

DIRECTIONS: From US 98 in Port St. Joe, take SR 71 N approx. 8.5 mi. and turn right (E) on CR 387. Drive 8.0 mi. and turn right (S) on Murphy Rd. in Howard Creek; FWC office (approx. 0.6 mi. on left) can provide maps of area roads.

Open dawn to dusk. (850) 827-2934
http://myfwc.com/recreation/apalachicola_river/



at St. George Island State Park. Unmarked trails leading off from the parking area at the end of 6th St. wind through a coastal pine forest and give vantages of the sound and shoreline. Watch for shore- and seabirds like royal terns, oystercatchers and laughing gulls as well as migrants moving through: common nighthawks, scarlet tanagers, Baltimore orioles and swallow-tailed kites all pass through coastal areas like these as they arrive off the Gulf each spring. Come prepared with insect repellent and drinking water.

Map Pitcher Plant & Peregrine Cluster

44 St. George Island State Park

This is regularly rated one of Florida's most beautiful beaches, but what all the beachgoers don't realize is that it's spectacular bird-watching too! Bonaparte's gulls are reliable in winter-spring, snowy plovers and American oystercatchers nest here and gull-billed terns cruise the beach in summer. Gannets plunge offshore Oct.-Apr., and spring migrants like swallow-tailed kites, common nighthawks and herons can be seen arriving off the ocean in March and April. The sandhill trail from the camping area and the oaks surrounding the youth camp are both excellent spots for migrant songbirds like blue grosbeaks and scarlet tanagers in April. There's something to see year-round, but birding is best and beach visitor numbers are lowest Oct.-Apr.

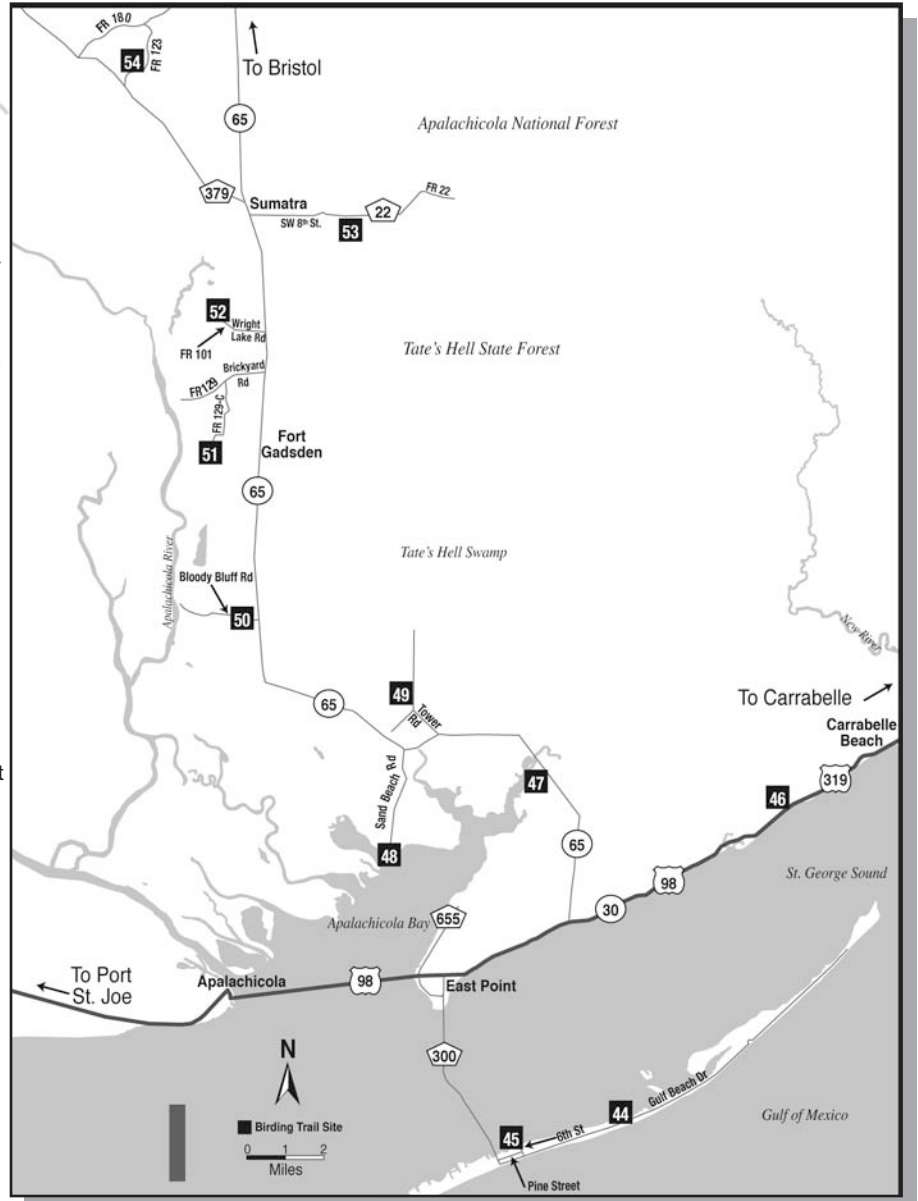
DIRECTIONS: From US 98 in Eastpoint, take Island Drive (CR 300) S approx. 5 mi. across bridge to St. George Island. Turn left (E) on Gulf Beach Dr.; entrance to park is approx. 4.0 mi. ahead.

