



BIRDING GUIDE

to Wakulla County

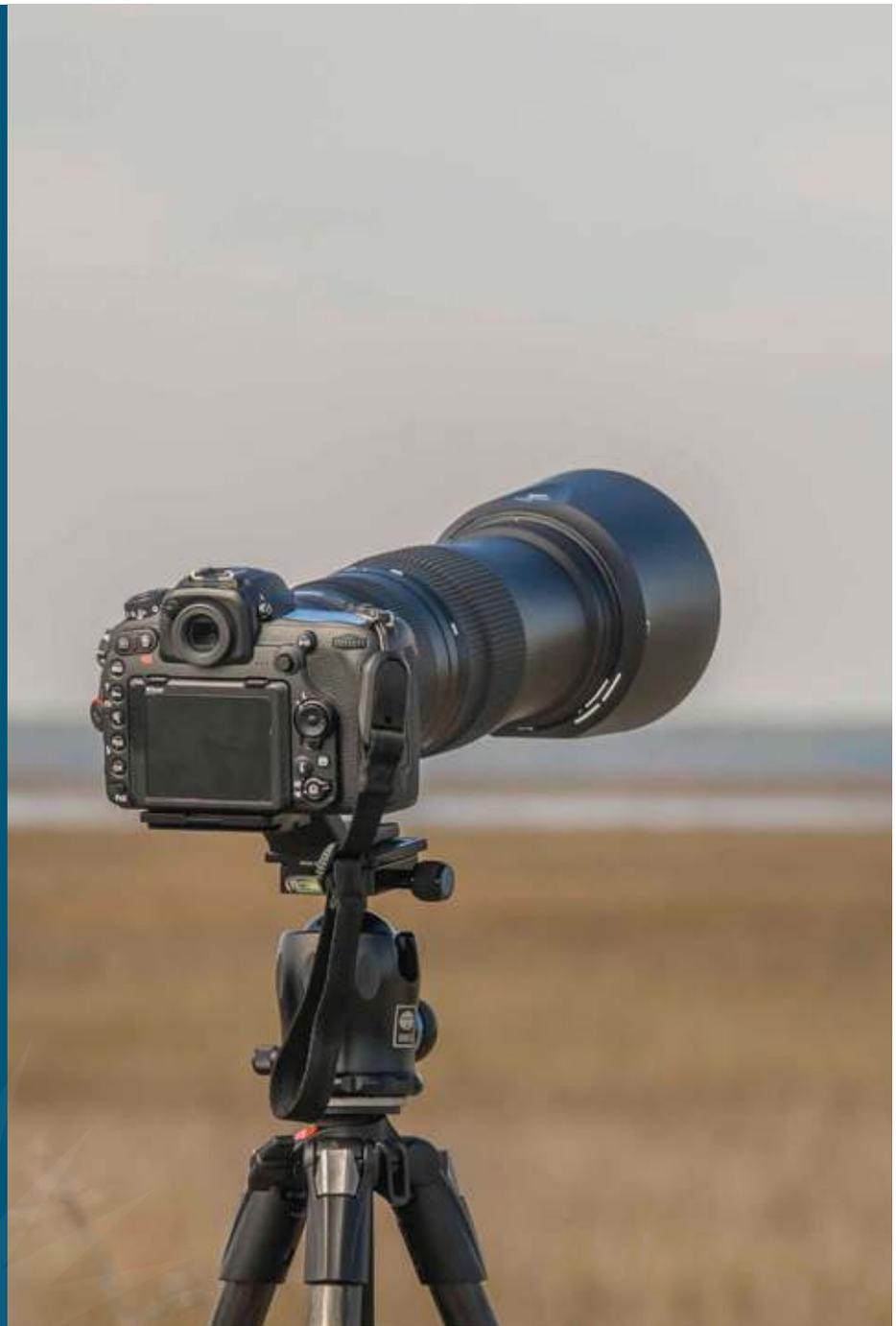


Introduction

Nestled along the Florida Panhandle's Gulf coast, just a short drive south of the state capital of Tallahassee, Wakulla County is a premier destination for birdwatchers. The vibrant and diverse ecosystem of the area attracts hundreds of different avian species across dozens of categories, and the area is home to accommodations and amenities for your comfort and enjoyment.

