

## Birding and Photography in Florida



March 21 – 27, 2013  
With Bob Speare and John Green



**DAY-TO-DAY ITINERARY**

**DAY 1 ~ THURSDAY, MARCH 21: ARRIVE IN FORT MYERS**

Tour leaders Bob and John will meet the group in the early afternoon at Southwest Florida International Airport, Fort Myers, Florida. *Overnight in Venice area. (Welcome dinner)*



**DAY 2 ~ FRIDAY, MARCH 22: VENICE ROOKERY AND MYAKKA RIVER STATE PARK**

After breakfast at the hotel, we will head to the Venice Rookery. The Rookery is famous as a photography site with nesting herons, egrets, and Anhingas. An area for a variety of wading birds, this site is great for learning more about photography of birds. Here we can sit still and watch closely. Offering a covered pavilion for shade and plenty of pond-side grassy areas, this small site has become a mecca for bird photography. Less than a stone's throw from the shoreline, herons, egrets, Anhingas, and ibises pose and repose, seemingly unconcerned by people watching them. During late spring and early summer, parents delicately feed and brood their ungainly offspring – truly a special glimpse into these birds' lives. Scan the pond edges for Common Moorhens, Purple Gallinules, and songbirds such as Common Yellowthroats.

We will stop to pick up some lunch, then head to one of the oldest and largest state parks: Myakka River State Park. The Myakka River is designated as a Florida Wild and Scenic River and flows through 58 square miles of wetlands, prairies, hammocks, and pinelands. We will have lunch here and spend time visiting the Canopy Walkway and photographing wildlife. White and Glossy Ibises, Wood Storks, and Sandhill Cranes can be found here. Birds of prey are often overhead and various ducks and waterbirds can be seen, including Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, Mottled Duck, American Coot, Common Moorhen, and Pied-billed Grebe. We may also see alligators, deer, wild pigs, and armadillos.

Our day will end with a pontoon boat trip to search for a large flock of White Pelicans that winter in the Boca Grande area. We will have dinner on the water then head back to our hotel. *Overnight in Venice area. (B, D)*

**DAY 3 ~ SATURDAY, MARCH 23: FORT DESOTO AND SARASOTA AREA**

An early start to the day as we travel to Fort Desoto, a great place to find migrant land birds, including various thrushes and Swainson's Warbler. Magnificent Frigatebirds may be seen overhead and migrant shorebirds such as American Golden-Plovers and Upland Sandpipers can be found in grassy areas.

In the afternoon we will visit Oscar Scherer State Park, which contains the largest protected population of Florida Scrub-Jays on the Gulf Coast. There are also a few active Bald Eagle nests here. If time allows, we will stop at Jelks Preserve to look for armadillos and other wildlife along the Myakka River. Then, it will be south to the Fort Myers Beach area for our dinner and overnight. En route, we will stop at Cape Coral for some birding (Burrowing Owls) and watch for manatees. *Overnight in Fort Myers/Cape Coral. (B, D)*



**DAY 4 ~ SUNDAY, MARCH 24: SANIBEL ISLAND, DING DARLING, AND CORKSCREW SWAMP SANCTUARY**

Another early start today to visit Sanibel Island and Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge is a wonderful introduction to mangrove habitat, one of the most biologically rich plant communities in Florida. We will drive onto the refuge slowly, listening and looking for Mangrove Cuckoos as we go. Here we hope to see the American alligator and a variety of birds including herons, egrets, Anhingas, Roseate Spoonbills, Ospreys, White Pelicans, and who knows what else! We will have a picnic lunch here. In addition to the wonderful wildlife, the beaches are known for extraordinary shells.

We will leave Sanibel in the early afternoon and continue on to Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary with its luxurious growth of Spanish moss, bromeliads, bald cypresses, and many species of ferns. This keystone site boasts a 200+ species bird list and is a great spot for observing birds, reptiles, and wildflowers (especially epiphytes). There are plenty of birding and photo opportunities here. We will look for Swallow-tailed Kites and Wood Storks (formerly known as Wood Ibis), as well as warblers, vireos, and Painted Buntings, which are regularly found here in the winter. After we have had our fill of natural wonders, we will head to Naples for our dinner and the night. **Overnight in Naples area. (B, picnic Lunch, D)**



**DAY 5 ~ MONDAY, MARCH 25: MARCO ISLAND / BRIGGS NATURE CENTER / ROOKERY BAY / KEYWAYDIN ISLAND**

Today will be a full day, so we will get an early start and explore nearby Marco Island – starting the day with a beach walk on Tigertail Beach, one of the best all-round birding sites in all of southwest Florida. It is an important stop for wintering and migrating shorebirds. We should have good views of Roseate Spoonbills, Least Terns, Red Knots, and a variety of herons, plovers, and sandpipers.



