

SOUTH FLORIDA WINTER WEEKEND

DECEMBER 9 - 13, 2009

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ITINERARY:

December 9 - Tour orientation and dinner at nearby restaurant

December 10 - We started our trip with a spectacular visit to Wakodahatchee Wetlands where there seemed to be spectacular views around every corner Purple Gallinules were especially numerous and a great songbird flock entertained us; next was Green Cay and then after lunch we took a trip out Tamiami Trail before pulling into Florida City

December 11 – All day birding in incomparable Everglades National Park. We began our day all the way down in Flamingo checking Eco Pond, the mudflats of Florida Bay, and the Flamingo Marina before heading back up the main park road. On our way up the road we stopped at Mrazek Pond, West Lake, Paurotis Pond, and Mahogany Hammock before heading to lunch. An afternoon return to the park took us to Pa-hay-okee Overlook, Long Pine Key, and we ended with Anhinga Trail at dusk.

December 12 – Morning birding in rural Homestead with a stops at Flynn’s, Lucky Hammock and the Annex, and the Homestead Airport; we also made a return trip to Anhinga Trail before heading toward Miami. In South Dade County we visited Cutler Wetlands and Dump Marsh then headed to Cutler Ridge where we took a walk at Matheson Hammock County Park. We returned to Lucky Hammock and Everglades for some owling this evening.

December 13 - It was back into the big city in search of those flashy exotics; we visited the cities of Kendall, Miami, Miami Shores and North Miami before making the drive back up to Fort Lauderdale for airport departures

BIRDLIST

Note: Species appearing in underlined print are birds of special note that are either rare, local specialties, or are otherwise generally hard to find. The taxonomic order and nomenclature follows American Ornithologist Union Check-list of North American Birds, 7th edition (including 48th suppl.).

Abbreviations:

FP: Frog Pond Wildlife Management Area, including Lucky Hammock and the Annex

ENP: Everglades National Park

WW: Wakodahatchee Wetlands

SD: South Dade County including Dump Marsh and Cutler Wetlands

WATERFOWL

Black-bellied Whistling Duck – a family group at Green Cay

(Muscovy Duck) - This species is considered to be an established exotic in Florida, but does not count for your ABA list. These birds bear little resemblance to their wild ancestors

Mottled Duck - we had great looks at WW

Blue-winged Teal - great looks at WW and scattered other locations

Ring-necked Duck - a nice close flock in a pond by the side of the Turnpike near WW

GREBES

Pied-billed Grebe – several at scattered locations

PELICANS

American White Pelican - We saw several of these giants on the flats at Flamingo

Brown Pelican – Several in Flamingo over Florida Bay and also in Miami Shores

CORMORANTS

Double-crested Cormorant - seen daily

DARTERS

Anhinga - many fantastic looks with birds in high breeding colors on nests at WW

BITTERN & HERONS

Least Bittern - heard only at Anhinga Trail

Great Blue Heron - many close looks, including nesting birds at WW

(Great White Heron) – this is currently regarded to be a subspecies of Great Blue with only a white morph, it was once considered to be a good species and my some day be again, we saw them in ENP and SD

Great Egret - seen daily

Snowy Egret - fairly common and widespread

Little Blue Heron - several seen at scattered locations

Tricolored Heron - great close looks at WW and elsewhere

Reddish Egret – a dark morph adult feeding on the flats at Flamingo

Cattle Egret - seen daily

Green Heron - many fantastic close views

Black-crowned Night-Heron – several perched at WW

IBISES & SPOONBILLS

White Ibis - many seen daily

Glossy Ibis - good looks at WW and SD

Roseate Spoonbill – nice views of adults at Eco Pond

STORKS

Wood Stork – Several at scattered locations

NEW WORLD VULTURES

Black Vulture - seen daily

Turkey Vulture - seen daily in direct comparison with the former species

HAWKS, EAGLES, & KITES

Osprey - we saw lots of these guys, including several active nests

White-tailed Kite – two near Lucky Hammock were a surprise, no doubt attracted by the same resource that had attracted all of the Harriers

