

2009



COURTESY OF NAPLES MARCO ISLAND EVERGLADES CVB



Florida's State Parks celebrated a record-amount of visitors during 2008!

Whether your preference is birding or native wildlife, eco tourists need look no further than Florida to find a rich variety of exciting and fun events. From some of the nation's best birding sites to festivals that celebrate the area's natural beauty, Florida's wildlife is found in all forms!

SPRING & SUMMER

Mar. 14/09 Pelican Island Wildlife Festival [Sebastian]

Environmental exhibitors will be on-hand with live wildlife, arts and crafts, and environmental displays. Feature presentations include live wildlife shows and live music. Many family activities are available including boat tours, kayaking in the Indian River Lagoon, kid's activities, bird watching and history tours.

772-562-3909, ext. 258 | www.pelicanislandfriends.org/

Mar. 22/09 Backyard Habitat Festival [Orlando]

This event, held at the Tibet-Butler Nature Preserve, gives individuals the chance to come out and enjoy a special day of outdoor fun and nature study. One can explore some of Central Florida's natural habitats, and how they can be beneficial to Florida's native plants and animals. Patrons can take part in free guided hikes, environmental programs, local environmental exhibitors, live music, and children's crafts. All activities are free of cost. Individuals will also be able to purchase food from local vendors. 407-876-6696

Apr. 2-4/09 Wakulla Wildlife Festival [Tallahassee]

Showcasing Florida's Big Bend area, family activities

include tours to Wakulla Springs State Park and St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Other features include a sunrise birding cruise, birding, plant, wildlife and other guided tours, seminars, vendors, multiple outdoor learning stations including bird banding, optics and ecosystem health, educational exhibitors and creative hands-on learning stations for children.

850-926-4293 | www.wakullawildlifefestival.org/

Apr. 3-5/09 Big "O" Birding Festival [Clewiston]

On hand are keynote speakers, kid's activities and viewings of some of the area's specialty birding sites.

For more information, please visit www.bigobirdingfestival.com. Contact Tracy Whirls 863-946-0300; Email: twhirls@gladescountyedc.com.

Apr. 5/09 Goby Fest [Fellsmere]

Hosted by the Coastal Preserves Alliance, this festival will include nature tours by boat, canoe, kayak, wagon and foot, presentations and exhibits. Highlights include birding excursions to observe the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker and threatened Florida scrub-jay, and boat tours to explore the beauty of the St. Sebastian River.

321-953-5004 | www.nbbd.com/npr/cpa/

wildlife

FESTIVALS & EVENTS



COURTESY OF LEE COUNTY VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU

Apr. 11-12/09 Chinsegut Birding & Wildlife Festival [Brooksville]

The Chinsegut Birding and Wildlife Festival offers one evening and day of bird and wildlife activities. Program offerings include bird banding, Florida bat talk and walk, butterfly, wildflower and bird walks, landscaping with natives talk and demo, puppet show, bird house building, bird games for kids and more. The festival will also include off site guided field trips to see area wildlife including burrowing owls. Chinsegut Nature Center, 23212 Lake Lindsey Road, Brooksville, FL 34601.

352-754-6722 | myfwc.com/chinsegut/

Apr. 12/09 Florida Black Bear Festival [Umatilla]

Visitors can learn about the Florida Black Bear and the importance of protecting Florida's natural habitats. Activities include field trips to the Ocala National Forest, presentations on Florida bears and other wildlife and a "Florida Authors Corner". Other activities include a kid's pavilion, food, arts & crafts, a teddy bear repair clinic, live music, a Florida Black Bear maze and educational exhibits. Field trips start at 9:30 a.m. with the last one at 2 p.m.

407-323-1298 | www.flblackbearfest.org

Apr. 12/09 Charlotte Harbor Kayak & Wildlife Festival

Charlotte Harbor & the Gulf Islands Visitor's Bureau, the Department of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources, and the Port Charlotte Kayak Club - is pleased to sponsor the sixth Charlotte Harbor Kayak & Wildlife Festival. Featuring: Kayak races, Guided kayak tours of the Charlotte Harbor Blueway Trails, Free kayak demonstrations, Kayak fishing tournament, Food/beverage, music, raffle prizes, & vendor

booths, and Seminars. www.charlotteharbortravel.com

Apr. 22-26/09 First Coast Birding & Nature Festival

A haven for outdoor photographers and bird lovers with more than 75 field trips, boat trips, kayak excursions and workshops presented by leading experts taking place during spring migration. All of the events are designed to put people where they can easily observe nature in the wild. A complete guide to the festival may be obtained by calling the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches Visitors and Convention Bureau. 800-653-2489 | www.getaway4nature.com

Apr. 25/09 Earth Day Family Fun Festival [Titusville]

At the Enchanted Forest Nature Sanctuary, visitors can participate in guided walks, music, stories, games, displays, exhibits by many nature and conservation organizations. www.nbbd.com/godo/ef/earthday/

Future Events & Festivals

At the time of publication, the following events and festivals have not announced their event dates. Call for details!

