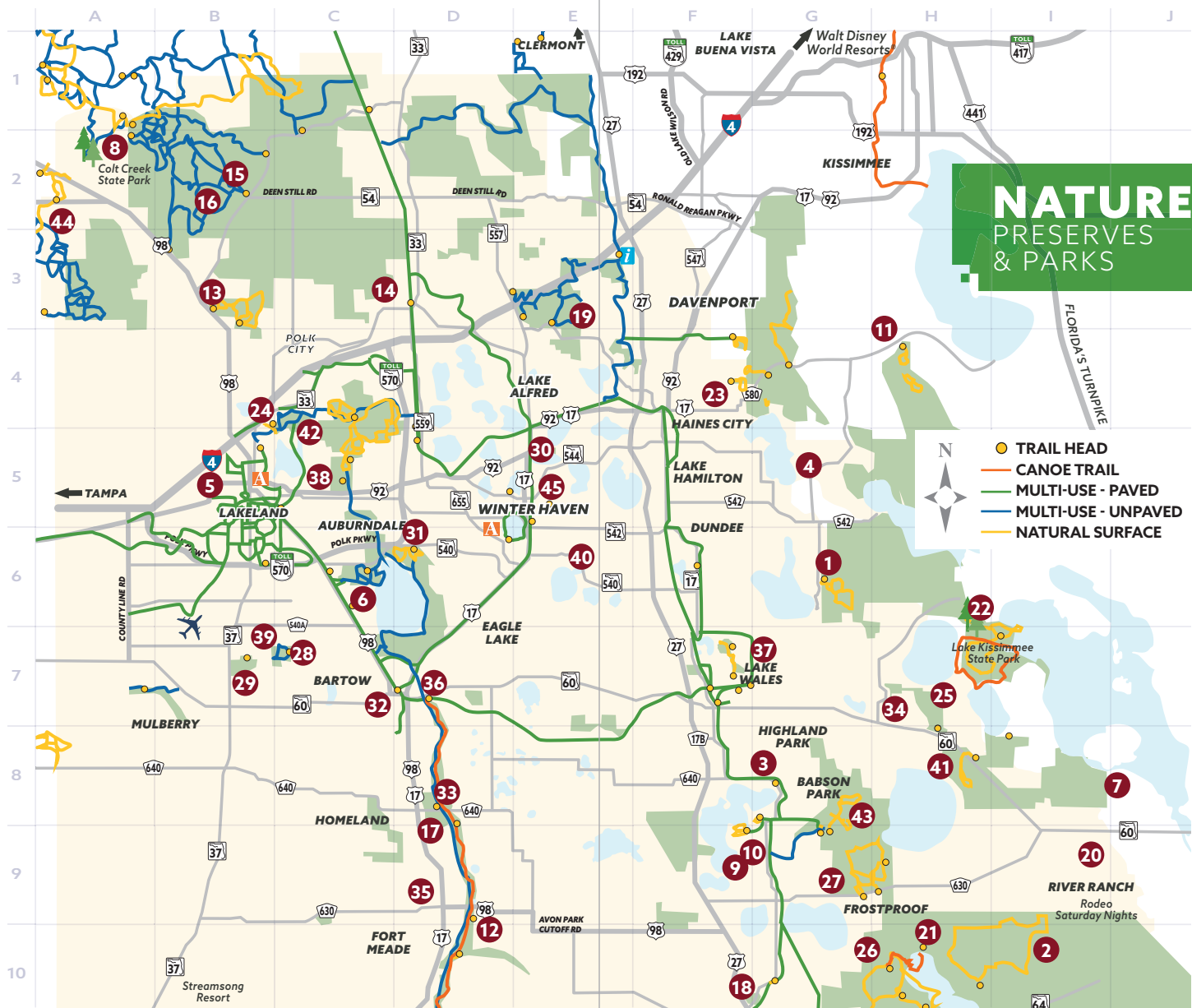
BUTTERFLIES

- Question Mark - *Polygonia interrogationis*
- White Peacock - *Anartia jatrophae*
- Monarch - *Danaus plexippus*
- Zebra Swallowtail - *Eurytides Marcellus*
- Zebra Heliconian - *Heliconius charithonia*

