

## Southwest Florida

# Oscar Scherer State Park

*Visit for the Scherer delight of it*

## Real Fun in the Real Florida

This park's large acreage of scrubby flatwoods makes it one of the best places in southwest Florida to view Florida scrub-jays, an imperiled species found only in Florida. The birds are abundant in this 1,381-acre park. In addition to viewing wildlife, an array of other land-based and water-based recreational activities awaits you. There is always something to do at Oscar Scherer State Park.

The park provides opportunities for **canoeing, fishing, swimming, picnicking, hiking, bicycling, camping** and **wildlife viewing**.

Visitors looking for wildlife will find that early and late in the day are the best times. Canoeists and **kayakers** can paddle along South Creek, a tidal blackwater stream, which flows to a nearby bay. Canoes and kayaks can be rented. Try both

freshwater and saltwater fishing from the creek banks, or anglers can fish the shores of Lake Osprey, which is also the park's swimming destination. Picnic areas are equipped with grills, and **pavilions** can be reserved for a fee. The park has full-facility campsites and a youth/group camp area. A **visitor center** has exhibits and videos about the park's plants and wildlife.

Fifteen miles of trails provide solitude, beauty, challenge and a healthy adventure for everyone. The **Lester Finley Barrier Free Nature Trail**, located in South Creek Picnic Area, is accessible to those with sight, hearing or mobility impairments. It has a wheelchair accessible fishing dock, butterfly observation area and drinking fountain.

## **History & Nature**

In her will, Elsa Scherer Burrows (1884-1955) left the family's 460-acre South Creek Ranch to the state in memory of her father Oscar Scherer (who invented a process for dyeing leather in 1872). After a year of preparation, Oscar Scherer State Park opened to the public in 1956.

Three decades later, realtor and environmentalist, Jon Thaxton began campaigning for the state to purchase and protect adjoining Florida scrub-jay territory. With help from The Nature Conservancy, Sarasota County and wide public support, the state purchased an additional 922 acres from the adjacent Palmer Ranch in 1991. The park now preserves more than two square-miles of natural land in a rapidly developing region, and provides resource-based recreation for over 100,000 visitors annually.

Bald eagles nest here in winter and are commonly seen. However, Oscar Scherer is perhaps best known as a place to see the Florida scrub-jay, a fearless bird seen on park trails, or even in the parking lot. Urban development has so reduced this bird's habitat that Oscar Scherer now has the only protected population in southwest Florida with a long-term chance of survival. Florida Park Service biologists conduct a monthly census of the population, and the park staff strives to manage the scrubby flatwoods, the natural community needed by the birds, in a way that will support an optimum number. Prescribed fire and the mechanical treatment of vegetation are the methods usually employed.

## Directions

Oscar Scherer State Park is located on U.S. 41, six miles north of Venice. Heading south on I-75 take exit 200. Heading north on I-75 take exit 195.

## Park Guidelines

- Hours are 8 a.m. until sunset, 365 days a year.
- An entrance fee is required.
- Plants, animals and park property are protected.
- Pets are permitted in designated areas only. Pets must be kept on a leash no longer than 6 feet and well behaved at all times.
- Fishing, boating, swimming and fires are allowed in designated areas only. A Florida fishing license may be required.
- Alcoholic beverage consumption is allowed in designated areas only.

- Become a volunteer. Inquire at the ranger station.
- For information about joining the Friends of Oscar Scherer Park Inc., call (941) 483-5956.
- For camping information, contact Reserve America at (800) 326-3521 or (866) I CAMP FL or TDD (888) 433-0287 or visit ReserveAmerica.com.
- Florida's state parks are committed to providing equal access to all facilities and programs. Should you need assistance to enable your participation, please contact the ranger station.

## Contact Information

Florida State Parks  
Department of Environmental Protection  
Division of Recreation and Parks

### **Oscar Scherer State Park**

1843 South Tamiami Trail

Osprey, FL 34229

(941) 483-5956

[www.FloridaStateParks.org/oscarscherer/](http://www.FloridaStateParks.org/oscarscherer/)