Snail Kite – unbeatable views of foraging birds near the 40 mile bend of Tamiami Trail

Bald Eagle – a young bird at Flamingo and another plus an adult in SD

Northern Harrier – a huge number (25+) around Lucky Hammock

Sharp-shinned Hawk – a couple of flybys

Cooper's Hawk – more common than the former

Red-shouldered Hawk - the most common hawk in South Florida, the resident race is distinctively pale

Broad-winged Hawk – a single bird seen in flight

Short-tailed Hawk – seen well at Anhinga Trail, Lucky Hammock and elsewhere

Red-tailed Hawk – at least two this year, more than we normally see

FALCONS & CARACARAS

American Kestrel - seen daily

RAILS & COOTS

Sora – nice views at WW

Purple Gallinule – point blank looks at several at WW

Common Moorhen - we saw the red bands around the tops of their legs at WW

American Coot - seen daily

LIMPKIN

Limpkin – heard at Green Cay and Anhinga Trail

CRANES

Sandhill Crane – Three flying around Lucky Hammock

PLOVERS & LAPWINGS

Killdeer – a few scattered about

STILTS & AVOCETS

American Avocet – Cutler Wetlands

SANDPIPERS

Spotted Sandpiper – one walking on the seawall at Flamingo

Greater Yellowlegs – a few in SD

Lesser Yellowlegs – a few with Greater in SD

Least Sandpiper – a few at Cutler Wetlands

Dunlin – same as the former

Short-billed Dowitcher – some in a mixed flock at Cutler Wetlands

Long-billed Dowitcher – ID'd by voice with the former

GULLS, TERNS, & SKIMMERS

Laughing Gull - hundreds at Flamingo

Ring-billed Gull - seen most days, thousands at the dump

Herring Gull – seen with the following two species

Great Black-backed Gull – on the water off Miami Shores

Lesser Black-backed Gull – side by side with the former

Caspian Tern – good numbers on the flats at Flamingo

Royal Tern – several on the flats at Flamingo

PIGEONS & DOVES

Rock Pigeon - seen daily

White-crowned Pigeon – One in Kendall gave us superb views. This species just barely reaches the US in extreme South Florida

Eurasian Collared-Dove - ubiquitous in South Florida, the origin of their U.S. invasion

White-winged Dove – we saw a few in Kendall; the origin of these birds is not exactly clear; it has been speculated that escaped birds have become establish, but certainly this species is expanding in the core of its U.S. range and could have spread to FL on its own

Mourning Dove - seen daily, much daintier than the two former doves

Common Ground-Dove - little toy doves, we saw a pair west of Homestead

PARROTS

Monk Parakeet - their huge bulky stick nests were quite impressive, we had excellent looks in Kendall

“Canary-winged” Parakeet – we saw a small group in flight near the airport in Miami. We could not tell if they were White-winged or Yellow-chevroned, but they were one or the other. This species pair used to be lumped as Canary-winged Parakeet.

Mitred Parakeet – we had a large flock feeding in a fruiting tree in Kendall

Blue-crowned Parakeet – a small group of parakeets seen in flight in Miami Shores were probably this species

CUCKOOS AND ANIS

Smooth-billed Ani – we saw the last known bird in FL. There are almost certainly more somewhere, but this is the last known location in the state and there is now only one bird there

OWLS

Eastern Screech-Owl – fantastic looks at this diminutive owl in ENP

Great-horned Owl – heard only in ENP

Burrowing Owl – great views at the Homestead Airport

Barred Owl – heard only in ENP

NIGHTJARS & ALLIES

Lesser Nighthawk – these are now seen annually in small numbers wintering in South Florida. We saw a few at dusk at Lucky Hammock

Whip-poor-will – great views of a perched bird at FP

HUMMINGBIRDS

Ruby-throated Hummingbird – several seen at flowering bushes

KINGFISHERS

Belted Kingfisher - seen daily

WOODPECKERS

Red-bellied Woodpecker - quite common in South Florida

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – heard only in Miami

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS

Eastern Phoebe - seen almost daily

Great Crested Flycatcher - a few seen and heard, seen year round in South Florida

