

Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive General Information Guide

New self-guided audio tour

In September 2016, the St. Johns River Water Management District launched an audio tour for this property to give visitors an overview of the district's restoration work on the former farmlands that make up the Lake Apopka North Shore, and the plants and animals that can be found here. The tour includes 11 points of interest along the wildlife drive and are indicated by numbered signs. A smartphone or other mobile device with an Internet connection will be needed to stream the audio. Standard carrier data rates apply. To join the audio tour at any time during your visit, go to www.sjrwmd.com/LANS.

About the wildlife drive

The Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive is a one-way 11-mile drive that begins at Lust Road and ends on Jones Road in Orange County, Fla. The drive is open Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and federal holidays between sunrise and sunset. The drive is closed other days due to ongoing restoration work. The entrance gate will be open during daylight hours and will close approximately one hour prior to sunset to allow visitors to complete the drive and exit the property prior to sunset.

For your safety, the speed limit is 10 mph and the maximum vehicle length is 25 feet. Vehicles pulling trailers are not allowed. Directional signs are located along the route and gates will be closed/locked for the public's safety in areas where work is ongoing. Several "pull over" areas provide visitors a chance to stop along the drive. Stopping is limited to the pull over areas. A portion of the drive intersects with a multi-use trail (shown as the Lake Spur on the map inside this brochure) and visitors are encouraged to carefully watch for hikers, bicycle riders and other users who will be sharing the road.

About this property

Lake Apopka is in the headwaters of the Ocklawaha River. At approximately 48.4 square miles in size, Lake Apopka is the fourth largest lake in Florida and receives water from spring flow, rainfall and stormwater runoff. The lake was identified for cleanup under Florida's Surface Water Improvement and Management Act of 1987. In 1996, the Florida Legislature passed Chapter 96-207, *Florida Statutes*, furthering its previous mandate to clean up the lake by providing funds to buy additional agricultural lands north of the lake.

The former farmlands make up the Lake Apopka North Shore, a restoration area where the St. Johns River Water Management District's major activities include marsh and floodplain restoration and the creation of a marsh flow-way that filters Lake Apopka's waters by circulating lake water through restored wetlands, returning cleaner water to the lake. The wildlife drive is along a portion of the former farm fields.

These public lands help protect water quality and storage, indigenous floral and faunal species, cultural resources, and provide natural resource-based recreational opportunities.

Wildlife and plant viewing

The Lake Apopka North Shore is widely known for its bird population. A 1998 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) — a one-day count performed annually during the holiday season — identified 174 species of birds here, the highest species total for an inland count in the 115-year history of the CBC.

The list of birds found here continues to grow, with 362 species seen on the property. They include Anhinga, Bald Eagle, Black Vulture, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Green Heron, Glossy Ibis, Little Blue Heron, Osprey, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-Winged Blackbird, Swallow-tailed Kite, Tricolored Heron, Turkey Vulture and White Ibis. Other wildlife found here include alligator, turtles, bobcat, otter, raccoon, snakes and coyote.

Plant species found in the upland portions of the North Shore include Florida bonamia, pygmy fringe tree, scrub buckwheat, Britton's beargrass, scrub plum and clasping warea (all federally listed plants).

The District continues to work to expand populations of listed and rare plants through management actions that include prescribed fire, planting and seeding, and to manage public lands to protect their natural resources.

For more information

To learn more about the District's work at Lake Apopka North Shore and recreational opportunities, visit the District's website.

- Restoration work: www.sjrwmd.com/lakeapopka
- Recreation: www.sjrwmd.com/recreation

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