

WILDLIFE OF VICTORIA PARK

by John Serrao

ORLANDO WETLANDS PARK

Florida is known throughout the country for its incredible variety of birds. People come from all over the world to see our egrets, herons, eagles, waterfowl, and songbirds. Besides the Everglades, 45 National Wildlife Refuges, 3 National Forests, and 175 State Parks, our state is blessed with many other lesser known birding destinations. One of these is located about 45 miles to our south in Christmas, Florida, is Orlando Wetlands Park.

This 1200-acre park is actually the first large-scale, man-made wetland designated to treat reclaimed water (from Orange and Seminole counties) and provide wildlife habitat.

It began receiving highly treated flow from a Water Reclamation facility in 1987, and today these wetlands support otters, lots of turtles and alligators, and over 200 species of birds.

The Park has picnic areas, an outdoor education center, a pavilion with brochures and wildlife exhibits, and — best of all — several miles of trails that meander through marshes, ponds, and woodlands. The most popular route is the 2-mile Birding Route. These trails are wide, level, and bordered in most cases by water along both sides. Along these trails, there are excellent opportunities, by walking or bicycling, to view alligators, anhingas, up to 10 species of herons and egrets, both glossy and white ibises, ospreys, bald eagles, several kinds of ducks, and spectacular purple gallinules and roseate spoonbills.

The address for Orlando Wetlands Park is 25155 Wheeler Road, Christmas, Florida.