

BINOCULARS

Purchasing binoculars is a long-term investment. A decent pair can be purchased for less than \$100 but many models cost much more. It is recommended that the magnification for bird watching is between 7x and 10x and the diameter of the lenses should be at least 5 times larger than the magnification power (this is the field of view). For example: 8x42 is the most popular choice in binoculars (8 is the magnification and 42 is the field of view).

TEST, TEST, TEST! Choosing a pair of binoculars should be done by holding (for comfort and weight), and looking through them to compare the magnification, sharpness, light and ease of focus. One of the best ways to compare binoculars is in the field with other birders. Ask them if you can try theirs. If you can't focus or find the bird quickly, they are the wrong binoculars for you. You may also try different binoculars at a shop that offers several brands and models. It is not recommended that you buy binoculars over the internet without testing them first.

FIELD GUIDES

There are many field guides available for purchase at birding stores, book stores and National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Centers. Some guides are limited to a certain region or state while others include all 800+ species of North America. Some use photographs while others use artist renderings to depict species. It is best to research all the options to compare the various guides. Choose the guide that seems the easiest for you to use for bird identification. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission recommends these popular comprehensive guides:

- *A Field Guide to the Birds, Eastern and Central North America* (Fourth Edition, 1980, Roger Tory Peterson)
 - *Stokes Field Guide to Birds, Eastern Region* (First Edition, 1997, The American Bird Conservancy)
 - *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (Fourth Edition, 2002, The National Geographic Society)
 - *Focus Guide to the Birds of North America* (First Edition, 2000, Kenn Kaufman)
 - *The Sibley Guide to Birds* (First Edition, 2000, David Allen Sibley)
-

FEEDERS IN FLORIDA

Feeding birds in Florida is a thing of patience as most birds that winter in the state prefer a diet of insects. Those that eat seeds will come to your feeders but the species that visit you will depend on the habitat around your home. If the habitat is right, the most commonly seen feeder birds are: Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Cardinal, Blue Jay, Goldfinch and House Finch.

The best seed for feeders is Black Oil Sunflower seeds. Putting up suet cakes may also bring in Woodpeckers such as Downey and Red-Bellied. If you put up feeders, don't forget to clean them frequently.

Hummingbird feeders may get Ruby Throated Hummingbirds who are usually in migration. Hummingbird feeders should have the nectar changed every 5 days. Do NOT put food coloring in the nectar.