



Globally Important Bird Areas



Avon Park Air Force Range, Florida

Ornithological Highlight: One of larger populations of the Florida Scrub-Jay occurs there, along with the endangered Florida Grasshopper Sparrow and Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

Size: 106,110 acres

Location: east of the town of Avon Park

- *Peninsular Florida* (NABCI Bird Conservation Region #31)
- *Peninsular Florida* (PIF Physiographic Area #02)

Habitats: Long-leaf and slash pine flatwoods, dry prairies, oak and sand pine scrub, riverine and hardwood forests, freshwater marshes

Land use: military training and exercises

Site description: This is an active military base where training exercises are conducted; there is gunnery practice and live ordnance remains from bombing exercises during World War II. Adjoining the range is a privately owned site of about 39,000 acres, which the state plans to acquire.

Birds: Avon Park Air Force Range has one of the larger populations of the endangered Florida Scrub-Jay (about 50 groups, but down from 100 a decade ago) and a small population of Red-cockaded Woodpecker (about 20 clusters). It also has the other two Watch List species characteristically found in the same habitat as the woodpeckers—Brown-headed Nuthatch and Bachman's Sparrow. The endangered Florida race of the Grasshopper Sparrow also occurs on the native dry prairie there. In the breeding season Swallow-tailed Kite and, rarely, Short-tailed Hawk can be found. The adjoining private land also has several clusters of Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

Conservation issues: Prescribed burning is used to maintain habitat for the rare and endangered species. Dry prairie becomes unsuitable for the Florida Grasshopper Sparrow unless it is burned at least every three years. Woodpecker nest and roost trees are marked. Population studies are conducted on the Florida Scrub-Jay, and the birds are color-banded. Part of the facility is used for bombing and gunnery practice.

Visitor information: Public access to the open parts of the facility is limited to Thursday noon to Monday evening, except during the hunting season in late October to December, when access is limited to hunting permit holders. Call 941-452-4119 for information.