Florida Keys Birding & Wildlife Festival [Marathon]

The exotic tropical Florida Keys provide the setting for this family-oriented event. From the National Key Deer Refuge, to spectacular offshore coral reefs and quiet backwaters, this festival highlights the best of the Keys. Activities include hawk-watching, stargazing, evening keynote speakers, snorkeling trips, backcountry kayaking trips, bird watching trips, American Crocodile program, wild bird

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rehabilitation center tours, seminars, an environmental fair and a butterfly garden. Additional information is available by calling the **Key Deer Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center** at 305-872-0774 or **Curry Hammock State Park** at 305-289-2690. Register by calling 305-852-4486. www.keysbirdingfest.org

Nature Coast Birding & Wildlife Experience [Cedar Key]

Cedar Key is situated in the midst of a natural paradise on Florida's undeveloped West Coast. It is virtually surrounded by thousands of acres of protected lands, including the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge, the Waccasassa Bay State Preserve and the Cedar Key Scrub State Reserve. These areas offer tidal salt marsh, coastal islands, sand scrub, cypress swamp, rivers, flood plain, artesian springs, maritime forest and old growth pine forest.

Rarely will you find such accessible, yet diverse and unique habitats so unaffected by today's urban and agricultural sprawl. For these reasons and many more the next Nature Coast Birding and Wildlife Experience event promises to provide a birding and wildlife experience you will not soon forget.

352-543-5600 | www.ncbwe.com

Old Florida Fest [West Melbourne]

A celebration of Florida's rich natural and cultural history for all ages! Wildlife and environmental displays, folk music and dancing, old Florida stories, tours of the park and the famous boardwalk through 3-400 year-old oaks. www.brevardparks.com

"DING" Darling Days Birding & Eco-Festival [Sanibel Island]

Birding, nature cruises, kayaking, and biking opportunities abound during "Ding" Darling Days birding and eco-festival. Recreational events take place at J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) co-host of the annual event along with the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society (its friends group) and Tarpon Bay Explorers (its recreation concessions operator) " and at other island venues.

For a complete schedule, visit www.ding-darlingdays.com. To receive the refuge's "Ding" on the Wing e-mail bulletin updates, e-mail dingdarlingdayspr@comcast.net.

Wings On The Wind Bird Festival [Ponce Inlet]

Sponsored by the Ponce Inlet Marine Science Center. Fun activities for the entire

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family. Lectures on Florida birds, tours of the Mary Keller Seabird Rehabilitation Center and more.

marinesciencecenter.com/birdfest.htm | 386-304-5545 | msc@co.volusia.fl.us

Everglades Birding Festival [Hollywood]

Opportunities to explore: Wakodahatchee, Loxahatchee, Okechee, Broward County's specialties, Big Cypress N.P., Shark Valley, Corkscrew Swamp, Everglades N.P., and the Dade County exotics.

<http://birdadventure.com/festival/index.html>

Southwest Florida Birding Festival [Naples]

Did you know that Southwest Florida's unique environment provides an essential habitat for more than 250 species of birds? Whether you are a birding expert or simply enjoy the view, you should plan to attend the Annual Southwest Florida Birding Festival.

239-417-6310 | www.rookerybay.org

Spacecoast Birding & Wildlife Festival [Titusville]

The Festival focuses on the abundance and diversity of the natural world around us - from the Atlantic Ocean westward through the Indian River Lagoon estuary system to the St. Johns River and surrounding wetlands. Educational emphasis is placed on the preservation and management of animals and their habitats, as well as the cultural heritage and historical venues to be found in East Central Florida. The Festival features bird and wildlife watching opportunities, nature and technology tours, boat and kayaking trips,

field trips, seminars, workshops, photography sessions and evening keynote presentations. www.nbbd.com

Blue Spring Manatee Festival [Orange City]

Blue Spring State Park is Florida's most significant warm water refuge for the endangered manatee. This two-day environmental festival in Valentine Park in Orange City features educational exhibits on endangered wildlife, children's rides, food, crafts, craft show and free rides to see the manatees. 386-775-9224 | www.themanateefestival.com

Burrowing Owl Festival [Cape Coral]

This festival is designed to educate residents about the owl and to involve them in its preservation, proceeds from the festival will go to wildlife preservation and protection.

Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife - 239-980-2593 | C.R.O.W - 239-472-3644 | Florida Wildlife Conservation - 888-404-3922 | City of Cape Coral Planning & Growth Management Division - 239-574-0589

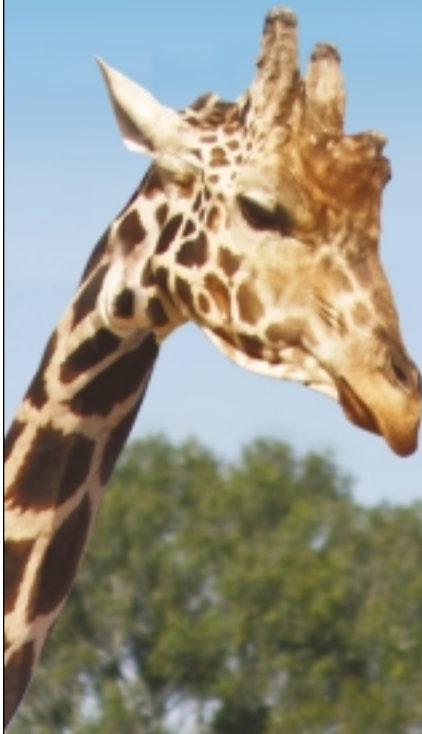
Orlando Wetlands Park Festival [Christmas]

Experience the world's first large-scale wetlands treatment system, a magnet for all types of wildlife. Features include birdwatching tours, photo shoots, bicycle tours, native plant walks, bird banding and mist-netting demonstrations, wildlife shows, historic reenactments, live music, Native American demonstrations, and bus tours will travel along the wetland berms.

Contact Mark Sees, 407-568-1706, www.cityoforlando.net, go to Parks, click on Wetlands or www.nbbd.com/festivals/OrlandoWetlands. *

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