



**FLORIDA PENINSULA AND THE FLORIDA KEYS
TRIP REPORT APRIL – MAY 2016**



"Cape Sable" Seaside Sparrow was observed on this trip.

Birding Ecotours' trip to south Florida was very successful, with every available specialty seen plus many migrants and some surprises. Along the way we enjoyed Florida's unique landscapes, excellent weather, and delicious food that ranged from Cuban cuisine to fresh seafood. While migration was relatively slow due to the nice weather and consistent south winds, we still managed a respectable 19 species of warblers and recorded approximately 170 species in total. In addition, we had close sightings of a West Indian manatee and American crocodile, both rare and threatened species. In all, we covered more than 2,220 kilometers, from central pine forests to southern hardwood hammocks, mudflats, and the remote beaches of the Dry Tortugas.

Day 1, April 24th 2016. Miami area

We started our adventure in urban Miami. During the first afternoon we were able to round up some of the exotic species that thrive in the area and are countable on the ABA list. After a bit of searching we located a pair of **Red-whiskered Bulbuls**, a distinct and uncommon exotic, and quickly added **Egyptian Goose** to the list. A short detour brought us face to face with **Burrowing Owl**, and just before dinner we enjoyed a small nesting colony of **White-winged Parakeets**. Of the many exotic parrots and parakeets flying about Miami, this established species is countable. Nearly-established species we saw included **Mitred** and **Yellow-chevroned Parakeets**. In the evening we enjoyed our first dinner together at an excellent Italian restaurant.

Day 2, April 25th 2016. Miami area, transfer to Port St. Lucie, birding on the way

We started early the following day, heading north out of Miami to John U. Lloyd Beach State Park, where a Thick-billed Vireo had been reported during the previous days. Despite several birders searching it appeared that the vireo had left the area, but we added several regular species like **Red-bellied Woodpecker**, **Northern Mockingbird**, some warblers, and our first **Black-whiskered Vireo**.

We moved on to the Evergreen Memorial Park and found our first **Fish Crow** (trying to dig up turtle eggs), **Common Grackle**, **Downy Woodpecker** at the nest, **Blue Jay**, and a close **Cooper's Hawk**. While Spot-breasted Oriole would have to wait for a later part of the trip, we scored our first migrants, most notably **Black-and-white** and **Worm-eating Warblers**, **American Redstart**, and **Scarlet Tanager**.

Continuing north, our next stop after lunch was the Green Cay Nature Center & Wetlands, and it was packed with waterbirds. **Anhingas** perched in the open, and we saw many downy youngsters in the rookery. **Common** and **Purple Gallinules** both showed extremely well, tending freshly hatched chicks. **Black-necked Stilts** foraged in the shallows, and **Mottled Ducks** dabbled in the deeper water. Among **Tricolored Herons** and **Snowy** and **Great Egrets** we spotted a **Least Bittern** that was well-camouflaged in the reeds. The pair of **Roseate Spoonbills** feeding in the open was much easier to see. We also added a newly-countable exotic when we spotted a pair of **Grey-headed Swamphens** dwarfing the **American Coots** nearby. Right before leaving we found a roosting **Eastern Screech Owl** and enjoyed exceptional daylight views of this small predator. On the mammalian front, a northern raccoon emerged from the brush to take a close look at us.

Our final stop for the day was the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, where **Red-shouldered Hawk** and **Limpkin** were added among more waterbirds. The Limpkin showed especially well, flying past at less than five meters.

Finally we drove to Port St. Lucie, checked into our accommodation, and enjoyed another hearty dinner.

Day 3, April 26th 2016. Three Lakes WMA, Lake Kissimmee, and Lettuce Lake Park

From Port St. Lucie we headed north to reach the pinelands typical of central Florida. We were focusing our efforts on the three pine-forest endemics, **Bachman's Sparrow**, **Brown-headed Nuthatch**, and **Red-cockaded Woodpecker**. We located all three during the morning and had scope views of several individuals of each species. Of course we also found many other species and en route had to stop several times to put our binoculars on "roadside" birds like **Bald Eagle**, **Northern Crested Caracara**, and **Sandhill Crane**. While searching the open pine forest for Bachman's Sparrow, of which we saw at least three and heard many more, we also located a roosting **Common Nighthawk** (great spotting, Merelie!), and **Northern Bobwhite** proclaimed its name loudly from the top of a pine!

Pine and **Mangrove** (Yellow) **Warblers** were nice breeding warblers to add, and **Eastern Towhee** called from the bushes. A flyby **Pileated Woodpecker** left us wanting better views, and we were not to be disappointed when we found a pair hitching up a roadside telephone pole. The birds just kept falling into place, when Kieran spotted **Wild Turkey** in an open field, and nearby Lake Kissimmee offered more shorebirds and wading birds, plus a surprise male **Bobolink** that perched obligingly on a fence post.