PLANTS

- Scrub Lupine - *Lupinus aridorum*
- Pickerelweed - *Pontederia cordata*
- Hooded Pitcherplant - *Sarracenia minor*
- Longleaf Pine - *Pinus palustris*
- Reticulate Pawpaw - *Asimina reticulata*
- Sweetgum - *Liquidambar styraciflua*
- Sky-Blue Lupine - *Lupinus diffusus*
- Purple Passionflower - *Passiflora incarnata*
- Wiregrass - *Aristida stricta*
- Pine Lily - *Lilium catesbaei*

The Southwest Florida Water Management District website provides an extensive listing of plants, mammals, birds, butterflies, frogs, insects, reptiles and the natural communities that they reside in. In addition, the listings include photographs of each species which allows for easy identification and all are provided in a PDF format that can be printed or downloaded to your smartphone and used as a reference while in the field. swfwmd.state.fl.us/recreation/species/



KEY:

 HIKING	 BOAT RAMP
 BIRDING	 BANK/PIER FISHING
 CYCLING	 ADA ACCESSIBLE TRAILS
 HORSEBACK RIDING (SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUIRED)	 RESTROOM FACILITIES (MAY BE PORTABLE)
 PICNICKING	 LEASHED PETS ALLOWED
 CAMPING - RV & TENT (WATER & ELECTRIC AVAILABLE)	 KAYAK / CANOE LAUNCH
 CAMPING - PRIMITIVE TENT (WATER & ELECTRIC UNAVAILABLE)	 FEE

1 ALLEN DAVID BROUSSARD CATFISH CREEK PRESERVE STATE PARK

Trailhead: 4335 Firetower Rd, Haines City | The site, adjacent to Lake Kissimmee State Park, is located along the beautiful Lake Wales Ridge and covers more than 8,000 acres of scrub, sandhill and flatwoods land. The preserve offers 6 miles of hiking trails, 7 miles of equestrian trails and excellent wildlife viewing opportunities. The preserve is home to numerous rare plants, such as scrub morning glory, scrub plum, pygmy fringe tree and cutthroat grass and several protected animal species including Florida scrub-jays, bald eagles, gopher tortoises and Florida scrub lizards. When visiting the preserve be prepared for the rugged conditions typical of the scrub habitat. The landscape, unlike any other, features tall, steep ridges of white sugar sand, with steep ascents and descents along the trail system. The broad trails are deep in soft sand with little to no shade. Incredible sweeping views from atop the ridges are well worth the physical challenge. floridastateparks.org **H-6**



2 AVON PARK AIR FORCE RANGE

In Avon Park from U.S. 27, turn east on C.R. 64 and follow for 10 miles until it dead ends at Avon Park Air Force Range. Access may be limited, depending on military activity you need a permit prior to arrival. Call for status. **863-452-4254** | avonparkafr.net **K-10**



3 BABSON PARK NATURE CENTER/RIDGE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Trailhead: 200 N. Crooked Lake Dr, Babson Park | The Babson Park Nature Center is a good educational resource for birding, bird conservation and upland conservation. Walk the 0.25 mile nature trail to see a sandhill ecosystem up close, with endangered wildflowers. Watch for birds such as the Eastern Towhee, White-eyed Vireo, Common Ground-Dove and Common Nighthawk. **863-638-1355** | ridgeaudubon.com **G-8**



4 BELLINI PRESERVE

Pine St. & Lake Marion Creek Dr., Haines City | Located along scenic Lake Marion, this 639-acre parcel of land was recently designated as a permanent conservation area by Conservation Florida in partnership with the Bellini family after which it is named. The area is largely an undeveloped rosemary scrub habitat, with seven miles of trails leading visitors through a variety of terrain on their way to a stunning lakeside view. Sand sinks and gopher tortoises, a threatened native species, are visible along the hike as well.



5 BONNET SPRINGS PARK

400 Bonnet Springs Blvd. Lakeland, 33815 | The former site of the longest railyard in Florida has been carefully converted into 168-acres of blended urban / natural space, situated next to Downtown Lakeland. Highlights include the Hollis Family Welcome Center, the AgAmerica Heritage Garden, The Florida Children's Museum, the Crenshaw Canopy Walk, The Kiwanis Cares for Kids Treehouse and more! Admission to Bonnet Springs Park is free. **863-413-0652**



