

Birds of the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades Watershed



Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*)

Identification: Adults are large, grayish-blue with a black stripe extending over the eye. Breeding adults have a yellowish bill and long plumes on head, neck and back. In southern Florida, an all-white morph is found, having yellow bills and legs.

Habitat/Diet: The breeding season is from Nov. through July or August. Food is obtained by “still-hunting” and includes fish, frogs, lizards, snakes, small mammals, and occasionally, other birds.



Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*)

Identification: Adults have a bluish head, neck and wings, maroon at the base of the neck, and a white stripe down the front of the neck.

Habitat/Diet: Found in freshwater marshes as well as the peninsular coast. Diet consists primarily of fish.

Status: Numbers of tricolored herons have declined due to the loss of wetlands.



Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*)

Identification: Adults are slate-blue overall and have lime-green to blue-green legs. Juveniles are white.

Habitat/Diet: Utilize a variety of nesting and feeding habitats but prefer fresh water. Diet consists of small fish, frogs, and invertebrates.

Status: Populations are declining due to loss of wetland habitat. It is also speculated that the competition with Cattle egrets for nesting sites may have some effect on their decline.

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Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*)

Identification: Adults are small and stocky with short legs. The back and sides of the neck are a deep chestnut, the upperparts of the body are green, the center of the throat and neck is white, and legs are sometimes a bright yellow-orange.

Habitat/Diet: Diet is primarily fish, crustaceans, mollusks and a variety of insects. Known to “fish” by dangling items in the water.



Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)

Identification: Adult is stocky with short legs and neck, and have a black crown and back. White plumes behind the head are longest in breeding season. Juvenile birds have a brown upperparts with bold white spotting.

Habitat/Diet: Found in shrub-bordered stream margins. Diet is fish, amphibians, crustaceans, snakes, and insects. Large eyes allow for nocturnal feeding.

Status: Species of special concern.



Yellow-crowned Night Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*)

Identification: Adults have a buffy-white crown, black face with white cheeks, and in breeding season, head plumes. Juveniles lack the black face and white cheek and are, instead, speckled uniformly with white.

Habitat/Diet: Roost in trees in wet woods and swamps. Diet is primarily crustaceans but a variety of other wetland prey is eaten. Large eyes allow for nocturnal feeding.

Status: Species of special concern.

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Great Egret (*Casmerodius albus*)

Identification: Adults stand about 40 inches tall, with a yellow bill and long black legs.

Habitat/Diet: Found in shallow wetlands such as lake margins and in the littoral zone along rivers for a diet of fish and invertebrates.

Status: Hunted for its plumes, great egrets were almost wiped out in the early 1900's. Currently this species is abundant and widespread threatened primarily by loss of wetlands.



Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*)

Identification: Adult is small and white with a slender black bill, yellow eyes, black legs and bright "golden slippers". Breeding adults have graceful plumes on head, neck and back.

Habitat/Diet: Active feeders that are found in various wetland habitats. Diet includes frogs, fish, worms, crustaceans, invertebrates and small snakes.

Status: Hunted for its plumes, snowy egrets were almost wiped out in the early 1900's and are still listed as a species of special concern.



Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)

Identification: Adults are all white with a yellow bill and legs and black feet. Breeding plumage on the back, head and chest is buff-colored.

Habitat/Diet: Found near livestock or along roadsides. Diet consists of a variety of invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, and small rodents.

Status: An Old World species associated with the East African plains. It migrated to South American in the 1930's and breeding individuals were found in Florida in 1953.

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White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*)

Identification: Adults have distinctive white plumage and pink facial skin, with a slender, downward-curved bill. Juveniles are mostly brown above with white below. In flight, the tips of the wings are dark.

Habitat/Diet: Found in freshwater marshes and shallow lakes. Diet includes crayfish, aquatic insects, grasshoppers, crabs, grass shrimp, and small snakes. Feeds by probing (“feeling”) mud for food items.

Status: Species of special concern.



Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)

Identification: Adult plumage is dark reddish overall, glossed with green or purple iridescence, and has a slender, downward-curved bill.

Habitat/Diet: Found in wetlands and prefer fresh water. Diet consists of crayfish, fish, snakes, grasshoppers, and other insects.

Status: Species of special concern.



Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*)

Identification: Limpkins are chocolate brown overall, with dense brown and white streaking above. Their bill is long and curved slightly downward.

Habitat/Diet: In this area, they feed primarily on apple snails. Limpkins breed year round, depending upon the availability of food.

Status: These birds are listed as a species of special concern due mostly to their dependence on apple snails as a food source. South Florida “specialty”.

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Anhinga

(*Anhinga anhinga*)

Identification: Adults have long, thin necks and are black above, with silvery-white streaks and spots on the wings and upper back. During breeding season, the male grows plumes on neck and bill and facial skin become brightly colored. Females have a buff-colored neck and breast.

Flight: Alternating flight pattern

Habitat/Diet: Often seen perched on a branch above the water, with their wings spread out to dry. Diet consists of fish, which they stab with their needlelike bill.



Double-crested Cormorant

(*Phalacrocorax auritus*)

Identification: Adults are dark overall with an orange throat patch. Can be distinguished from Anhingas by their heavier, hooked bills.

Flight: Constant flight pattern.

Habitat/Diet: Found in large bodies of open water, both fresh and salt. Often found on pilings along the Kissimmee River. Diet consists of fish.



Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*)

Identification: Adults have a bald, blackish-gray head, with a dark legs, and a downward-curved bill.

Flight:: In flight, their black tail and wingtips contrast with their white body, and have a slow-beat flight pattern.

Status: Due to degradation of nesting and feeding habitat, wood storks have declined in numbers and are on the state and federal endangered species lists.

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Birds of the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades Watershed



Purple Gallinule

(*Porphyryla martinica*)

Identification: Adults have a metallic green back and purplish-blue head, neck and undersides. The bill is red with a yellow tip and they have a white frontal shield.

Habitat/Diet: Found in wetlands where nests are placed over water in marsh vegetation. Food consists of invertebrates, such as frogs, grasshoppers, and spiders, and a variety of wetland vegetation.



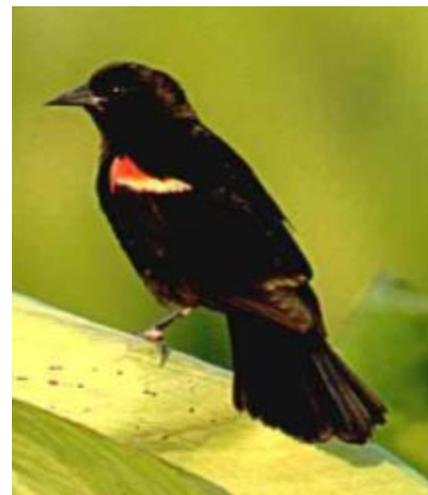
Common Gallinule a/k/a Common Moorehen

(*Gallinula chloropus*)

Identification: Adults are dark gray below and brownish above with a yellow-tipped red bill and red frontal shield.

Flight: Before flight, they run across the surface of the water.

Habitat/Diet: Commonly seen along the river in amongst the wetland vegetation or swimming on the open water. Diet consists of a variety of wetland vegetation, seeds, insects and aquatic invertebrates.



Red-winged Blackbird

(*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

Identification: Males are a glossy black with bright red patches bordered with yellow on the wing. Females are sparrow like - brown above and streaked below.

Habitat/Diet: Commonly found in large flocks feeding in grasslands and near marshes. Diet consists of seeds as well as grasshoppers, dragonflies, and other insects.

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Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

Identification: Adults are easy to identify by their white head and tail, and their large, yellow beak. Juveniles are mostly dark.

Flight: Eagles fly with wings straight distinguishing them from vultures, which fly with their wings in a slight v-shape.

Habitat/Diet: Nests are usually built in tall pine trees near lakes, marshes or coastlines. Eagles feed mainly on fish.