Later in the morning we will visit Briggs Nature Center boardwalk, and/or the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. This reserve has a nice education center and a roadway that has excellent scrub habitat to explore - armadillo, Florida Scrub-Jay, and Eastern Towhee can be found here.

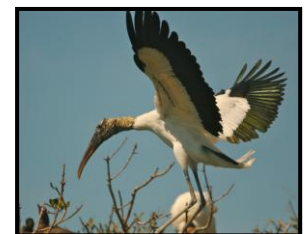
In the afternoon we will take a boat to Keewaydin Island. The island is a part of the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. The mangrove-fringed area provides visitors with the opportunity to explore a 1,300-acre natural buffer that offers habitat for a diverse population of wildlife: sea turtles, bobcats, gopher tortoises, deer, black bears, raccoons, eagles, wild boar, and, some say, panther. The island is one of the most active areas for nesting loggerhead turtles and has a surprising variety of coastal birds, including Least Terns and Snowy Plovers. **Overnight at Naples. (B, D)**

**DAY 6 ~ TUESDAY, MARCH 26: EVERGLADES, SHARK VALLEY, AND BIG CYPRESS BEND**

Today, we end our trip with the Everglades and the fascinating sawgrass habitat. Taking a tram tour through the northern region of Everglades National Park, we will explore the rivers of grass and look for wildlife, including alligators, of course! We will find a place to have a picnic lunch so we can continue on to Big Cypress Bend. The Loop Road and trails bring us deep into the swamp where we will look for Least Bittern, Sora, Snail Kite, and Marsh and Sedge Wrens, among others. Keep an eye out for Wood Storks. At the end of this full day, we will head back to Naples for our farewell dinner. **Overnight at Naples. (B, D)**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27: DEPARTURE**

After breakfast we will head north to the Fort Myers airport for our trip home. Travelers are urged to plan flights departing no earlier than noon (12PM).



## **TOUR PRICE**

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**PRICE:** \$2695 per person/double occupancy; Single Supplement \$300

**A \$500.00 per person deposit is required.**

**GROUP SIZE:** A minimum of 8 participants is required. The group size will be limited to approximately 10 participants.

### **WHAT'S INCLUDED:**

- Services of two qualified Massachusetts Audubon Society naturalists.
- All scheduled land transport.
- All breakfasts and dinners, one lunch. Lunches often will be picnic style.
- All accommodations as indicated in the itinerary.
- All scheduled transfers, portages, and service charges and taxes.

### **NOT INCLUDED:**

- Round-trip travel to Fort Myers.
- Items of a personal nature (e.g., laundry, alcoholic beverages, and phone calls).
- Airport departure taxes, passport fees, or other fees not listed in program.

## **ABOUT YOUR GUIDES**

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**Bob Speare**, Director of Wildwood and the Monadnock Conservation Center in Rindge, New Hampshire, has led numerous trips for Mass Audubon, including Belize, Baja California, Big Bend in Texas, the Mojave Desert, and Death Valley. He has lead many trips throughout the East, from Cape May to Newfoundland. Beyond birds and other aspects of flora and fauna, Bob likes to focus on wetland and desert ecology, butterflies, reptiles, and amphibians. He also enjoys sharing his passion for photography on tours and presents workshops on digital photography across Massachusetts.



**John Green**, interpretive naturalist and nature photographer, has led natural history trips from Newfoundland to Florida, and west to Arizona. He is skilled in bird and plant identification, and an expert in “birding by ear.” John also possesses a working knowledge of many mammals, insects, reptiles, and amphibians. He operated the nature travel company *Naturethics* for 11 years. Since then, he has been presenting his slide shows to civic and nature groups, and teaches workshops in nature photography and bird identification. He resides in Belchertown, Massachusetts.

