

Friday, Oct 18, 2024

Fri-CB Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve

Address is 3839 Gulf City Rd, Ruskin, FL 33570

8:30 am - 12:00 pm. Fee \$30 (plus registration)

Limited to 20 participants. No entrance fee, tolls or parking.

Leader: Mary Barnwell 813-853-1166 or 352-279-2984, Travis Blunden

Bring water, snacks, hat, insect repellent. There are no facilities, and very little shade, so come prepared. The nearest restroom facilities are at the Circle K a quarter mile south of the turnoff onto Cockroach Bay Road. You will be on the back of a wagon with no canopy, and will need to get off and on it a few times.

The Cockroach Bay Ecosystem Restoration Project represents one of the largest, most complex coastal ecosystem restoration projects ever developed for Tampa Bay. Named for the abundant horseshoe crabs ('roaches') in the nearby waters, after 20 years the Preserve is a model of habitat diversity. On arrival in the parking area look east to see a night roost for many of our wading birds. A few may still be just leaving. There will be an easy walk up 'Mount Cockroach' for a view of the tidal and freshwater wetlands and search for gallinules, limpkins and egrets, and to scan the tree line for the eagles' nest. From the top of the 'mount' you can see the Skyway Bridge to the south, Tampa's downtown high-rises to the north, and St Pete's skyline to the west. The ride continues through grasslands that harbor everything from nighthawks to sparrows and common yellowthroats and around one or more wetlands. Both white and glossy ibis frequent the freshwater ponds and wetlands, as do black bellied whistling ducks. The area is close enough to the bay that gulls and pelicans will sail overhead. Gull-billed terns nest nearby and often continue in the area year-round. Spoon-bills use the tidal lagoon, and passerines forage in the old oaks. The freshwater pond to the south is well-known for the wintering ducks often found there.

Directions from Brandon:

Take I-75 south to Exit 240B, for Sun City Center/Ruskin.

Use Exit B to exit to the West onto College Ave/Rt 674. Go West on College Ave for 2.75 mi to Rt 41/Tamiami Trail.

Turn Left/South on Rt 41, continue just over 3 mi south to Cockroach Bay Rd on your right.

Turn Right/West, cross RR tracks and go 1.9 mi. west.

Turn Right/North on Gulf City Rd.

Take first Left into parking lot for Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve.

Directions from St Petersburg:

Take I-275 south, cross Skyway Bridge. Take Exit 2 for Rt. 41. At end of ramp, turn Left/ North on Rt 41 and continue 9 miles to Cockroach Bay Rd on your left. Turn Left/ West and follow directions above.

