

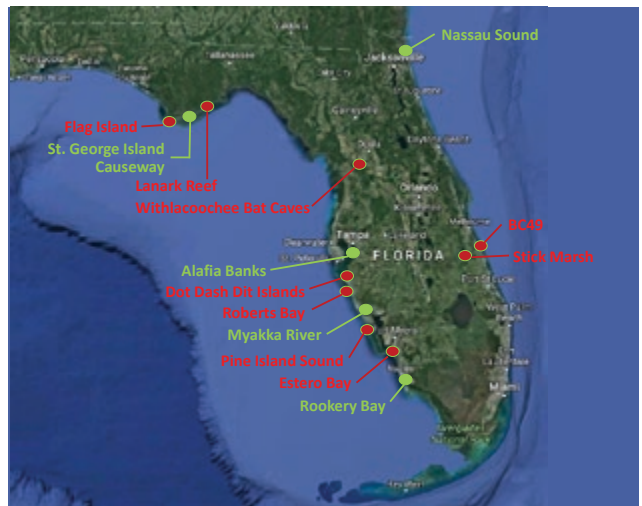
Audubon Moves to Block Permit Threatening Little Estero Island Critical Wildlife Area

This fall, Audubon learned of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's intent to permit a private boardwalk across state-owned mangroves, a coastal lagoon and into the very heart of Little Estero Island Critical Wildlife Area in Lee County. This important Critical Wildlife Area supports nesting Least Terns, Snowy Plovers, Black Skimmers and more, as well as migrating and wintering birds like Red Knots, Piping Plovers and Reddish Egrets. If approved the precedent would be set for private use and degradation of protected public conservation lands. Audubon intervened in the request by Texas Holdem LLC and Squeeze Me Inn LLC to build this private boardwalk for use at their rental houses on Fort Myers Beach. After an initial rejection by the Department of Environmental Protection, Audubon amended and refiled a petition in November.

BREAKING NEWS: After a dismissal by the state's Department of Environmental Protection, Audubon successfully fought for a hearing by an independent Administrative Law Judge.

FWC Approves 13 New Conservation Areas and Expands Five Existing Conservation Areas for Vulnerable Birds and Wildlife

In November, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) voted unanimously to create 13 new and expand five Critical Wildlife Areas (CWA's). Based on Audubon data, these protections will allow the posting of in-water buffers around nesting and roosting islands to protect rare and declining birds and wildlife. Species like the Roseate Spoonbills, American Oystercatchers, and Wood Storks will receive protections from devastating disturbance. This vote was the culmination of more than a year of efforts by Audubon staff, chapters and partners who advocated at public FWC meetings. At November's meeting, more than 28 supporters spoke including representatives from ten Audubon chapters. Despite objections from anglers and boaters opposed to these protections, FWC supported Audubon's position to establish more CWAs in one year than were created in the last 30 years combined!

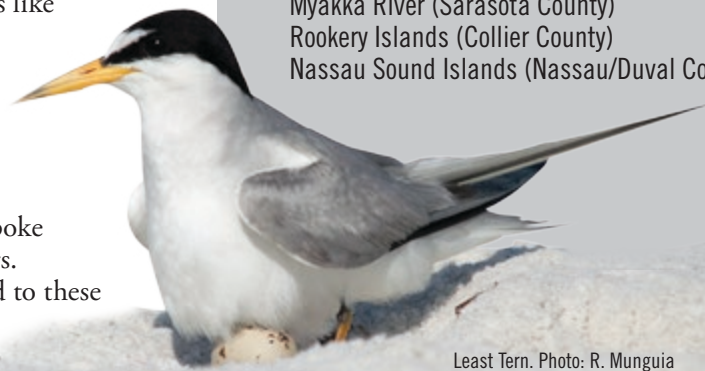


● New Critical Wildlife Areas:

- Lanark Reef (Franklin County)
- Flag Island (Franklin County)
- Withlacoochee Caves (Citrus County)
- Dot Dash Dit (Manatee County)
- Roberts Bay (Sarasota County)
- Broken Islands (Lee County)
- Useppa Oyster Bar (Lee County)
- Hemp Key (Lee County)
- Matanzas Pass Island (Lee County)
- M52 (Lee County)
- Coconut Point East (Lee County)
- Stick Marsh (Indian River County)
- BC49 (Brevard County)

● CWA expansions:

- St. George Island Causeway (Franklin County)
- Alafia Banks (Hillsborough County)
- Myakka River (Sarasota County)
- Rookery Islands (Collier County)
- Nassau Sound Islands (Nassau/Duval Counties)



Least Tern. Photo: R. Munguia

Florida Extends State Protections to 23 Imperiled Species

Recently, FWC also adopted its new Imperiled Species Management Plan including the “uplisting” of 23 species from the old “Species of Special Concern” status to “state Threatened.” As a result, these species (including American Oystercatcher, Reddish Egret, and Burrowing Owl) will now enjoy much stronger protections and considerations in state permitting decisions. Three years ago, Audubon also successfully advocated to consider the loss of habitat for state Threatened species in permitting decisions. This drastically increases the opportunity for successful lives of thousands of baby birds.