The afternoon held more new birds when we visited the oak woodlands and wetlands of Circle B Bar Reserve and Lettuce Lake Park. We saw some common breeding species of central Florida like **Tufted Titmouse**, **Northern Parula**, **Red-shouldered Hawk**, and the impressive **Wood Stork**. Other standouts included a scoped pair of **Wood Ducks** and **Black-crowned Night Heron** that was almost too close for photos.

For dinner we tried a Cuban restaurant that served up delicious fares, and everyone had the chance to try something new.

Day 4, April 27th 2016. Lettuce Lake Park and Fort De Soto Park

We returned to Lettuce Lake Park for the morning and after some searching found a literal goldmine of **Prothonotary Warblers**. Their glowing yellow plumage offset by slate-gray wings made them one of the favorites of the trip. Other breeding birds we located included **Yellow-throated** and **Red-eyed Vireos**, **Blue-grey Gnatcatcher**, and a tiny **Ruby-throated Hummingbird**.

Next we headed to Fort De Soto Park, and although migrants were thin on the ground we managed a few new warblers like **Tennessee**, **Black-throated Blue**, and **Blackpoll Warblers** plus our first **Indigo Bunting**. The shorebirds were moving through in numbers, and among the resident **Wilson's Plovers** we found **Sanderling**, **Dunlin**, **Short-billed Dowitcher**, **Grey** (Black-bellied) **Plover**, **Least Sandpiper**, and best of all a small group of **Red Knots** with some in breeding plumage. The beach also held a fine assortment of **Terns**, with **Royal**, **Sandwich**, **Cabot's**, **Forster's**, and **Least** all present. A few **European Herring Gulls** loafed among the hordes of **Laughing Gulls**, and a dancing **Reddish Egret** delighted all.

We spent the majority of the day at the park and found another exotic that has recently been added to the ABA list in the form of **Nanday** (Black-headed) **Parakeet**.

We drove to Sarasota for an early night and a seafood feast.

Day 5, April 28th 2016. Oscar Scherer State Park, Eagle Lakes Community Park, Tamiami Trail

This morning would find us in a completely different habitat as we searched for Florida's only endemic bird species, Florida Scrub-Jay. This species has suffered from habitat loss and fragmentation and is now limited to specific reserves and state parks. Areas within the state parks are regularly burned to maintain the habitat of this cooperative breeder that often lives in family groups.

We geared up for a longer walk with water and sunscreen and started to head down the trail. I took about ten steps before I heard the first **Florida Scrub Jay** and spotted it moments later. Wow, that was really lucky, and the bird proceeded to fly in close to check us out. At one point it landed on my head, and everybody got great looks except for me, but that was OK since the mate was nearby! We scoped another **Eastern Towhee**, this one in perfect sunlight, showing its white eye unique to this part of the species' range, and also had a close flyover of graceful **Swallow-tailed Kites**.

En route to the famous Tamiami Trail and the Everglades we stopped at Eagle Lakes and found hordes of **Black-bellied Whistling Ducks** among other wading birds. We headed east along the Tamiami Trail, a nearly straight road crossing the northern section of the Everglades with its extensive stands of ancient bald cypress and endless flats of sawgrass. Our main goal was to see the localized **Snail Kite**, another specialist of the Everglades, and after some searching a male flew right over us near Shark Valley. I wanted for the group to have more prolonged views and located two males in the distance that circled in scope view for several minutes. Close looks at a calling **White-eyed Vireo** and a scoped **Northern Flicker** were bonuses.

Once we reached the Homestead area we circled through a few streets to locate the now countable **Common Myna**. This Asian species is now doing quite well in southern Florida, and we watched it at close range.

After checking in we enjoyed an authentic Mexican dinner.

Day 6, April 29th 2016. Everglades National Park, Flamingo area, and Homestead

An early start found us along the main road into the national park, and we soon heard the insect-like buzz of "Cape Sable" **Seaside Sparrow**. It took some maneuvering, but we soon scoped one or two of this Endangered (IUCN) and distinct subspecies. A quick stop at a wetland got us onto roosting **Wood Storks** and **Roseate Spoonbills**, and good numbers of **White-crowned Pigeons** were flying about, some perching for scope views. We focused our efforts on the Flamingo area, where a singing **Prairie Warbler** showed well and the resident **Grey Kingbirds** perched in the open. A pair of **Great Crested Flycatchers** was nesting in an old woodpecker cavity, and **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** were busy making even more cavities.