6 CIRCLE B BAR RESERVE

Trailhead: 4399 Winter Lake Rd, (SR 540) Lakeland | Circle B Bar Reserve, located on the shores of Lake Hancock, was named one of the "Top 51 Places in the U.S. to see Wildlife" by USA Today. The 1,267-acre reserve contains a series of well-maintained marked trails of different lengths and several distinct ecosystems that support numerous bird and animal species. There are countless opportunities for photographers and painters looking to capture the beauty of nature. The tremendous bird population includes a variety of wading birds, waterfowl, ospreys, purple gallinules and bald eagles. Alligators inhabit Lake Hancock and may be observed at a distance from shore or from a pier. Oak hammock, freshwater marsh, hardwood swamp and the lakeshore are among the habitats contained on the Reserve. Many of the trails interconnect for longer hiking opportunities and are built upon berms that rise up out of the marsh and swamp habitats, offering up close and personal wildlife viewing. The trail network connects to the Fort Fraser Trail via the 0.6 mile Circle B Bar Reserve Connector Trail. Visit Polk County's Nature Discovery Center which provides hands-on educational opportunities for visitors and school groups to learn more about Florida's environmental and hydrologic natural resources. Open Tuesday-Saturday, 9 am-4 pm and Sunday, 12 pm-4 pm. **863-668-4673** | polknature.com **D-7**



7 COLEMAN LANDING

Trailhead: 1450 Shady Oaks Dr, Lake Wales | Located at the southern end of Lake Kissimmee, a short distance from the Kissimmee River, Coleman Landing provides a 135-acre mix of lakeshore and oak hammock. **K-8**



8 COLT CREEK STATE PARK

Trailhead: 16000 State Rd 471, Lakeland | This 5,067-acre state park is centered in the heart of the Green Swamp Wilderness Area just south of the Withlacoochee River. Visitors can hike or horseback ride on more than 12 miles of marked trails that meander through and around pine flatwoods, cypress domes and hardwood hammocks. A portion of the trail skirts the edge of pastureland, providing scenic vistas. The park is home to three creek systems, three man-made lakes and many animal species including the American bald eagle, Sherman's fox squirrel, gopher tortoise, white-tailed deer, wild turkey and bobcat. Glamping available. **863-815-6761 | floridastateparks.org B-3**



9 CROOKED LAKE PRAIRIE

Trailhead: 985 Ohlinger Rd, Babson Park | The 0.4 mile Lake View Trail and the 1.6 mile Scrub Trail lead you through four key imperiled ecosystems (scrub, scrubby flatwoods, wet prairie and depression marsh) in this 525-acre preserve. In addition to the great views of Crooked Lake one should be on the lookout for a wide variety of native plants (wiregrass, buttonbush, tarflower and Florida milkweed) and animal life including several species of wading birds, scrub-jays, osprey, bald eagles, turkeys, coachwhip snakes and gopher tortoises. **polknature.com G-9**



10 CROOKED LAKE SANDHILL

Trailhead: 801 Hollister Rd, Babson Park | This 25-acre property is home to four rare animals (sand skinks, gopher tortoises, eastern indigo snakes and scrub lizards), and the distinctive yellow-sand soils contain many endangered and threatened plant species. **polknature.com H-9**



11 DISNEY WILDERNESS PRESERVE (THE NATURE CONSERVANCY)

700 Scrub Jay Trail, Kissimmee | The Nature Conservancy's 11,500-acre Disney Wilderness Preserve is home to more than 1,000 species of plants and animals. Explore a rejuvenated longleaf pine forest, in addition to cypress swamp, freshwater marsh, scrub, flatwoods and oak hammocks. Hikers might glimpse a Sherman's fox squirrel, eastern indigo snake, swallowtail butterfly, or gopher tortoise, and birders may spy a bald eagle, red-cockaded woodpecker, wood stork, sandhill crane or crested caracara flying overhead. **407-935-0002 | nature.org I-5**



12 FORT MEADE OUTDOOR RECREATION AREA

1639 Frostproof Hwy, Ft. Meade | The 120-acre Ft. Meade Outdoor Recreation Area provides visitors with a beautiful woodland setting along the shores of the Peace River. **cityoffortmeade.com E-9**



13 GATOR CREEK RESERVE

Trailhead: 9725 U.S. Hwy 98 N., Lakeland; Equestrian Only Entrance (Special Use Permit Required): 9305 Hall Rd | Lakeland Gator Creek Reserve is situated on 2,700 acres and has five miles of well-established trails traversing through marshes, cypress swamps and hardwood forests. **polknature.com C-5**



