

S9 Day Paddles - Hillsborough Bay

Bird Island Preserve Paddle Information Sheet

Description: Bird Island and Sunken Island are two manmade islands that were formed from spoil material when a channel that connects the main Tampa shipping channel to the Alafia River was dredged in the late 1920s. The islands were immediately important as bird nesting sites for gulls, terns, and skimmers. As shrubs and trees replaced low-lying vegetation, nesting herons, egrets, ibis, and later pelicans moved from the historic nesting site at Green Key. Today the islands are owned by Cargill Fertilizer, Inc. and leased to Audubon for operation as a sanctuary. Each year, up to 18,000 nesting pairs of 16 to 20 species of birds nest on the Alafia Bank Sanctuary, making it one of the largest colonies in Florida and one of the most diverse colonies in the continental United States. This is a great birding and photography paddle.

Skill Level: Intermediate

Distance/Approximate Time: 6.3 Miles/3.5 Hours

Launch Site: Williams Park Ramp

Special Considerations: Do not go so close to the islands that you upset the birds natural patterns. Keep your distance.

Skill Level Definitions

Beginner: New to paddling and may need tips and or instructions about paddling strokes, safety procedures, and entering/exiting kayaks. Comfortable on short trips of 1 to 3 miles on protected waters, when wind does not exceed 5 mph.

Novice: Paddlers acquainted with basic paddle strokes and can manage kayak handling independently in winds not exceeding 10 mph on protected waters. Comfortable on trips up to 6 miles.

Intermediate: Paddlers with experience in basic strokes and some experience on different venues, including some open water. Comfortable on trip distances of 6 to 10 miles, winds not exceeding 15 mph.

Advanced: Seasoned paddlers who possess skills and experience to paddle all venues and conditions. Experienced in self-rescues. Should be comfortable paddling more than 10 miles in a day.

NOTE: Great care has been taken to ensure this guides accuracy, but weather, tides, and water conditions can change rapidly and create hazardous conditions. These maps are for visual reference only, please consult NOAA Charts for navigation. Paddlers should have all proper safety equipment and check conditions before departure. All paddlers should always wear PFDs while on the water, and leave a float plan. There are inherent dangers in any paddle sport. There are special hazards along the Florida coast due to shifting tides, changing wind and weather, shallow waters, and treacherous bottoms with soft mud, rocks, and oyster bars. It is up to each paddler to be aware of these dangers, to accept and be prepared for the risks involved, and to be certain they have the skills to safely paddle in these conditions.