Western Ospreys circled constantly above, and a pair tended chicks in a close nest. We wandered down to the marina and found **Spotted Sandpiper** and a beautiful pair of "Great White Herons", a color form of the **Great Blue Heron** mainly restricted, in the ABA area, to southern Florida. We had excellent views and could study the birds in detail. We systematically searched for the cowbird flock, and it did not take too long to spot our target, **Shiny Cowbird**, among **Brown-headed Cowbirds** and **Common** (European) **Starlings**. The bird showed really well, and we were able to get many pictures of this rarity. Before leaving the area we found a West Indian manatee really close and also the endangered American crocodile (south Florida being the only place in the world where alligators and crocodiles occur together).

An excursion after dark got us close **Chuck-will's-widows** that swept past us within touching distance, and **Barred Owl** proclaimed its territory loudly in the distance.

Day 7, April 30th 2016. Key Largo, Marathon, and Long Key

We spent the morning searching Key Largo for the elusive Mangrove Cuckoo, and, while we had no luck with the cuckoo, we saw many new warblers in the form of obliging **Ovenbirds** walking in the path, **Northern Waterthrushes** sitting in the open, and a colorful **Magnolia Warbler**. En route west we stopped at Long Pine Key and went for a walk in the beautiful coastal landscape, and a strategic stop in Marathon had us looking at breeding **Least** and

Roseate Terns. Soon we crossed the final bridge onto Key West and checked into our comfortable accommodations.

Dinner was another seafood feast.

Day 8, May 1st 2016. Dry Tortugas National Park

The trip to the Dry Tortugas is always a highlight when birding in southern Florida. We made our way to the ferry on time and boarded around 7:30 a.m., leaving just after 8:00 a.m. Just after leaving Key West I promptly spotted three adult **Pomarine Skuas** (Jaegers) winging past, an unexpected bonus. Minutes later an immature **Masked Booby** was seen, but it took more vigilance on our part, as the sea became quiet. The effort paid off when all of us got onto the adult **Brown Booby** I spotted. We nearly missed the two **Bridled Terns** that appeared out of nowhere, but all of us caught a glimpse. This is a species that is not always expected during the crossing.

Once we got closer to the Dry Tortugas (named for their lack of freshwater and at least former abundance of turtles) the captain took the boat close to Hospital Key, so we could enjoy good views of the ABA's only breeding colony of **Masked Boobies**. At least two dozen birds sat on the sand, and one obliged us by flying directly over the boat as we slowly motored past. **Magnificent Frigatebirds** increased in numbers, and **Brown Noddies** and **Sooty Terns** were obvious. Once we landed we walked to the coaling docks to get close views of the noddies and terns. Bush Key was busy with nesting birds, with both species swirling above in a constant cacophony. In the distance we could see **Magnificent Frigatebirds** landing in the small trees where they nest.

We walked into Fort Jefferson to check the trees and brush for migrants and immediately found warblers, including many **American Redstarts**, a female **Hooded Warbler**, **Red-eyed Vireo**, and many swallows. Overhead **Merlin**, **Peregrine Falcon**, and **Sharp-shinned Hawk** were all passing through as well. The open parade grounds were dotted with **Western Cattle Egrets** and a single **Glossy Ibis**. One corner held a nice mixed flock of migrants, and we were able to find **Mangrove (Yellow) Warbler**, **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**, another **Black-whiskered Vireo**, and many **American Redstarts**.

Before leaving the island we staked out the small water drip and enjoyed pointblank views of **Palm** and **Prairie Warblers**. During the return trip **Northern Gannet** and another **Pomarine Skua** made brief appearances.

The dinner at a seafood and steak place tasted especially good after this long, but enjoyable, day.

Day 9, May 2nd 2016. Fort Zachary Taylor, No Name Key, and Key Largo with Tavernier in the evening

We stopped into Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park after a delicious local breakfast, but the south winds continued to send most migrants north. But we did find **Hooded**, **Yellow**, and **Black-throated Blue Warblers** and had our best looks at **Black-whiskered Vireo**.

Heading back east towards the Florida mainland, we made a strategic stop at No Name Key to look for the Endangered (IUCN) **Key deer**, a small subspecies of the white-tailed deer, and we soon found three along a side road. This deer is smaller than some dog breeds and was really fun to see, since this subspecies is endemic to the Florida Keys. An eastern rat snake was also a nice critter to see.

After our success we focused our search on the difficult **Mangrove Cuckoo**, and a diligent effort on Key Largo paid off when a pair of this shy species came within a few meters. We all had exceptional views and photo opportunities and were now left with only two south Florida specialties to find. We arrived early in Florida City to rest a bit before our planned evening excursion.

