

Panther Point on Lake Hancock

For decades, the Lake Hancock area has been a key component on the Peace River to Green Swamp water resource / wildlife corridor. As early as the 1950s it was identified as a wildlife and birding hotspot. When footprints were found along the southwest corner of the lake, it became known as "Panther Point". Today, Panther Point Trail runs south from the Marshall Hampton Reserve around the east side of Lake Hancock. It goes through pasture, shady woods and along former phosphate mine pit lakes that have spoil island rookeries. There is an impressive bridge that allows for water control between the pit lakes and Lake Hancock.

TRAIL ENTRANCE via:
Marshall Hampton Reserve
3115 Thornhill Rd.

Winter Haven, FL 33880
PARK GPS COORDINATES:
N 28° 00.473 W 081° 49.259



TREK TEN CACHE COORDINATES:
N 27° 59.020 W 081° 49.304



DRIVING DIRECTIONS

From US 98 South turn east onto Winter Lake Road / FL-540 East. Turn right to stay on FL-540 East. Travel about 4 miles, then turn right onto Thornhill Road. The parking area is a short distance on the right side of the road.



Work in progress:

The first 5 miles of the trail are open. Ultimately, it will run 10-miles and connect to the Fort Fraser Trail at US 98.

FIND THE CACHE WITHOUT GPS:

From the parking area head west on the trail approximately 0.6 miles. At the point where you can see the trail forking to the east, go clock wise around the pit lake, follow the signs to Panther Point Trail. You will have to open two gates along this trail through a pasture. Push the button to open the gates, the gates will close behind you. The area between the two gates is an active cattle grazing area. Please DO NOT feed, chase or try and pet the cattle.

About 1 mile south of the second gate you will reach the cache. Just past the cache location you will see a large piece of concrete on the left side of the trail, you can use it as a bench. Before you reach the concrete look to your right (west) for a group of 4 pine trees. The cache is behind the second tree off the trail. (5.4 mile round trip) We recommend going past the cache another 0.3 miles to see the bridge.

(HIKE: 6.0 mile round trip)

THINGS TO SEE

The trail traverses a variety of habitats including open water via the bridge. You are almost guaranteed to see alligators and a good variety of birds especially during spring and fall migrations. There are impressive views of Lake Hancock and the vestiges of phosphate mining.



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