14 GREEN SWAMP EAST TRACT

Trailheads: 28057 SR 471, Webster; 18039 Rockridge Rd., Polk City | The Green Swamp East Tract provides more than 33 miles of trails and 71 miles of unpaved service roads that traverse pine flatwoods, cypress domes, hardwoods swamps and the shorelines of the Withlacoochee River. Portions of the trails are inaccessible due to water in all but the driest years. Wildlife that may be seen in the area include alligator, white-tailed deer, bobwhite quail, armadillo, gray squirrels and a variety of birds. **www.myfwc.com | swfwmd.state.fl.us C-3**



15 GREEN SWAMP HAMPTON TRACT

Trailheads: 14980 Rockridge Road, Lakeland, 12198 US Hwy 98 N, Lakeland | The Green Swamp Hampton Tract provides more than 28 miles of multi-use trails. Some trails are excessively wet and/or are inaccessible during certain times of year. Wildlife that may be seen in the area include alligator, white-tailed deer, bobwhite quail, armadillo, gray squirrels, feral hogs and a variety of birds. **myfwc.com | swfwmd.state.fl.us C-3**



▼ Lake Hatchineha :: Lake Wales, FL



16 HERITAGE PEACE RIVER LANDING

3301 Homeland-Garfield Rd, Bartow | Canoe, kayak and small boat launching only. ADA-accessible floating dock. Wildlife is abundant, and cypress trees tower over the Peace River. **E-9**



17 HICKORY LAKE SCRUB

Trailhead: 1658 Scenic Hwy, Frostproof | Short sugar-sand hiking loops traverse this endangered scrub habitat that provide a good opportunity to see a diverse plant community including scrub morning glory, scrub blazing star, blue pickerelweed, yellow canna, white lizard's tail, huckleberries, lyonias and tarflowers. **polknature.com H-10**



18 HILOCHEE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Trailheads: End of Home Run Blvd, Davenport; 6239 Co Rd 557, Polk City 5650 C.R. 557, Lake Alfred; 7561 Old Polk City Rd, Haines City; Old Polk City Rd 1/4 mile east of C.R. 557, Haines City | In total the Hilochee Wildlife Management Area covers 6,093 acres of diverse plant and animal communities. Numerous hiking trails, old railroad beds and power line right-of-ways provide opportunities to see a wide variety of bird species including Anhinga, Ibis, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered hawk, American kestrel, kingfishers and hummingbirds. Deer, fox, rabbit, alligator and wild hogs are also frequently viewed throughout the management area. **myfwc.com F-4**



19 JAMES A. FLEET STATE TRAIL

7683 Berkley Road, Polk City | Designated as a National Recreation Trail®, this 29.2-mile paved trail runs through Green Swamp, the headwaters for popular paddling destinations like the Withlacoochee, Hillsborough & Peace rivers. Landscapes include the river swamp, bottomland forest, pine flatwoods, former citrus lands & cattle ranches. An equestrian trail parallels the paved path, which offers excellent wildlife viewing.



▼ American Alligator



20 KICCO WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Trailheads: 25699 Hwy 60, Lake Wales; East side of River Ranch Blvd, Lake Wales; North end of KICCO Rd (1/4 mile past the Westgate River Ranch Resort guard house on River Ranch Blvd) | KICCO consists of more than 7,000 acres along the Kissimmee River, south of Lake Kissimmee. It is a place with a real "old Florida" feel and includes a rich patchwork of habitat extremes from scrub to marsh. More than 13 miles of trails traverse through oak hammock, scrub, cypress strand and pine-palmetto flatwoods, with an additional 9 miles of hiking/off-road biking trails on the shell bed of the KICCO Grade road. Abundant wildlife includes white-tailed deer, alligators, feral hogs, bald eagles, wild turkeys, hawks, wading birds and sandhill cranes. The threatened crested caracara has been observed in the area. Thirteen miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail (**fs.usda.gov/fnst**) runs through KICCO. The Everglades Paddling Trail (**EvergladesTrail.org**) utilizes the Kissimmee River to navigate from Lake Kissimmee to Lake Okeechobee. **sfwmd.gov K-9**



