

VERO - WEST COUNTY WASTEWATER WETLANDS FACILITY

Everyone has heard of the Viera Wetlands in Brevard County, but did you know that Indian River County has a wetlands? Tucked away next to the interstate on 8th St. in Vero Beach is the [West County Wastewater Wetlands Facility](#), Vero Wetlands if you will. The wetlands are open daily from 7-3. Treated waste water filters through 13 cells of varying depths and vegetation types, providing habitat for a wide variety of plants, birds, and animals. Grassy berms between the cells offer miles of easy walking and wildlife viewing. A cypress dome near the southern boundary hosts numerous water birds that roost every night. Early visitors can watch a parade of egrets, herons, and others leaving by the 100's, but many birds remain at the wetlands for all to see.

In the late 1990's, Maggie Bowman resurrected the Vero Beach Christmas Bird Count. Frances Graves and I had the honor of covering the wetlands. Four hours of birding, starting at dawn, routinely produced a bird list of over 80 species.

County listers will appreciate the site. Many species that are difficult to find in the county can be seen easily here. Maggie was ecstatic to find Ruddy ducks in the deep water cell near the entrance gate. Common goldeneye and Greater scaup are among other birds that have turned up over the years. Most winters, the wetlands hosts up to a dozen species of ducks. Shorebirds can be found along the edges, especially when water levels drop. The wooded outer perimeter hosts Painted buntings, warblers, and many other songbirds. A recent visit (October 27, 2015) produced 72 species. Many wintering species had not yet arrived and there were only three species of ducks. As winter sets in, species numbers will surely rise.

Unlike Viera Wetlands, access to this site is strictly by foot. Not to worry, though. The berms are easily traveled and there is lots to see, even within a short walk. The [eBird Hotspot Explorer](#) shows 167 species

recorded at this site from 202 checklists (as of 11/8/2015.) Surely more species can be found. I certainly plan to try. I hope to see you out there. You never know what we might find!

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