Open 8 a.m. to sunset. (850) 927-2111
www.floridastateparks.org



45 Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve: Unit 4

This small preserve on the sound side of St. George Island is a nice companion to the larger, more well-known migrant fallout site



DIRECTIONS: From US 98 in Eastpoint, take Island Drive (CR 300) S approx. 5 mi. across bridge to St. George Island. Turn left (E) on Gulf Beach Dr. and go 1 mi. to 6th St. Turn left. At the end, look for a gravel road and small gazebo at the site entrance.

Open dawn to dusk. (850) 670-4783



46 Tate's Hell State Forest: High Bluff Coastal Hiking Trail

From the parking area, a nature trail leads 4 miles through sand pine scrub good for brown-headed nuthatches, red-bellied woodpeckers and eastern towhees year-round. In migration, summer and scarlet tanagers can be found in the pines. Bald eagles nest NE of the parking area so watch for flyovers! A nice spot for a quick hike, worth checking in migration.

DIRECTIONS: From Carrabelle, drive W on US 98 approx. 3.0 mi. past Carrabelle Beach; entrance and parking area are on right (N).

Open dawn to dusk. (850) 697-3734 www.fl-dof.com



47 Apalachicola River WEA: Cash Bayou

If you're traveling between Sumatra and Eastpoint, it's worth taking a moment to pull off at the edge of Cash Bayou to take in the scenery, scan for waterbirds like bald eagles and American bitterns, and check the brief trails for songbirds. Better yet, launch your canoe or kayak from this landing and bird the bayou by boat. Hunting is allowed in the area; more info available on the Web.

DIRECTIONS: From US 98 E of Eastpoint, drive N on SR 65 for 4.6 mi. Parking is on left (SW) side of SR 65 just before bridge.

Open dawn to dusk. (850) 827-2934
http://myfwc.com/recreation/apalachicola_river/



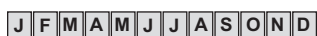
48 Apalachicola River WEA: Sand Beach Tower and Area Roads

Sand Beach Rd. ends at a canoe/kayak launch, pier and viewing tower, in a nice hammock where yellow-throated warblers and white-breasted nuthatches are possible. Scan the reeds for waders like little blue herons and from the tower, scope East Bay for loons, grebes and wintering ducks. Osprey and bald eagles nest in the area, and both Mississippi and swallow-tailed kites are likely in summer here in the Apalachicola River basin. Area roads can be interesting birding for intrepid explorers, particularly Tank Island

Rd. and Butcher Pen Landing. Shallow streams across the road (= low water crossings) have firm limestone bottoms, and are not an obstacle to 2WD vehicles, except during very high water. These are a hydrologically sensitive alternative to culverts.

DIRECTIONS: From US 98 E of Eastpoint, drive N on SR 65 for 8.6 mi. Turn left (S) on Sand Beach Rd. to enter site. Informational kiosk containing maps of area roads is on right. Tower is 2.7 mi. down Sand Beach Rd.

Open dawn to dusk. (850) 827-2934
http://myfwc.com/recreation/apalachicola_river/



49 Tate's Hell State Forest: Deep Creek Birding Trail

This rustic site gives you quick, easy access to a wet prairie in the Apalachicola River basin. Insect-eating pitcher plants line the ditches around this prairie measuring 0.75 mile by 0.5 mile. Watching for other recreational users, bird the road from your car and drive the road that divides the prairie in two, watching in winter for typical wintering wetland sparrows like skulky LeConte's, grasshopper and Henslow's, as well as more common swamp and song sparrows. Swallow-tailed kites use the cypress domes in late spring; wading birds like snowy egrets and little blue herons are most concentrated March-June. By summer, the sun is punishing and bugs are fierce, hence the state forest's name! Hunting here is heaviest at the end of Nov. and from mid-Dec. through early-Jan. Call for details.

DIRECTIONS: From US 98 E of Eastpoint, drive N on SR 65 for 7.3 mi and turn right (N) on Tower Rd. After 1.0 mi., bear right at the fork; site is along the left side of Tower Rd.

Open dawn to dusk. (850) 697-3734 www.fl-dof.com



50 Apalachicola River WEA: Bloody Bluff Tract

Along the drive down Bloody Bluff Rd., watch the edges for sparrows including chipping, swamp and song, as well as listening in spring for Bachman's sparrows. The loop trail at the boat ramp at the end of the road can be good for songbirds like yellow-throated warblers and blue-headed vireos, and swallow-tailed and Mississippi kites frequent the river run. Most roads in this area can be interesting for birding (Creek Rd. and Old County Rd. have been productive for sparrows in the past) and several species of rare plants occur on the area. This site is very rustic and there are some low water crossings on the dirt roads, but these washes are hard bottomed (and accordingly passable in 2WD except in times of very high water). Various hunting seasons run between October and April, so check the Web site for seasons and wear blaze orange when recommended.