21 LAKE ARBUCKLE PARK & CAMPGROUND

2600 Lake Arbuckle Rd, Frostproof **I-10**



22 LAKE KISSIMMEE STATE PARK

Trailhead: 14248 Camp Mack Rd, Lake Wales (Fee required.) | The park, located on the shores of lakes Kissimmee, Tiger and Rosalie, covers 5,930 acres. Twelve distinct natural communities including floodplain marshes, flatwoods and shady hammocks, hold more than 30 listed species of flora and fauna. It is home to butterfly orchids, sawgrass, fetterbush, gallberry and expansive, colorful fields of lotus and pickerelweed. The Park, known as one of the best birding areas in central Florida, hosts more than 200 bird species... scrub-jay, bald eagle, snail kite, sandhill crane and the crested caracara to name a few. The park offers 13 miles of hiking trails and 6 miles of equestrian trails which showcase white-tailed deer, bobcat, turkey, Sherman fox squirrels and grey fox. The trails lead you through pine flatwoods, oak hammocks, by freshwater marshes and out to Lake Kissimmee. You may take your pick from a half-mile self-guided nature trail, two loop trails and a spur trail out to the lake. Or you can travel back in time to 1876 to find a Florida cow hunter in a frontier camp along the route of a cattle drive as a living history demonstration (open seasonally). There are two backcountry campsites along the trails available for those who wish to spend the night under the stars. The park has full-facility campsites, glamping, as well as a primitive camping facility and is a stop on the Everglades Paddling Trail. **863-696-1112 | evergladestail.org | floridastateparks.org I-6**



23 LAKE MARION CREEK WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA / LAKE MARION CREEK HORSESHOE SCRUB TRACT

Trailheads: Horseshoe Creek Rd, Haines City; County Route 580 at Huckleberry Island Rd; County Route 580 at Snell Creek, Poinciana; Baltic Rd off Caspian Rd, Poinciana | Located on the Polk-Osceola county line, the 8,083-acre Lake Marion Creek Wildlife Management Area consists of pine flatwoods, cypress swamps, hardwood swamps, oak hammock, scrubs and freshwater marshes. White-tailed deer, feral hogs, wading birds (including white ibis, little blue heron, great blue heron and great egret) and scrub-jays can be viewed during most hikes. sfwmd.gov **G-5**



24 LAKE PARKER PARK

Trailhead: 910 E. Granada St, Lakeland | Lake Parker Park has more than 100 acres of native Florida vegetation and more than 6.25 miles of multi-use trails, some along the Lake Parker shoreline. lakelandgov.net **C-5**



25 LAKE ROSALIE PARK & CAMPGROUND

Rosalie Lake Rd, Lake Wales **863-679-4245 I-7**



26 LAKE WALES RIDGE STATE FOREST - ARBUCKLE TRACT

Trailheads: Lake Arbuckle Rd, Avon Park; Rucks Dairy Rd, Avon Park; Lake Godwin Rd, Avon Park; McClean Cabin Rd, Avon Park; Intersection of School Bus Rd and C.R. 64, Avon Park; Lake Arbuckle Boat Ramp (canoe/kayak launch) | The Arbuckle Tract leads hikers alongside picturesque Reedy Creek where one may see otters frolicking on the creek banks. Fishing and canoeing can be enjoyed on Reedy Creek, Lake Godwin, Lake Arbuckle and Arbuckle Creek. Download a trail map at freshfromflorida.com **I-10**



FUN FACT:

The best time to see wildflowers is late September-October and late February-Early April.

27 LAKE WALES RIDGE STATE FOREST - WALK-IN-WATER TRACT

Trailheads: State Hwy 630 E. six miles east of U.S. 27, Frostproof; State Hwy 630 E. 7.5 miles east of U.S. 27, Frostproof; Intersection of State Hwy 630 E. and Walk-In-Water Rd, Frostproof; Walk-In-Water Rd, two miles north of State Hwy 630 E., Frostproof; Lake Walk-in-Water Boat Ramp (Canoe/Kayak Launch) | The forest offers many recreational opportunities for the outdoor enthusiast. This tract is home to resident Florida scrub-jays, often seen from the trails. Download a trail map at freshfromflorida.com **H-9**



28 LAKELAND HIGHLANDS SCRUB

Trailhead: 6998 Lakeland Highlands Rd, Lakeland | This unique 551-acre conservation area is located atop the Lakeland Ridge at an elevation of 230 feet above sea level. Two trails (the 2.2 mile Tortoise Trail and 0.6 mile Shady Oak Trail) traverse open dry prairie, pine flatwood, xeric hammock and basin swamp habitats. polknature.com **D-7**