## **TOUR PACE**

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This trip is not physically difficult. The walks are on level ground, boardwalks, or sand. However, the days will be long and full with birding, photography, wildlife watching, boating, and walking. Travelers should be familiar with how to use binoculars and their cameras. They should be comfortable climbing in and out of vans and boats.

*All Photos by Bob Speare*

## **TERMS & CONDITIONS**

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**TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:** A valid U.S. Passport or driver's license.

**RESERVATIONS, APPLICATIONS, DEPOSITS:** Early reservations are required to insure your place on this trip. All reservations must be accompanied by a completed reservation form, and a \$500 deposit. In the case of questionable health, the operators reserve the right to require a physician's certification to affirm you are capable of the activities. You will receive a final invoice 90 days prior to departure with final payment due by 60 days prior to departure.

**RATES:** All forms and fares are accurate at the time of publication, August 2012, but are subject to change at any time prior to departure. It is our policy to pass on only the actual amount of any increases in airfares or land costs such as those increases due to the devaluation of the dollar. A price increase may be called for if the group falls below the minimum of 8. If any price increases exceed \$100, you may cancel within 10 days of the notice without penalty.

**FLIGHTS:** Travelers are responsible for arranging their own flights. We work with a local travel agent, The Travel Station, in Lincoln to book our tour leader's flights. They will have the most up-to-date information on the flight arrival and departure times that we recommend for our travelers (there is a \$30 charge for all bookings). Once your deposit and reservation form have been sent to us, we will send you flight and contact information. Please be aware that most tickets are nonrefundable, therefore you should not book your flight arrangements until you have checked with us to be sure the tour has the minimum number of participants for the trip to go.

**CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS:** All cancellations must be done in writing and are effective upon receipt in the Mass Audubon Travel Office. Cancellations received 91 days prior to departure will be refunded all monies less a \$200 service fee. Cancellations between 90 and 61 days prior to departure will not have the deposit refunded. There are no refunds for cancellations 60 days or less from departure. We strongly advise trip cancellation insurance and will send information upon receipt of your deposit.

**RESPONSIBILITIES AND CONDITIONS:** The Massachusetts Audubon Society (the "Society") and/or its agents assume no responsibility or liability in connection with the service of any train, vessel, carriage, aircraft, motor, or other vehicle or conveyance that may be used wholly or in part, in the performance of their duty to the passengers; neither will they be responsible for any act, error, or omission, or for any injury (including death), loss, accident, delay or irregularity that may be occasioned by reason of any defect in any vehicle or conveyance, or through neglect or default of any company or persons engaged in conveying the passenger; or for any hotel proprietor, or for any other person, engaged in carrying out the purpose for which tickets or coupons are issued.

In the event that the tour operators deem it necessary or advisable for the comfort or well being of the passengers, or for any other reason whatsoever, to alter the itinerary or arrangements, such alterations shall be made without penalty to the tour operators. Additional expenses, if any, shall be borne by the passengers. The Society reserves the right to withdraw any or all tours offered should conditions warrant. The Society also reserves the right to decline to accept or retain any passenger as a member of the tour. In such instances, the full, or an equitable, amount will be refunded to the passenger, but this amount shall not exceed the amount paid by the passenger. No refund shall be made for any passenger during operation of the tour.

The sole responsibility for any airline used in these tours is limited to that set out in the passenger contract evidenced by the ticket. Airlines and other carriers are not responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their planes or conveyances. This restriction shall also apply to all other types of carriers, including car rental companies. The services of any IATA and ATC carrier may be used in connection with these tours. The Society shall not be held responsible for any penalties or charges made on special purchase or discount tickets that, due to schedule changes or cancellations, must be changed by the participants.

**RESERVATION /APPLICATION FORM**

**Traveler 1:**

Nickname for Name tag: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

**Traveler 2**

Nickname for Name tag: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Room Preferences**

\_\_\_\_ I request single accommodations where available and will pay the single supplement.

\_\_\_\_ I would like to be assigned a roommate. If one is not available, I will pay the single supplement.

**Personal Information:**

\_\_\_\_ I/We are nonsmokers. (If you are a smoker(s), please check here \_\_\_\_ and note that smoking is limited to outdoors in nongroup spaces)

**Deposit:**

Please find my enclosed **check** \_\_\_\_\_ or please **charge** \_\_\_\_\_ my credit card for the deposit of USD\$500.00 per person.

VISA MC Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_

Checks should be made payable to "Massachusetts Audubon Society"

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_