

# HOT SPOTS FOR BIRDING in St. Johns County, FLORIDA



## Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve (GTM NERR)

<b>Description:</b>	<p>The GTM NERR is a collaboration between Florida’s Department of Environmental Protection and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The Reserve covers 74,000 acres of coastal lands in northeast Florida from Ponte Vedra Beach to Palm Coast. The GTM Research Reserve is one of 29 National Estuarine Research Reserves across the country that focuses on research, education, and stewardship.</p> <p>The GTM NERR is a northeast Florida birding hotspot. The diversity of habitats on the Guana Peninsula account for its rich variety of birdlife. The area lies in the eastern flyway, allowing for large numbers of migrating birds to be observed.</p>
<b>Address:</b>	505 Guana River Road Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
<b>Phone Number:</b>	904-823-4500
<b>Fee:</b>	\$3 daily parking fee, annual pass \$53
<b>Hours of Operation:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trails and Beach Lots: 8am – sunset, 7 days a week</li> <li>• Visitor Center: 9am – 4pm Tuesday — Saturday, closed on Sunday, Monday, and state holidays</li> <li>• Guana Dam: 4am – 11pm, 7 days a week</li> </ul>
<b>Handicap Accessibility:</b>	The Visitor Center is handicap accessible. A variety of birds can be seen from the back of the Visitor Center looking out over the marsh and the Guana River. At the entrance to the trails is a short, paved trail that loops through a wooded area.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.gtmnerr.org">www.gtmnerr.org</a>
<b>Facilities Available:</b>	<p>The 21,000 square foot Visitor Center includes interpretive exhibits, aquariums, classrooms, teaching and working laboratories, an auditorium and an outdoor amphitheater overlooking the Guana River Aquatic Preserve.</p> <p>There are restrooms located in the Visitor Center, by the dam, and at the entrance to the trails. There are portable restrooms available in the north, middle, and south beach access parking lots.</p> <p>Picnic tables are available at the entrance to the trails and at the visitor center.</p> <p>There is a boat ramp to the Guana River at the south side of the dam.</p> <p>Guana Outpost South rents kayaks, SUPS, and bikes (904-217-7388) located near the dam</p>
<b>Types of Habitat:</b>	Beach and dunes, coastal strand, salt marsh, freshwater marsh, maritime hammock, and pond pine flatwoods

<p><b>Other Information:</b></p>	<p>There are several trails, 3 beach access points (north, middle, and south) and a visitor center.</p> <p>To access the trails, drive past the gate after turning off route A1A. Drive past the dam and onto a short unpaved road to the parking lot by the picnic tables and restroom facilities. All the trails start at this point, including the paved trail. There is a trail map located here.</p> <p>The dam lies between the mostly freshwater Guana Lake and spills into the saltwater Guana River. It's a great place to see many birds actively feeding on the lake and river.</p> <p>Behind the Visitor Center located on the Guana River is a deck where you will always see a variety of birds resting. There is an active eagle's nest that can be spotted from the Visitor Center. When the eagles are nesting, there is a spotting scope available inside the center to view the birds.</p> <p>The North Beach Access point has a boardwalk that goes over the dune and includes an observation platform. The platform allows for views of the ocean and Guana Lake. This is a great place to observe migrating birds in the fall.</p>
<p><b>Level of Difficulty:</b></p>	<p>Trails can be wet and muddy during the rainy season and after wet weather. Bug spray and sunscreen are recommended.</p> <p>The beach is accessible via boardwalks going over the dunes. There are stairs.</p>
<p><b>Species:</b></p>	<p>241 species observed</p>
<p><b>Bird Checklist Available:</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>