29 LOYCE HARPE PARK

Trailhead: 500 W. Carter Rd, Mulberry | Loyce Harpe Park features a seven-mile single-track mountain biking course built on old phosphate mining land with several types of terrain. **C-7**



30 MACKAY GARDENS & LAKESIDE PRESERVE

Trailhead: 900 Mackay Blvd, Lake Alfred | This 112-acre preserve sits on the shores of Lake Rochelle and includes a 1.1 mile multi-use trail. With almost a mile of lakefront shoreline, there are ample opportunities to view wading and migratory birds, in addition to observing several species of endangered plants and animals. mylakealfred.com **F-6**



31 MARSHALL HAMPTON RESERVE

Trailhead: Thornhill Rd, Lakeland (Parking is on Thornhill Rd just south of Winter Lake Rd) | Marshall Hampton Reserve, located across Lake Hancock from Circle B Bar Reserve, has an interesting blend of oak hammock, cypress dome swamp, pine flatwoods and a 60-acre pond. The 1,100-plus acre site is mostly dominated by live oaks, slash pine, sweet gum and palmettos. It provides more than 7 miles of multi-use trails that offer different views of the property. Osprey Overlook Loop Trail (2.5 miles) offers little to no shade, while Acorn Hammock Loop Trail (3.5 miles) is shaded. Both trails are flat, with areas that may be under water during the rainy season. The site is open for horseback riding, call to obtain a special use permit. **863-534-7377** polknature.com **D-7**



32 MARY HOLLAND PARK

City of Bartow | From U.S. 98, go south on North Broadway Ave, then south on Shumate Drive. Shumate Drive becomes Mary Holland Park Rd. Tall trees and scenic vistas of the lakes and foot bridges offer a relaxing opportunity to stroll the property. Water birds frequent the area.

friendsoftheparks.net/2012TrekTenTrails D-8



33 MOSAIC PEACE RIVER PARK

Trailhead: 2200 County Route 640, Bartow | A boardwalk with perfect view of Peace River takes visitors through the shade of mature cypress and oak trees. Plentiful horse-trailer parking. Equestrian users call for special use permit. **863-534-4340**

friendsoftheparks.net/2013TrekTenTrails E-8



34 NORTH WALK-IN-WATER CREEK

Trailhead: North side of S.R. 60 just before Walk-in-Water Creek, Lake Wales | North Walk-in-Water Creek is a 1,100-acre wetland reserve that is home to the one-mile Hammock Hideaway Trail. The Preserve is home to an abundance of wildlife including turkeys, deer, Sherman's fox squirrel, alligators, otters, pileated woodpeckers and great horned owls.

polknature.com I-8



35 PATTERSON PARK

601 North Charleston Ave, Fort Meade. A nice paved trail for walking around scenic reclaimed phosphate-mined lakes.

cityoffortmeade.com/departments/recreation E-9



36 PEACE RIVER CANOE LAUNCH

2419 S.R. 60, Bartow. A floating dock on the Peace River provides fishing opportunities and a spot to put in your canoe or kayak. **E-8**



37 PINE RIDGE NATURE PRESERVE - BOK TOWER GARDENS

Trailhead: 1151 Tower Blvd, Lake Wales | Bok Tower Gardens, a National Historic Landmark, features two hiking trails, 50 acres of gardens, the 20-room Pinewood Estate and the 205-foot art deco and neo-Gothic Singing Tower carillon. Bok Tower Gardens has fascinated millions of Florida visitors since 1929. The Pine Ridge Nature Trail at Bok Tower Gardens is a longleaf pine/turkey oak habitat. The .75-mile walking trail takes you through this unique and quickly disappearing habitat that once covered millions of acres of the Southeastern United States. The trail begins near Window by the Pond and ends at the Visitor Center. The 1.5-mile Preserve Trail traverses Longleaf Pine forest and former citrus groves. Both trails provide great views of the gardens, the iconic carillon tower and spectacular views across the horizon from some of the more elevated areas of the property.

863-676-1408 | boktowergardens.org G-7



FUN FACT:

Sandhill Cranes are famous for their courtship dances. They mate for life and can live up to 20 years old.

38 SADDLE CREEK PARK & CAMPGROUND

Trailhead: 3716 Morgan Combee Rd, Lakeland | Of the 750 acres that make up this park, the majority is taken up by former phosphate mine pits that are now lakes. The two main trails are very good for hiking. The 1.2-mile Nature Trail is very broad and easy to hike. The 2.3-mile Tenoroc Trails (made up of the 1.1-mile Flatwoods Loop and 1.2-mile Lake Loop) are narrower and provide a more strenuous hike.