Discover why Wakulla County should be at the top of your list of future birdwatching adventures. With verified counts of over 300 migratory and nesting birds, this rich ecosystem is the ideal spot for birding enthusiasts anywhere. We have compiled the best of local knowledge and national data so you can make the most of your trip to Wakulla County.

In addition to the best birding spots, we've also included accommodation information as well as some of the best local places to grab a bite to eat.



Birding Hotspots



Bottoms Road Ramp

Experience beautiful views as the path through the salt marshes near Panacea winds its way down to the Gulf. Bottoms Road Ramp is home to a large variety of bird species. In addition to numerous wading birds, some other notable species include:

- Roseate Spoonbills (during low tides in the summer)
- Short-eared Owls (on winter mornings)
- Clapper Rail

Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park

Wakulla Springs State Park is one of the most celebrated areas for nature lovers in the county. The springs allow for an incredibly diverse network of both flora and fauna, including many different avian species as well as land animals and marine wildlife. An abundance of hiking trails allow you to get off the beaten path to look for species like:

- Summer Tanagers
- Great Crested Flycatchers
- Least Bittern
- Prothonotary Warbler

Myron B. Hodge City Park

Myron B. Hodge City Park may not be large, but it does offer some excellent opportunities for bird watching. The park is located in the town of Sopchoppy and is situated directly on the beautiful Sopchoppy River. You can observe many different birds just by walking along the boardwalk, or you can use the park's boat ramp to launch a canoe or kayak into the river for a closer look at the species in the area, including:

- Acadian Flycatcher
- Great Crested Flycatcher
- Prothonotary Warbler

Ochlockonee River State Park

Also located in Sopchoppy near Myron B. Hodge City Park, Ochlockonee River State Park has several trails, viewing areas, and a boat launch for you to explore. The park offers camping facilities so you can get a head start on your early-morning bird watching. Red-cockaded Woodpeckers are often spotted throughout the park, so check with a ranger for info on the most recent sightings. Some other notable species include:

- Bachman's Sparrow
- Brown-headed Nuthatch
- Chuck-Wills-Widow

Birding Hotspots



Shell Point Beach Park

Shell Point Beach Park in Crawfordville is the perfect place to enjoy the gentle lapping of the Gulf waters on the shore and catch several different species of migratory shorebirds. The cooler weather that descends between September and April brings a greater diversity of avian wildlife to the shores.

- Double-crested Cormorant
- Bufflehead
- American Oystercatcher

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge: Otter Lake Recreation Area

The St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge is the crown jewel of wildlife watching in Wakulla County. The NWR is separated into two units, and the area surrounding Otter Lake offers some longer hiking trails that wander through wetlands. Be sure to look for Little Blue Herons throughout the wetlands areas. Birds of prey such as Ospreys and Bald Eagles are often spotted in the cooler months. Some other notable species include:

- Barred Owl
- Acadian Flycatcher

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge: St. Marks Unit

The St. Marks Unit of the NWR is where the headquarters is located, and it provides abundant opportunities for birdwatching. This section of the refuge is expansive and features numerous different locales that are famous for birding activity, including Stoney Bayou Pool, East River Pool, and Tower Pond. Over 300 species have been observed throughout the St. Marks NWR, so be sure to check out the visitor's center for maps, sighting logs, and tips from the experts. Some include:

- Black Duck
- White-faced Ibis
- Purple Gallinule

Bird Species

In many ways, the geographic details that define Wakulla County make it one of the most unique areas for birdwatching throughout the U.S. This area is notable for its mix of dense forests, sprawling wetlands, abundant freshwater sources, miles of coastline, migratory routes, and temperate winters that draw hundreds of different species of birds at any given moment. Different types of shorebirds, passerine birds, game birds, birds of prey, wading birds, owls, and more call the lands of Wakulla County home. Some of the species you may encounter during your visit include:

- Swallow-tailed Kite
- Bachman's Sparrow
- Bald Eagle
- Whooping Crane
- Barn Owl
- Wood Stork
- Purple Gallinule
- Snowy Egret
- Black-crowned Night Heron
- White Ibis
- Yellow-throated Warbler
- Red-shouldered Hawk



Where to Stay

Shell Island Fish Camp and Motel

The Shell Island Fish Camp is a quaint haven for anglers, but birdwatchers will also find themselves right at home thanks to the close proximity to prime viewing locations and friendly accommodations.

