

Welcome to Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park, a 210-acre

park that encompasses some of Florida's loveliest landscape and the headwaters of the Homosassa River. The park is a showcase for native Florida wildlife. Nature trails wind throughout the park encouraging nature study.

About Our Wildlife . . .

Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park is a rehabilitation center for injured and orphaned West Indian manatees. The natural spring allows them an opportunity to re-acclimate to a natural environment before being returned to the wild. Swimming with the manatees is not allowed, since it will cause them to lose their fear of man and put them at a disadvantage when they are returned to the wild.

Most of the birds and animals living at Homosassa Springs can not survive in the wild. The park provides these animals a habitat and diet that is as natural as possible.

Natural Communities

Homosassa Springs has several ecological communities represented including *wetlands*, *hydric hammock*, *spring-run streams* and a *second-magnitude spring*. Sabal palms, live oaks, loblolly pines, southern magnolias and wax myrtles are just some of the wide variety of native trees and plants that can be found in the park.



Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park offers visitors a rare opportunity to observe Florida's native wildlife in natural settings. Visitors may stroll along paved trails and boardwalks to see manatees, black bear, bobcats, key deer, alligators, gray fox, otters and cougars at close range. Many varieties of birds, from colorful wood ducks and roseate spoonbills to majestic birds of prey, herons and egrets and a Whooping Crane, also make Homosassa Springs their home.

A huge spring, from which millions of gallons of fresh, clear water bubble every hour, is the centerpiece of this park and the headwaters of the Homosassa River. Saltwater and freshwater fish are attracted to this large, natural spring with its comfortable, year-round temperature of 72 degrees. Thirty-four varieties of fish have been identified in the spring.

One of the most interesting encounters at this natural attraction is the floating observatory, where you can go under water to view the thousands of fish and Florida's endangered manatees. Homosassa Springs is one of the only places in the world where manatees may be observed at close range 365 days a year.



Florida State Parks

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park

4150 South Suncoast Blvd., Homosassa, FL 34446-1168

Recorded information: (352) 628-2311

Park office: M-F 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (352) 628-5343

www.FloridaStateParks.org/homosassasprings

www.HomosassaSprings.org

Park Guidelines

- Please help us keep our animals healthy by not feeding them. They are on special diets.
- Do not tease the animals or throw anything into their habitats.
- Do not place children on railings or fences. Children under 12 years of age must be accompanied by an adult.
- Proper attire, including shirts and shoes, are required in the park at all times.
- Pets are not permitted in the park with the exception of service animals. Kennels are provided free of charge at the Visitor Center and West Entrance for your pet's safety and comfort.
- Intoxicants and firearms are prohibited.
- The park offers many recreational opportunities to visitors with disabilities. Should you need assistance to enable your full participation, please contact the park office.
- This is a non-swimming, non-fishing park.
- The park is open from 9:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. 365 days a year. Ticket counters close at 4:00 p.m.
- Admission is required to enter the wildlife park.

West Central Florida

Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park

A Showcase for Florida's Wildlife



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FLORIDA
State Parks
...the Real Florida



...the Real Florida



History & Culture

Native American coastal dwellers first inhabited the Homosassa River and surrounding islands. Excavations have revealed burial grounds, canoes, cooking pots, axes and other artifacts.

William Cooley was the first settler of the area in 1845. In 1846, David Yulee, a former U.S. Senator, established a 5,000-acre plantation and sugarcane mill. Famous and wealthy sportsmen including Grover Cleveland, John Astor and artist Winslow Homer have known the Homosassa area for generations. Homer came to the area for the excellent fishing and painted eleven watercolors of the Homosassa River in 1904.

In the 1920's, West Coast Development Company purchased land in Homosassa and began advertising and encouraging development. This attracted investors and property owners.

In the late 1940's, Elmo Reed opened "Nature's Giant Fish Bowl," the first attraction at Homosassa Springs. In the 1950's, it was sold to David Newell who built a three-storied structure above ground alongside the spring to give visitors an aerial view of the spring. Bruce Norris bought the property in 1963 and expanded the attraction into Homosassa Springs Attraction. In 1984, Citrus County bought the attraction to protect it as an environmentally sensitive area until the State of Florida could purchase it. On January 1, 1989, Homosassa Springs became a Florida State Park.



Florida Parks Timeline

BP (Before Present)
Early Human Habitation

1500-1700s

1513-1539: Spanish territory
1763-83: British territory
1776: American Revolution
1783-1812: Spanish territory

1800s

1821-45: American Territory
1845: Florida becomes 27th State
1860-65: American Civil War

1900

1920s: Land Boom
1929: The Great Depression
1940s on: WWII & Population Growth

1999-2001: Florida State Parks are voted #1 in the nation

2000

7000 BC to 1500 AD: Native Americans lived along river

1851: Yulee Sugar Mill in operation

1940s: Elmo Reed opens Nature's Giant Fish Bowl

1984: Citrus County purchases attraction

2003: Attendance exceeds 300,000

May 2003: Wildlife Walk Phase II completed

Educational Programs

Manatee

11:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.

Wildlife Encounters

10:30 a.m. & 2:30 p.m.
Alligator & Hippopotamus
12:30 p.m.

Directions

The park is located 75 miles north of Tampa and St. Petersburg, with the entrance located on U.S. 19 in Homosassa Springs.

Legend:

- BOAT TOUR
- CONCESSION
- PARKING
- PAVILION
- PICNIC
- RESTROOM

Real Fun in ... the Real Florida

Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park provides an opportunity to **see Florida's wildlife** in a natural setting along 1.1-miles of paved trails and boardwalks.

The Fish Bowl **underwater observatory** allows visitors to see manatees up close below water. Thousands of fish congregate in 72-degree waters.

Educational Programs are presented daily on the endangered manatees, Florida wildlife, alligators, and the Park's hippopotamus. The Children's Education Center offers a variety of **hands-on activities** for young people to learn about Florida's wildlife.

The Visitor Center/Main Entrance on U.S. 19 includes a ticket counter, Tourist Resource Center, Manatee Education Center, boat docks, gift shop and rest rooms. Another ticket counter, gift shop and rest rooms are located at the West Entrance where visitors may dine at the **Wildside Café**.

Pontoon boats transport visitors from the Visitor Center along Pepper Creek to the West Entrance. Trams provide alternate transportation.

Birdwatchers will enjoy exploring Pepper Creek Trail, a 1.5-mile wheelchair-accessible trail. Walk 3/4 miles on the trail from the Visitor Center parking area to the boat docks and return on Pepper Creek by boat. Warblers, vireos, thrushes, pileated woodpeckers, ospreys, wading birds and wood ducks are often seen along the trail.



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