

Q: What wildlife do our lakes and ponds support?

A: A lot of wildlife depends on our lakes and ponds, which are actually man-made stormwater ponds designed to prevent flooding and remove pollutants before they enter our groundwater, creeks, estuaries, Bays, and the Gulf. This system mimics the natural Florida landscape, which was mostly wetlands.

We have a ton of opportunity to improve our ponds and increase plant diversity and Florida wildlife. When properly maintained, stormwater ponds can provide great fishing, birding, and wildlife viewing, with:

- Over 35 species of migratory and resident birds, including ducks, roseate spoonbills, anhingas, egrets, osprey, and bald eagles
- Bluegills, largemouth bass, and other gamefish
- Frogs, turtles, non-poisonous snakes, and alligators
- Blue-flag iris, white pond lilies, alligator flag, and over 100 other native aquatic plants



Great Blue Heron



One of the best ways to improve wildlife habitat around stormwater ponds is to establish a low-maintenance zone, or buffer, along their shorelines. A buffer will also help stabilize the shoreline, preventing erosion and improving water quality.

Does your nearest stormwater pond provide ideal habitat for wildlife? You can rate it with our stormwater pond habitat assessment tool. Download it to your tablet or computer at www.tinyurl.com/StormwaterPondAssessment.

For more on properly maintaining stormwater ponds, including aqua scaping plants, visit <https://www.sarasota.wateratlas.usf.edu/upload/documents/LivingontheWatersEdgeFreshwater.pdf>

Written by the Palmer Ranch Watershed / Natural Assets Committee, a group dedicated to maintaining and improving our water, preserves, and common areas.