

Museum releases iPhone app for bird, butterfly and plant identification

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GAINESVILLE, Fla. — With the touch of a finger, iPhone users can access information to help identify birds, butterflies and flowering plants seen along the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail and throughout the state.

The Florida Museum of Natural History's new app, currently available through the iTunes store, "Nature Viewing Along the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Viewing Trail," allows users to search for 200 birds, 106 butterflies and 247 flowering plants through a variety of options including name, color, shape and size. The app provides photographs and information about each species.

The app also includes a list of 491 sites along the 2,000-mile trail which extends from the Florida Panhandle through the Keys, as well as information about habit conservation and animals and plants unique to the state.

"This app was really designed for the non-expert, but experienced nature viewers will enjoy it as well," said Shari Ellis, Florida Museum project coordinator. "We wanted to increase appreciation of Florida's natural environment and enhance the experience of trail visitors."

Development of the app was funded with grants of \$40,000 from the Florida Wildflower Foundation and \$9,500 from the Florida Museum Associates board.

Florida Wildflower Foundation Executive Director Lisa Roberts said the app is an excellent field guide for anyone interested in plants, birds or butterflies.

"Those three are so dependent on one another and learning about the ecosystem as a whole is essential," Roberts said. All information and photos are stored on the user's iPhone, meaning internet access isn't required to use the app.

Because the app requires 416MB, users will need to connect to a Wi-Fi network for the initial download. The app will be available for the iPad by the end of January and an Android version is scheduled for release in late February.

The Florida Museum developed the app with the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Services entomology and nematology department and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.