

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.

Information used in the text of this guide were obtained from Florida's Birds, by Kale and Maehr.
Photos were obtained from Captain David Gilliam and the South Florida Water Management Districts web page.
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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 underparts.

Flight: 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.



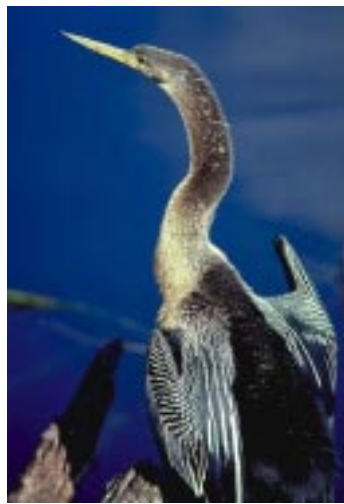
Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*)

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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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. Florida has the largest population in the lower 48 states.



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 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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