Best Western Wakulla Inn and Suites

The Best Western in Crawfordville blends the convenience of a national chain—including free WiFi—with the natural uniqueness of Wakulla County.

The Magnuson Inn at Wildwood

When you stay at the Magnuson Inn at Wildwood you won't have to go far for great birdwatching opportunities. This serene property is located amidst 1,000 square miles of protected land.

Sweet Magnolia Inn Bed and Breakfast

It's the only B&B in the county, and it's perfect for when you want to combine your birdwatching trip with charming accommodations where you can relax and take in the scenery. The Sweet Magnolia Inn is located just a short drive away from the St. Marks NWR.

Sopchoppy River House

Quiet and comfortable, the Sopchoppy River House is perfect for anyone who is looking to connect with the natural environment around them, including avid birdwatchers. It's also conveniently located near great seafood restaurants and gorgeous beaches.

Wakulla Springs Lodge

The Lodge is located within Wakulla Springs State Park, and it is a full-service hotel featuring dining options, conference facilities, and easy access to numerous birding hotspots.

Vacation Rentals

One of the professional agents at Ochlockonee Bay Realty will be happy to help you find a private rental house that you can call your own during your visit.

Campgrounds

Wakulla County is also home to several places with camping facilities that accommodate tent campers and RVers, including:

- Ochlockonee River State Park—Sopchoppy
- Myron B. Hodge City Park—Sopchoppy
- Panacea RV Park—Panacea
- Holiday Park and Campground—Ochlockonee • Bay
- Newport Park—Crawfordville



Where to Eat

You may be spending most of your time in Wakulla County with your eyes pinned on the skies, but you still need to take some to enjoy delicious food while you're here. You may even want to order something to-go so that you can have a picnic while you're keeping watch for rare species at one of the locations mentioned above. Thankfully, the towns of Wakulla County are home to numerous family-owned restaurants that offer delicious dishes at reasonable prices. Whether you're looking for traditional southern barbecue or the freshest Gulf seafood around, the dining options of Wakulla County have you covered. Here are a few of the great restaurants you can visit during your stay:

Sopchoppy Pizza Company—Sopchoppy

The perfect cure for your pizza craving, right in the heart of downtown Sopchoppy.

Coastal Restaurant—Panacea

The oldest restaurant in Panacea packs in the crowds with their all-you-can-eat seafood specials.

Spring Creek Restaurant—Crawfordville

Fresh, local seafood and friendly service are the hallmarks of the Wakulla County mainstay.

Wakulla Springs Lodge—Crawfordville

Enjoy delicious fine-dining inside the Lodge at Wakulla Springs.

Hamaknocker's BBQ—Crawfordville

Feast on traditional, slow-smoked BBQ paired with a variety of homemade sauces. The ribs are some of the most tender you will ever try!

Bay Leaf Market—Crawfordville

Stop in and grab some healthy wraps, soups, sandwiches, and dips to fuel your adventures in nature.

Savannah's Country Buffet—Crawfordville

Savannah's Country Buffet is traditional...

...southern cooking at its finest. They're open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, but don't leave without trying the famous fried chicken.

Riverside Cafe on the River—St. Marks

It doesn't get much better than enjoying fresh seafood—including grouper, fresh oysters, and stone crab (seasonally)—on the dock with your friends and family.

Ouzt's Too Oyster Bar—Crawfordville

Ouzt's Too has a long winding history with Wakulla County and is complete with raw oyster shooters, smoked mullet, sandwiches, burgers and real pit barbeque.

Lindy's Fried Chicken—Crawfordville

Family owned and operated since 1996, Lindy's Fried Chicken is a household name in Wakulla County. If you're craving a fried meal, stop by Lindy's and see why their secretly spiced fried chicken is famous.

The Family Coastal—Crawfordville

Starving? Stop by The Family Coastal for all-you-can-eat specials of just about any item on the menu.

