

## Be a good steward

If you see someone disturbing birds that are nesting or roosting, politely let them know about the harmful effects of their actions. Many people do not know why “Do not disturb” and “Keep your distance” are important actions around birds and other wildlife. If someone is deliberately disturbing birds, report the wildlife violation to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888-404-FWCC (3922).



Photo: Patrick Leary

*Keep at least 300 ft away from birds. If they take flight, you are too close!*

## Did you know?

Birds in flight are a beautiful sight. But repeated disturbances of birds caused by boaters can threaten the nesting success and survival of waterbirds.

When birds fly away in response to disturbance, they may leave nests and chicks vulnerable or use up energy reserves they need for migration.

You can help us conserve Florida’s shorebirds, seabirds and wading birds for future generations by being a responsible, bird-friendly boater!

Both bird watching and wildlife viewing also have major economic value to Florida, supporting about 44,000 jobs and a \$4.9 billion industry annually.



Photo: UF/IFAS

## For more information:

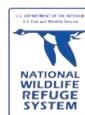
### Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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[www.flshorebirdalliance.org](http://www.flshorebirdalliance.org)  
[MyFWC.com/viewing/how/](http://MyFWC.com/viewing/how/)  
[www.fws.gov/refuge/Cedar\\_Keys](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Cedar_Keys)



# Conserve Nature Coast waterbirds



A guide to being  
a bird-friendly boater

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## Nature Coast's importance: Critical nesting, roosting habitat for waterbirds

Welcome to the Nature Coast, the long stretch of Florida's Gulf coast from Wakulla to Hernando County. Boaters here, both residents and visitors, have access to beautiful coastal waters, beaches and an abundance of fish and wildlife. Boaters also play a critical role in helping conserve the many seabirds, shorebirds and wading birds nesting here in spring and summer and wintering here in colder months.

The waterbirds, which include some threatened and endangered species, have a better chance of survival if boaters keep their distance and avoid disturbing them. These bird-friendly actions, whether you're using a motor boat, sailboat, kayak, canoe or paddle board, can make a difference!



Photo: Patrick Leary

The limited number of high tide roosting sites for birds, such as the American oystercatcher, make human disturbance an even greater risk to the birds' survival.

## How can you help?

### Avoid disturbing birds

Waterbirds will concentrate and rest, or roost, on coastal lands (islands, shell rakes, etc.) where they are safe from predators. These roost sites are limited along the Nature Coast, and landing on or approaching these locations too closely can force birds to move to areas that are not as safe. To protect our nesting and roosting birds, stay back at least 300 ft. If birds appear agitated or take flight, you are too close.

### Respect posted nesting areas

Do not enter areas on the land or water with posted signs indicating bird nesting. These areas are designated to protect waterbirds, their nests and chicks. If disturbed, birds nesting in trees and vegetation can fly off suddenly, crushing or pushing eggs from nests, or leaving eggs or chicks vulnerable to predators. For ground-nesting birds, their nests and chicks are difficult for people to see and can be stepped on by mistake. They also may fly away if disturbed, leaving their eggs and chicks vulnerable to heat and predators.



## Keep your distance

All boaters can help by keeping their boats at least 300 feet away from nesting and roosting birds to avoid disturbing them. Use binoculars or a camera's zoom function or lens to observe or photograph the birds from a distance. While a motorized boat generally is more disruptive to birds, people who use a canoe, kayak or paddle board to get close to birds that are nesting or roosting also can cause significant disturbance.



Photo: FWC

Landing on roosting sites causes the birds to take flight and expend valuable energy resources.

## Keep pets leashed and away from birds

Some dogs go to sea along with people. If you take a dog on your boat, be sure to keep it out of nesting or roosting areas. When you do let your dog off the boat and onto land, keep it leashed and as far away from birds as possible.



Photo: USFWS

Disturbance of colonial seabird rookeries can cause abandonment of a colony and negatively impact the Nature Coast's populations of seabirds, like the brown pelican.