

# Dry Season

Although it may come as a surprise, Florida does have seasons. The most dramatic are the *wet* and *dry* seasons.

The Slough cycles through many subtle changes throughout the year.



Cypress trees in dry season. Notice high water mark from previous wet season.

# Dry Season

As the summer rains decrease, water in the ponds recedes and fish become concentrated in smaller and smaller areas. This concentration provides wading birds with an easily obtainable food source that is needed in large amounts to help feed themselves and their young.



© Robert Repenning

Wood Duck Pond feeding frenzy

# Dry Season

The dry season is also critical for cypress trees. Although the older, larger cypresses can live in water, the young plants can only take root and begin to grow when the ground is dry.



Cypress trees lose their needles during the winter and start growing them back around February.

# Dry Season

Although most migratory birds fly south to the Slough in the fall, the Swallow-tailed kite flies north from South America, arriving sometime in February.

South America's winter is Florida's summer. These birds fly here to stay in hot, sub-tropical weather when it's cold in their native environment.



© Wilma Keidel

# Dry Season

With more dry land available, female turtles come out of the water to lay eggs sometime in spring.

This Softshell turtle will not stay with the eggs. Once the young hatch, they will have to survive on their own.



# Dry Season

In the spring, new life can be seen at the Slough, such as young birds like this Yellow-crowned night heron.



The dry season also brings wildflowers, like the Blue flag iris and the Buttonbush.

Buttonbush



# Dry Season

During the dry season, ponds that were once full of water begin to dry up and shrink.



© Wilma Keidel

Otter Pond

# Dry Season

When the ground is dry, you can clearly see the cypress knees that are otherwise hidden underwater during wetter times of the year.



# Dry Season

Drier ground also makes animal tracks visible, like the ones in this photo that were made by a raccoon.



Wilma Keidel

# Dry Season

By the end of the dry season, baby birds are venturing out of their nests and learning how to be independent.

Parent birds, like the Red-bellied woodpecker on the top right of the picture, teach the babies how to fly, feed and take care of themselves.

Fledglings may remain with their parents until fall, even if they're not dependent on them.





# Wet Season

Wet season at the Slough generally corresponds to the Florida hurricane season, June 1 through November 31.

The beginning of the wet season is marked by building storm clouds, and the rain and runoff fills the Slough with fresh water.



Photo by Wilma Keidel

# Wet Season

These nourishing waters signal a time of recharge for the Slough.



# Wet Season

The water levels rise in the Slough and the water from the ponds and other areas mix.

This means you can see huge fish, like the Florida gar, swimming in areas that are dry at other times of the year.



© Wilma Keidel



# Wet Season

The wet season is a time of preparation for the Slough. Trees and shrubs produce berries that will later ripen for birds and others to feed on.



Fish populations thrive and many animals have young.

Cypress trees scent the air with their fragrant cones, some of which will eventually fall and take root when the ground is dry.



# Wet Season

Although mosquitoes are commonly associated with swamps and wetlands, the Slough's moving water and some of its organisms - like frogs, grasshoppers, dragonflies and spiders - keep the mosquito population in check.



# Wet Season

Baby alligators hatch between August and September after about 65 days of incubation.

Mother gators are very protective of their young and stay with them for a year after they hatch.



© Wilma Keidel

# Wet Season

In the fall, many birds migrate south to the Slough, including (clockwise - top left) the Belted kingfisher, Prairie warbler, Yellow-bellied sapsucker woodpecker and Pied-billed grebe.

Luckily, the Slough has been preparing for these visitors and is ready for them.

