

**FIELD TRIP RECAP**  
**St. Mark's National Wildlife Refuge, 17 February 2010**  
**Written by Leland Leonard**

Field trip to St. Marks NWR on Feb 17:

Leaving Pensacola at 2 a.m. I travelled east on I-10.

After a delicious omelet at a greasy spoon in Marianna I reached Tallahassee as dawn approached. Turning off on Monroe St. I travelled thru the city and south on 363 to the wildlife refuge.

After leaving my money in the drop box I hiked the Plum Orchard trail around the unopened visitor center. Water was high; I played cat and mouse with six deer: two doe and their young. Coots in the pond and an assortment of woodland birds, sparrows, woodpeckers, etc.

It was a blue sky day.

The visitor center opened and I purchased a copy of Jackson's book on the Ivory-bill. A quick look; seems to be mainly a historical record.

Drove down to the lighthouse and set up the spotting scope at the tower. Scoped the ponds for ducks; hundreds of American Widgeon, Redheads, coots, 1 moorhen. Saw a bald eagle course overhead, land at a grassy island and later take off with a duck in its talons. A racoon crossed the road and came by the tower; I chattered at it and the animal stood on its hind legs and glared up at me; I must have said something very insulting.

The ponds to the south had some egrets and herons; the beach mudflats had some sandpipers; flocks of white ibis flew over. This is one of my very favorite spots.

Up the road to the Headquarters pond: many scaup and ringnecked ducks (along with coots.).

Drove up the road stopping at ponds to scope. Lots of birds.

At the office they thought the Neotropic Cormorant had left.

East on US 98 to Wakulla Beach Rd. Stopped at check station and hiked Florida Trail along the North Line Boundary. Closed canopy hardwood bottomlands, very wet. After half a mile found fresh hog sign and about faced back to the van.

Drove west on 98 to Bottoms Rd. and out to point. High tide but spotted American Oystercatchers across the water. Could see smoke plume from St. Marks prescribed burn.

Drove over to Otter Lake; large cypresses with osprey nests. Sparrows etc.

Dinner at Posey's in Panacea. Back to P'cola by 10:30 p.m. 48 bird species.

-Leland Leonard