Western Kingbird – with the scissor-tails

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher – great looks in Homestead

SHRIKES

Loggerhead Shrike - quite common in South Florida, especially compared to the Northeast where they have almost disappeared

VIREOS

White-eyed Vireo – seen at WW and in SD

Blue-headed Vireo - we saw a few of these handsome vireos

CROWS & JAYS

Blue Jay – a few here and there

American Crow - only in the Everglades

Fish Crow - only outside of the Everglades system, these guys stay along the coasts

SWALLOWS

Tree Swallow – the most common swallow in the winter

Cave Swallow – just a brief look at a flyby just outside ENP

Barn Swallow – a few around FP

WRENS

Carolina Wren – heard only in ENP

House Wren – we heard several

BULBULS

Red-whiskered Bulbul – nice scope views, though it was a bit distracting having to look past the Spot-breasted Oriole and the Bronzed Cowbird

GNATCATCHERS

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - common year-round in South Florida we saw many

MOCKINGBIRDS & THRASHERS

Gray Catbird - a common winter bird in South Florida, not as common this year though

Northern Mockingbird - seen daily

Brown Thrasher – one at WW

MYNAS & STARLINGS

European Starling - seen daily

Common Myna – the latest countable exotic for Florida, they are getting more common each year; we saw them in Florida City

Hill Myna – a pair in Kendall were conveniently located

WOOD WARBLERS

Northern Parula - seen a few times, a common winter warbler

Yellow-rumped Warbler – not seen every day, this species is somewhat irruptive this far south

Yellow-throated Warbler – the love Coconut Palms in winter, we found a couple

Pine Warbler – in the pines at WW

Prairie Warbler - common year round in FL we found several

Palm Warbler - “Western Palm Warbler” is the form that winters in South Florida, and they sure are common, many seen daily

Black-and-white Warbler – in our super flock at WW

American Redstart – ditto

Northern Waterthrush – heard calling at FP

Common Yellowthroat – multiple looks, a common year-round species

SPARROWS & ALLIES

Grasshopper Sparrow – we heard a few calling around Lucky Hammock

TANAGERS & ALLIES

Summer Tanager – we found one with our super flock at WW, rare in winter in SFL

CARDINALS & ALLIES

Northern Cardinal – a common resident

BLACKBIRDS & ALLIES

Red-winged Blackbird – WW and GC

Eastern Meadowlark - great looks at singing birds at the Homestead Airport

Common Grackle - seen daily

Boat-tailed Grackle - seen daily

Bronzed Cowbird – a surprise sharing the scope view with the bulbul and the next species...

Spot-breasted Oriole – we were chasing a bulbul and stumbled upon this gorgeous bird, sometimes it's better to be lucky...

OLD WORLD SPARROWS

House Sparrow – refreshingly uncommon

BUTTERFLIES

Giant Swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*)

Large Orange Sulphur (*Phoebis agarithe*)

Orange-barred Sulphur (*Phoebis philea*)

Ceraunus Blue (*Hemiargus ceraunus*)

Julia Heliconian (*Dryas julia*)

Zebra Heliconian (*Heliconius charitonia*)

Viceroy (*Limenitis archippus*)

Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)

Queen (*Danaus gilippus*)

Soldier (*Danaus eresimus*)

Dorantes Longtail (*Urbanus dorantes*)

OTHER CRITTERS

REPTILES

American Crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*) an endangered species, we were lucky to see it in the Flamingo Marina

American Alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) we saw some big'uns

Florida Cooter (*Pseudemys floridana*)

Florida Redbelly Turtle (*Pseudemys nelsoni*)

Florida Softshell (*Apalone ferox*)

Brown Anole (*Anolis sagrei*) an exotic that is becoming abundant

Green Iguana (*Iguana iguana*) fairly common in South Florida, an exotic

MAMMALS

Florida Marsh Rabbit (*Sylvilagus palustris paludicola*) – this animal is rapidly disappearing from the Everglades as pythons become increasingly common

Florida Raccoon (*Procyon lotor elucus*)