DIRECTIONS: From US 98 E of Eastpoint, drive N on SR 65 for 14.2 mi. Turn left (W) on Bloody Bluff Rd. to enter site.

Open dawn to dusk. (850) 827-2934
http://myfwc.com/recreation/apalachicola_river/



51 Fort Gadsden Historical Site

This site of a British Fort dating back to the War of 1812 is slowly returning to the nature it was eked out of centuries ago. Fortifications and historical signage are surrounded by the Apalachicola National Forest's flatwoods on one side, good for common yellowthroats and the occasional Bachman's sparrow; on the other side, the shoreline at the broad, brown Apalachicola River is lined with hardwoods and cypress, home to singing parulas and prothonotary warblers. Hike the flatwoods trail from the parking area, and walk the waterfront in migration. Breeding raptors like red-shouldered hawks and Mississippi kites are raucous in spring/summer. Longleaf pines used by red-cockaded woodpeckers as cavity trees are ringed with white paint.

DIRECTIONS: Approx. 4.5 mi. S of Sumatra on SR 65, turn right (W) on FR 129 (Brickyard Rd.). Follow FR 129 2.3 mi. to site.

Open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (850) 643-2282
www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/recreation/



52 Wright Lake

Two trails here, a 0.25-mile trail and 4.5-mile one, traverse stretches of longleaf pine-wiregrass community. Plants and animals in this community type have come to depend on frequent fire that keeps the understory low and open, stimulating pine seeds to germinate and wiregrass to flower. Since natural fire is feared by people, it's been suppressed in much of Florida, allowing many remaining examples of this community to become overgrown and unsuitable for the animals that are uncompromisingly dependent on it. Here in the national forest, prescribed fire is used to keep pinewoods healthy, making one of the best places to see red-cockaded woodpeckers and Bachman's sparrows. Spring mornings are best for spotting both, when sparrow males are singing "here, kitty-kitty-kitty-kitty" on their territories, and RCWs are busy coming and going from their nest cavities, carrying food to their young.

DIRECTIONS: Approx. 2.5 mi. S of Sumatra on SR 65, turn right (W) on FR 101 (Wright Lake Rd.). Follow FR 101 2.0 mi. to site.

Open 24 hrs./day. (850) 643-2282
www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/recreation/



53 Apalachicola Ranger District County Road 22 Pond

While there are red-cockaded woodpecker cavity trees ringed with white paint visible throughout the national forest, this site offers the opportunity to park and hike to view the birds on foot without danger from passing traffic. From the small parking area, hike S to the small lake where ducks like lesser scaup may occasionally be found in winter. The W side of the lake is a good foraging and nesting area for the woodpeckers. Around the cavity entrances, you'll notice sap running from holes drilled by the woodpeckers; this is thought to deter snakes from raiding the nests. Please take care not to approach the cavity trees too closely; these birds are protected by law and harassment is not tolerated. Patient observers will easily see RCWs on spring mornings as they emerge and then begin bringing food to chicks in the cavity. Please stay on the trails to avoid trampling some of the sensitive and rare plants that occur in this area.

DIRECTIONS: From SR 20 just W of Bristol, take SR 12 S approx. 19 mi. to SR 65 in Wilma. Go S on SR 65 9.7 mi. to Sumatra and turn left (E) on SW 8th St./CR 22. Go 1.4 miles down this wide unpaved road (also known as FR 22). Narrow woods road to site is on right (S) side. Park on SW 8th St./CR 22/FR 22 and walk the woods road to the pond.

Open dawn to dusk. (850) 643-2282
www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/recreation/



54 Post Office Bay, Forest Road 123 Northeast

This scenic drive passes through wet savannas and longleaf pine forest in some of the best condition you'll find anywhere in the southeast. Watch for carnivorous plants like four species of pitcher plants growing in roadside wetlands, and stop at roadside pulloffs to explore, looking for breeding red-cockaded woodpeckers, Bachman's sparrows and Swainson's warblers. Winter can be good for rarer sparrows like Henslow's and LeConte's in the soggy flatwoods and savannas. Take care not to trample delicate plant life by walking off trails, and be aware that hunting pressure can be very heavy here in deer season. Call for dates and wear blaze orange in season; roadways and their immediate area should be safe during daylight hours.

DIRECTIONS: Half a mile N of Sumatra on SR 65, turn left (W) onto CR 379. The best access point for FR 123 is approx. 6.0 mi. ahead on the right (E) side of the road. This road can be driven as a loop with stops to view RCW clusters and savannas: drive FR 123 until it ends at FR 180. Turn left (W) and FR 180 will return you to CR 379, 1.5 mi. further north.

Open dawn to dusk. (850) 643-2282
www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/recreation/