Panhandle Pizza—Crawfordville

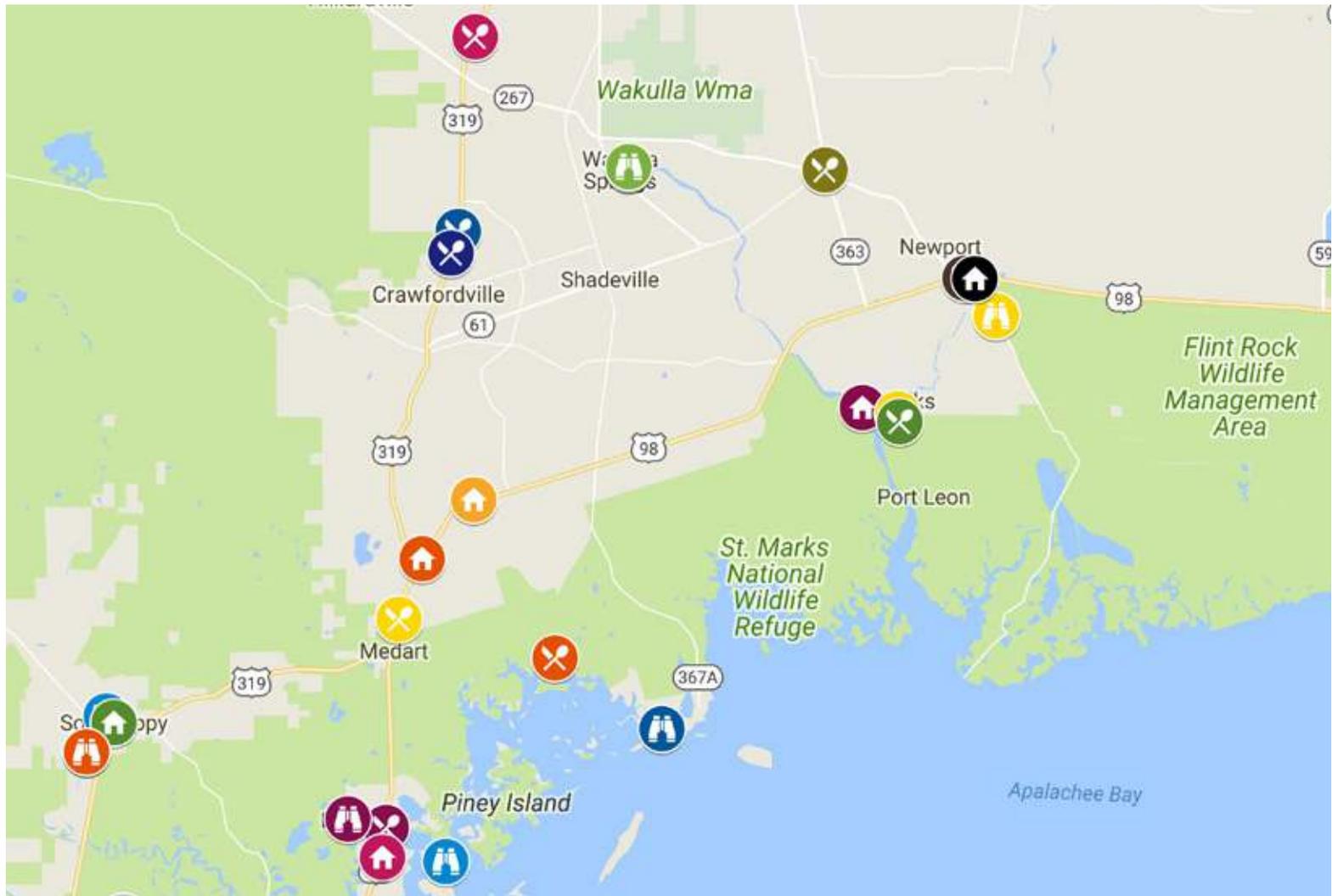
Dine-in or take-out Italian-style cuisine featuring a full salad bar with 35 items and a large selection of homemade pizza, pasta and dessert selections.

Tropical Trader Shrimp Company—Ochlockonee Bay

Tropical Trader Shrimp Company has indoor and outdoor seating and a raw oyster bar for seafood lovers. They are currently the only restaurant and retail seafood market in Wakulla County where patrons can order off the menu or select from an array of fresh seafood in the retail market to have cooked on site.

Angelo and Son's Seafood Restaurant—Ochlockonee Bay

Family owned and operated since 1945, Angelo and Son's serves the area's fresh seafood while patrons overlook the very water that the seafood comes from.



Explore Our Interactive Map of All These Birding Hotspots, Places to Eat, and Places to Stay! Click the Map Above to Start Planning Your Trip!