863-413-2399 D-6



39 SE7EN WETLANDS

Trailheads: Through Loyce E. Harpe Park at 500 W Carter Rd. Mulberry, follow signs for mountain bike parking and use Gopher Tortoise Gate. Through Lakeland Highlands Scrub at 6998 Lakeland Highlands Rd, Lakeland, follow signs for Se7en Wetlands connector trail through and Wood Stork Gate. | The Red Wetland Two trail features a 2.9-mile loop and the Blue Wetland One trail offers a 2.4 mile loop. Opened in early 2018, Se7en Wetlands is part of a 1,600-acre system comprised of marshes, uplands, and lakes designed to help naturally clean already treated wastewater as it meanders through the seven 'cells'. Diverse habitats give visitors a chance to see a variety of wildlife including a host of migratory bird species, as well as alligators, river otters, turtles, bobcats, and more. The first phase brought visitors restrooms at each entrance along with 8.5 miles of trails and two observation decks. When completed, Se7en Wetlands will have more than 22 miles of walking/hiking trails along with an Educational Center.

863-834-7386 | lakelandgov.net/se7enwetlands D-7



40 STREET AUDUBON CENTER

Trailhead: 115 Lameraux Rd, Winter Haven | Short Trails will lead you to the shores of Lake Ned through passionflower vines, the host plant to Florida's Zebra Longwing Butterfly. Check times to visit their volunteer-run visitor center. lakeregionaudubon.org F-7



41 SUMICA

Trailhead: 14020 State Rd 60 E., Lake Wales | At 4,031 acres, SUMICA is the largest of Polk County's Environmental Lands. Three trails provide a total of 9.1 miles (Hiking Trail 2.1 miles; Campsite Trail 2.2 miles and Equestrian Trail 4.8 miles) of nature viewing opportunities amongst the pine flatwoods, oak hammock and marsh habitats. You may see a variety of birds including bald eagles, sandhill cranes, wild turkeys, falcon, crested caracaras and wading birds. Also look for deer, bobcats, fox, gopher tortoises and occasional bear tracks . polknature.com I-8



42 TENOROC FISH MANAGEMENT AREA

Trailhead: 3829 Tenoroc Mine Rd, Lakeland (Fee required.) | Tenoroc is one of the gateways to the Great Florida Birding Trail, and its diverse habitats provide productive year-round hiking and nature-watching opportunities. More than 10 miles of hiking trails offer both easy ambles on level ground and challenging hikes on hilly terrain. Tenoroc is nationally noted for largemouth bass and provides excellent fishing for panfish (bluegill and redear sunfish), black crappie and several varieties of catfish (anglers please stop by the Welcome Center for more information). Birding hotspots at Tenoroc are numerous. Keep watch for meadowlarks, raptors, wading birds, wood ducks, Florida mallards, blue-winged teal, hooded mergansers and other migratory ducks. Northern harriers, white pelicans, belted kingfishers and American kestrels can be spotted in the winter. In addition to birds, keep an eye out for colorful butterflies such as the question mark, red admiral, spicebush swallowtail and giant swallowtail. Several undisturbed areas of pine flatwoods, xeric oak and floodplain swamp provide abundant natural habitats to support the numerous plant and animal species found here. **863-499-2421 | myfwc.com** D-5



43 TIGER CREEK PRESERVE

Trailhead: 674 Pfundstein Rd, Babson Park | Tiger Creek Preserve encompasses more than 4,800 acres and is owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy. Three hiking trails totaling more than 8 miles are available within the Preserve. The Highlands Trail is a sandy loop trail that takes visitors through a beautiful, open pine woods area called the "central highlands." A shorter side trail, the Patrick Creek Loop, crosses Patrick Creek and enters a forested wetland. The George Cooley Trail is an easy, well-marked loop that goes through a variety of natural habitats: scrubby flatwoods, hardwood swamp, pine flatwoods and cutthroat seeps. polknature.org H-9



44 UPPER HILLSBOROUGH

From U.S. 98 N., take C.R. 54 west across RR tracks, entrance is on the left. | Experience the greenway corridor that is the Hillsborough River. sfwmd.state.fl.us A-3





Polk County Board of County Commissioners



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