Status: At one time considered endangered. Ban on DDT has allowed for a strong population rebound.



Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*)

Identification: Adult birds have reddish shoulders and wing linings.

Flight: Fly with several quick wing beats and a glide.

Habitat/Diet: Found in moist, mixed woodlands near water. Nests are usually in a well-foliaged tree, with two to the usual number of eggs laid during late winter. Diet consists of small mammals, lizards, snakes, frogs, crayfish and insects.



Snail Kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*)

Identification: Adults have a thin, deeply-hooked bill. Males are grey-black above and below, with white uppertail and undertail coverts, square white tail, with a broad dark band, legs orange-red, eyes and facial skin are reddish. Females are dark brown, with light patches on their face.

Flight: Flight is slow with much flapping of wings when hunting for apple snails.

Habitat/Diet: Found in freshwater marshlands. Diet of only apple snails, which their beak is specialized for opening.

Status: Endangered species, found in southern Florida.

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Crested Caracara (*Caracara plancus*)

Identification: Brownish-black overall, with a white throat and neck, barred underparts and facial skin that varies from red to orange to yellow.

Flight: In flight, white patches are visible at the ends of the wings.

Habitat/Diet: Found in open prairie and can be seen feeding on the ground with vultures, feeding primarily on carrion. Also feed on insects and small animals.

Status: Threatened species.



Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

Identification: Dark brown above and white below, with a white head and noticeable dark eye stripe, hooked bills and strong talons.

Habitat/Diet: Nest near salt or fresh water. Ospreys build bulky nests in trees, on poles and on specially made platforms. Diet consists of fish.

Status: Threatened species.



Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*)

Identification: Deeply-forked tail, white body, and dark tail and wing tips are most obvious in flight.

Habitat/Diet: Found in flatwoods in tall pines or cypress trees. Diet consists mostly of insects, but also snakes, lizards and young birds. Swallow-tailed kites often eat prey in flight and drink in flight skimming the water like a swallow.

Status: The loss of tall trees for nesting has contributed greatly to the listing of this bird as a threatened species.

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Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)

Identification: Adults are mostly black all over, with a black head and shorter wings and tail than the Turkey Vultures.

Flight: Wings are held flat and feet usually extend beyond the tail. Flap less often than Turkey Vultures.

Habitat/Diet: Diet consists of carrion and can be aggressive, often dominating the kill.



Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)

Identification: Adults have a bare red head, and a relatively long tail. Light color on the wings.

Flight: Wings held in a nearly flat "V".

Habitat/Diet: Diet consists of carrion. Has an extremely sensitive sense of smell.



Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis*)

Identification: Adults have gray plumage, black legs, whitish cheeks and a red crown. Their rattling call can be heard over long distances.

Habitat/Diet: Found in marshes and wet prairies. Diet consists of a variety of plants and invertebrates.

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Mottled Duck (*Anas fulvigula*)

Identification: Both males and females have brown plumage. Males have bright yellow bills with a black spot at the base. Females have dull orange bills flecked with black.

Habitat/Diet: Often found in freshwater marshes. Diet is mostly vegetarian. In summer, insects and snails account for 1/3 of diet.

Status: Important game species in Florida. Over 13,000 are harvested each year.



Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*)

Identification: Male plumage on head and back is iridescent, eye and base of bill are red, tan sides, white throat, and white-spotted maroon chest. Female plumage is grayish above, white undersides, white eye ring and eye line, and a light blue wing patch.

Habitat/Diet: Commonly found in wooded wetlands. Diet in the fall consists primarily of acorns.

Status: Readily nest in man-made nest boxes. Many have been placed along the Kissimmee River in hopes of recolonizing restored river runs.



Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*)

Identification: Adults are stocky birds with large heads and a large beak. They are slate blue above with a white belly. Females have a reddish streak across their chest.

Habitat/Diet: Seen perched on power lines above a roadside ditch. Dive headfirst into water to catch prey. Diet consists of small fish, crayfish, frogs and insects.

