

Considerations that may affect your decision to accept a position with the University of Florida Wading Bird Project

- If you don't like to get dirty... This is not a position where we sit in blinds, follow banded birds through the forest, or run mist nets. We're going to be working with dirty boat engines, walking through mucky and guano-laden waters, and handling birds that use feces and regurgitation as defensive tools. If you have an aversion to getting dirty, this may not be the job for you.
- If you are a smoker... Aside from the decreased ability to do strenuous activities, know that you will find yourself spending the vast majority of your time in smoke-free environments—airboats, airplanes, university vehicles, and university housing, and nesting colonies. The more you enjoy tobacco, the more you will hate this job.
- If you are prone to road rage... We'll spend a lot of time in large, slow vehicles towing unwieldy airboats. Miami traffic is like that of almost any large city—frustrating and, at times, menacing. If you are either a timid or an aggressive driver, you will find this job especially irksome.
- If you are “gatorphobic”... Alligators do not normally prey on adult humans, but they do prey on birds, and we will be frequenting nesting colonies where young birds often fall into the waters below. That means that we'll be working around gators. Most will be small and actively avoid us. Some will not, but will keep their distance. On occasion, we may walk up close to, and then around, gators in our path. If these last two scenarios are cause for great anxiety, you may not want this position.
- If you easily succumb to motion sickness... If you don't like amusement park rides, flying in small airplanes may not be the way you want spend your Spring. We repeatedly circle colonies as we count and take pictures, and later in the mornings the air gets bumpy. Most of those flying will want to take some motion sickness preventative because we will be reading and taking notes while bouncing along inside the (often uncomfortably warm) aircraft. If, however, you are especially sensitive to this type of movement or get carsick easily, you may want to pass on this job.
- If you have immune response deficiencies... Mosquitoes in most of the country now carry West Nile Virus. Even with DEET and other mechanical forms of protection, you are likely going to endure some mosquito bites. West Nile is rarely serious, but those with immune response deficiencies are at special risk.

Those are the negatives. The positives of this position are many times more numerous. The Florida Everglades area is a unique and spectacular environment in which to work. You will see and do things few other people ever have the opportunity to experience, something you will remember for your entire career. You will learn a range of skills that are applicable to many other wildlife positions, and more importantly, you will (with perseverance) demonstrate the capacity to develop and use such skills in the most challenging of conditions.