

Great Birding and Nature Viewing Sites



Colonial Coast Birding Trail

Georgia's vast network of rivers, marshes, and barrier islands provides ideal habitat for hundreds of species of birds, from nesting wood storks to painted buntings. This "trail" is a string of numerous sites along the Georgia coast straddling U.S. 17 and Interstate 95. Four of the sites (Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge, Jekyll Island, Cumberland Island, and the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge) have been designated Important Birding Areas (IBAs) by the Georgia Audubon Society. With more than 330 species of birds to watch for, the staffs of visitor centers along the way have maps and plenty of bird-watching suggestions for both skilled and novice birders.

Each site along the Colonial Coast Birding Trail is unique. Many sites offer visitors the opportunity to watch birds and visit 18th and 19th Century historic places. Other sites are located on lands and waters that were once part of early plantations dedicated to growing rice, indigo and cotton. So whether you want to see a bald eagle soaring over a coastal river, an endangered wood stork feeding its gawky young, sanderlings chasing the waves on a sandy beach, or a great egret standing motionless in a placid pond, the Colonial Coast Birding Trail has something for you.

Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge

Description: This refuge is located on an abandoned World War II Army airfield. There are more than 2,700 acres of saltwater marsh, freshwater impoundments, mixed deciduous forests and open fields. These habitats support an amazing array of bird. Types of Birds: Songbirds, birds of prey, wading birds, waterfowl

Best Birding Seasons: Songbirds (all), birds of prey (all), wading birds (all), waterfowl (all)

Specialties: Wood stork, white ibis, painted bunting

Sapelo Island Visitor Center

Song birds, painted buntings, wading birds and birds of prey provide regular sightings along the nature trails that weave through the maritime forest and along the marsh and salt pans surrounding the facility. Stop by for a quick hike through our nature trail and to visit our interpretative center.

Blue Heron Inn

A privately owned property welcomes birders and nature photographers. One and two seat blinds are available for use. Extensive marsh, tidal creeks and a vibrant fresh water pond provide for excellent birding year round. Innkeepers at Blue Heron in addition to sharing their birding knowledge are happy to arrange private tours of Sapelo Island. Spotlight: painted bunting, pilliated woodpecker

Sapelo Island

A variety of shore and marsh birds will greet you by the ferry landing. On your ferry ride to Sapelo shorebirds and birds of prey are commonly spied. Oyster catchers can be found on the oyster beds. The island itself with a myriad of eco systems provides for a diverse bird population.

Tolomato Island

Salt marsh, fresh water pond with rookery along a quiet nature trail offer abundant birding opportunities. Roseate spoonbills, snowy egrets and many more wading birds abound.

Darien and Butler Island

Darien is fortunate to be located along Georgia's Colonial Coast Birding Trail. Viewing areas are situated in the Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area, on the remains of the old Butler rice plantation, about 3 minutes from the center of Darien. Today, the old rice fields are managed to benefit waterfowl and other wildlife species.

Birdwatchers delight in spotting birds of prey, shorebirds, songbirds, wading birds, and many kinds of waterfowl. Fall and winter offers the best season for spotting raptors and waterfowl. Visitors may see a variety of species including the wood stork, swallow-tailed kite, bald eagle, king rail, painted bunting, mottled duck, wood duck, white ibis, glossy ibis, and purple gallanule.

Ansley Hodges M.A.R.S.H. Project (Altamaha Wildlife Management Area)

Description: This viewing area is situated on the Altamaha Wildlife Management Area where an impoundment was constructed as part of Ducks Unlimited's M.A.R.S.H. (Matching Aid to Restore States' Habitat) program. The impoundment is located on the remains of an old rice plantation. Many of the rice fields are managed to benefit waterfowl and other wildlife species.

Types of Birds: Birds of prey, shorebirds, songbirds, wading birds, waterfowl, raptors
Best Birding Seasons: Songbirds (all), shorebirds (all), wading birds (all), waterfowl (fall and winter), raptors (fall and winter)
Specialties: Wood stork, swallow-tailed kite, bald eagle, king rail, painted bunting, mottled duck, wood duck, white ibis, glossy ibis

Hofwyl-Broadfield Plantation State Historic Site

Description: From 1800 to 1915 this site was a thriving rice plantation. Today the 1,268-acre historic site is a mix of saltmarsh, pasture and flatwoods.

Types of Birds: Birds of prey, songbirds, wading birds, waterfowl

Best Birding Seasons: Birds of prey (winter), songbirds (all), wading birds (all), waterfowl (winter)

Specialties: Wood stork, bald eagle, osprey, glossy ibis, painted bunting, yellow-throated warbler, sharp-tailed sparrow, northern parula.

Tips: Ospreys are most common spring to summer. Look for warblers during spring and fall migrations. Northern parulas and yellow-throated warblers can be found in spring and summer. Clapper rails and marsh wrens can be seen and/or heard in the marshes throughout the year.

Fee: Museum and picnic areas free. For tour of grounds and plantation house: \$5 per adult, \$4.50 per senior (62 and older), \$2.50 for children ages 6-18.