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Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

Identification: 14" Plumage is glossy black above and white beneath. The female is somewhat browner, as is the juvenile. They do not build a nest, but lay around 4 eggs in a shallow depression lined with grass and debris on open ground, or in the grass. The eggs are incubated by both parents for 22-27 days.

Habitat/Diet: Often found in shallow wetlands. Diet is mostly insects and snails.

Status: Hunted almost to the point of extinction in the 19th century, the Black-necked Stilt was later protected and has recovered a great deal of ground.



Roseate Spoonbill (*Ajaia ajaja*)

Identification: 32" The adult male and female look very similar, with a white neck and a pink back and wings highlighted in red. The head has no feathers and is greenish in color, while the distinctive spatulate bill is pale gray with darker gray black mottling. The eyes are red, the legs are red with dark feet. The immature bird has yellow eyes and a yellowish bill, with white head feathers, and its body is white or a very pale pink.

Habitat/Diet: Marshes, lagoons, mangroves, mudflats. The adults swing their distinctive spoon-shaped bills back and forth through shallow water to catch small fish, crustaceans and aquatic invertebrates. They sometimes eat plant material.

Status: Roseate Spoonbills were once hunted for their plumes, which were used in the millinery trade, but now despite the destruction of their habitat in some areas their numbers in America have increased.



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Photo to be
added

Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*)

Identification: 14" tall, slender bird, with a long neck, a straight bill (1 ½ times longer than head) and long, bright yellow legs. Its plumage is gray-brown overall, with black and white mottling above, white below, a white rump and a barred tail.

Habitat/Diet: Often found in shallow wetlands. Wades into deeper water, sweeping its bill to catch invertebrates or stabbing small fish. It also eats aquatic insects and their larvae, and water snails.



Tom Yarborough

Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*)

Identification: 10.5" tall, slender bird, with a long neck, a straight bill (equal to length of head) and long, bright yellow legs. Its plumage is gray-brown overall, with black and white mottling above, white below, a white rump and a barred tail. Almost identical to Greater Yellowlegs, but smaller; size difference only noticeable when birds are together.

Habitat/Diet: Often found in shallow wetlands. Wades in shallow water, picking at the surface to snap up small fish, invertebrates and aquatic insects and their larvae.

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Birds of the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades Watershed



American Coot (*Fulica americana*)

Identification: 15” slate-colored; ducklike; white bill; partial ring around tip of bill. Immature: grayish overall; whitish chin and throat; bill light-colored with no partial ring at tip. Immature plumage gradually changes to adult through winter.

Habitat/Diet: Year-round found in all wetland habitats. Feeds on water by diving or tipping its body like a duck, eating seeds, leaves, roots, and small aquatic animals. Also feeds on land.



Mark Lasnek

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Identification: Large dabbling duck. Male has iridescent green head, rust colored chest, gray body. Female is mottled brown.

Habitat/Diet: Winter non-breeding resident of Florida. Found in all wetland habitats. Feeds on insects and larvae, aquatic invertebrates, seeds, acorns, aquatic vegetation, and grain.

Birds of the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades Watershed



Black-bellied Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*)

Identification: Adults have long neck, long pink legs, black belly, and large white wing patch. Chest and back rufous, face gray, red bill.

Habitat/Diet: Year-round resident in small area of south-central Florida near Lake Okeechobee, along with other extreme southern areas of United States. Usually nests in a tree cavity without lining, but will use man-made nest boxes. Feeds on aquatic plants, grass, grain, insects, and mollusks.



Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*)

Identification: Medium-sized stocky song bird with short tail. Black “V” across chest. The back is brown and streaked with white outer tail feathers. Females are smaller with shorter wings. Beautiful song.

Habitat/Diet: Year-round resident in Florida grasslands, pastures, croplands, and golf courses. Feeds on insects, especially grasshoppers and crickets, as well as insect larvae and grubs. They are ground feeders, and build their nest on the ground woven into some vegetation.

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