

# WILDLIFE & BIRD *Watching*

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- 1 Big Bend Scenic Byway
- 2 Ormond Scenic Loop and Trail
- 3 Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway



## *Wildlife & Bird Watching*

Looking to try a new hobby or to experience nature up close? Take a trip on one of Florida's Scenic Highways to find fantastic destinations for watching some of your favorite feathered, furry and scaly friends in their native habitats.



[www.floridascenichighways.com](http://www.floridascenichighways.com)



Planning a Florida road trip?  
Go off the "beaten path" by taking



### 1 *Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway*

The **Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway** offers 40 federal, state and locally designated sanctuaries and natural areas to explore and enjoy. Just south of the City of Melbourne Beach on A1A, the Barrier Island Sanctuary features a variety of habitats, which provide a diverse array of wildlife for your viewing pleasure. This 34-acre sanctuary offers guided walking tours, classes at the educational center located on site and other amenities for your comfort. During your visit, you may see osprey, roseate spoonbill, alligator, giant land crab, and, if you're lucky, the elusive bobcat. Time your visit during turtle nesting season – June and July – and take a guided turtle hike. Birding opportunities are also available on foot or by boat.

Travel further south on A1A along the **Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway** and you'll find Sebastian Inlet State Park. Located on the tip of two barrier islands, this state park offers abundant, year-round wildlife and bird-watching opportunities. Manatees, dolphins and more than 180 species of birds, including the frigate bird, painted bunting, least tern, roseate spoonbill and wood stork, migrate to the inlet. Visit during January and February to witness the migration of the right whale – the world's most endangered whale with an estimated global population of only 300. These magnificent creatures migrate with their young through the warmer coastal waters of this area, looking for protection as the baby whales gain weight. You might also spot a bobcat, alligator, river otter, raccoon or opossum.



### 2 *Big Bend Scenic Byway*

For a view of the variety of habitats and ecosystems offered in Northwest Florida, take a trip on the **Big Bend Scenic Byway**. A naturalist's dream, this 220-mile National Scenic Byway route loops through four Florida counties and takes visitors from the sandy, plains-like ecosystem of the sandhills to the beautiful waters of the Gulf of Mexico. As you travel from the eastern extent of the byway, head south on State Road 363 towards St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge provides a wintering habitat for migratory birds, as well as rare and exotic flora and fauna. As you take the seven-mile drive from the entrance of the refuge south towards the Gulf and the St. Marks Lighthouse, you will notice the land descending to the sea and the dramatic differences between the upland forests at the northern extent of the refuge, and the coastal marshes and estuaries bordering the Gulf. Look for flocks of whooping cranes, as well as deer, armadillo and everyone's favorite – alligators. Explore the refuge from one of the many hiking and canoeing trails and look for purple gallinule, gull-billed terns, piping plovers and swallow-tailed kites. Also, keep your binoculars handy for views of our national bird, the bald eagle.

Time your visit during late October to witness the annual migration of the amazing monarch butterfly as the landscape is set aflame with the orange hue of thousands of butterflies. The butterflies – up to five generations at a time – travel 2,000 miles from northern America to the mountains of Central Mexico – an important stop to restore their energy. There, the butterflies feed on the saltbush, goldenrod and milkweed that grow along the coast near the St. Marks Lighthouse.

Venture west along U.S. 98 to check out gorgeous beaches. Then turn north along SR 65 for a day in the Apalachicola National Forest, which encompasses six watersheds over 570,000 acres, and a vast array of habitats. Walk, bike, kayak or horseback ride to explore this botanical dream. And, don't miss the vast and rare pitcher plant savannas, the virgin pine and cypress stands, as well as the longleaf pine forests, which provide critical habitat for the red-cockaded woodpecker and the Florida black bear.



### 3 *Ormond Scenic Loop and Trail*

If your travels take you to the east coast of Florida, enjoy a drive on the **Ormond Scenic Loop and Trail** starting on historic SR A1A at the Flagler County line and extending south from the **A1A Scenic and Historic Coastal Byway** to SR 40. This byway provides a loop along the Halifax River to the Atlantic Ocean through three state parks, offering bird and wildlife viewing opportunities. Also a location along the Great Florida Birding Trail, Tomoka State Park (accessed via North Beach Street) provides habitat for more than 160 species of birds, such as the gull-billed tern, painted bunting, gray kingbird, black skimmer, wood stork and the bald eagle. Visitors can also view the endangered West Indian manatee that finds shelter here.