Just after dinner we returned to the Keys, and a twenty-minute wait in the right spot had us soon looking at a calling **Antillean Nighthawk**. It swept down several times, allowing close studies and, most importantly, we saw it calling. A **Common Nighthawk** flew in and allowed great comparisons. What a way to finish the day!

Day 10, May 3rd 2016. Miami area

We promptly left our accommodations in Florida City to look for the final possible south Florida specialty, the colorful **Spot-breasted Oriole**. Arriving just before eight o'clock in a small park in the Miami area I heard the bird as soon as I stepped out of the car. A few minutes later we spotted a pair tending an active nest. What a great bird to finish the tour! Good views of **Yellow-chevroned Parakeet**, and the non-countable, yet good-looking Red-masked Parakeet, were just a bonus.

It was a great trip with an enjoyable group, and we all hope to see you on future Birding Ecotours trips.

FLORIDA TOUR SYSTEMATIC BIRD LIST, APRIL/MAY 2016

Taxonomy: IOC (International Ornithological Congress) 6.1

Abbreviations:

(H) Heard only

(E) State endemic

ANSERIFORMES

Anatidae

Black-bellied Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis* - We saw a small flock fly over the highway on the way to Oscar Scherer State Park and then saw more than 100 birds in the wetland at Eagle Lakes Community Park.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca* - We saw a single of this newly ABA-countable non-native at Kendall Baptist Hospital and again on the last day at Brewer Park.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa* - A pair was scoped at Lettuce Lake Park, one of the most beautiful ducks in North America.

Mottled Duck *Anas fulvigula* - Several seen well and scoped at Green Cay Wetlands

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* - At least six were seen well at Fort De Soto Park.

GALLIFORMES

Odontophoridae

Northern Bobwhite *Colinus virginianus* - A calling bird was scoped at Three Lakes WMA; it was perched high in a pine and allowed excellent views!

Phasianidae

Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo* - One was seen well in a field en route to Joe Overstreet Landing on Lake Kissimmee.

PODICIPEDIFORMES

Podicipedidae

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* - Seen well at Green Cay Wetlands

SULIFORMES

Fregatidae

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens* - First seen at Fort De Soto Park and then many seen in the Dry Tortugas, which harbors the only breeding colony of this species in the United States. Many hung in the breeze above Fort Jefferson, and some were seen perched on channel markers.

Sulidae

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra* - We saw the colony on Hospital Key in the Dry Tortugas very well, where at least two dozen birds were present in the only colony of this species in the United States. One flew right over the ferry as we passed.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* - We saw an adult in flight from the ferry en route to the Dry Tortugas.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* - A juvenile passed briefly by the ferry during the return trip from the Dry Tortugas to Key West.

Phalacrocoracidae

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* - Common, seen in wetlands and coastal locations

Anhingidae

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga* - Common, especially at Green Cay Wetlands, where we saw downy youngsters in a rookery

CICONIIFORMES**Ciconiidae**

Wood Stork *Mycteria americana* - Regularly seen in flight, but we had the best studies of roadside birds and a small rookery in the Everglades NP, especially at Paurotis Pond.



Wood Stork

PELECANIFORMES**Pelecanidae**

American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos* - Only seen distantly in flight at Three Lakes WMA

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis* - Common in coastal areas

Ardeidae

Least Bittern *Ixobrychus exilis* - One was scoped at Green Cay Wetlands, great views of this shy species.



Least Bittern

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* - Common in wetlands and roadside areas. We also saw a pair of "Great White Heron" at Flamingo in the Everglades and another in Key West; in addition we scoped the distinct "Wurdeemann's Heron", an intermediate morph only found in South Florida, at Bahia Honda State Park.

Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens* - One scoped dancing in the shallows at Fort De Soto Park and another flew past in Marathon while we studied the terns on the pier. The species is listed as Near-threatened.



Reddish Egret

Great Egret *Ardea alba* - Common

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* - Common

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea* - Fairly common

Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor* - Common with great, close views at Green Cay Wetlands; it used to be called Louisiana Heron.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* - Common, we also saw many inside Fort Jefferson. Many of these migrating birds don't survive and some try to catch migrating warblers and thrushes.

Green Heron *Butorides virescens* - Fairly common, seen at several locations

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* - A few seen, but one close bird at Lettuce Lake Park that looked like it was drinking water was memorable.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron *Nyctanassa violacea* - One seen in flight and a juvenile near Card Sound Bridge

Threskiornithidae

American White Ibis *Eudocimus albus* - Very common



American White Ibis

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* – Common, with close birds at Green Cay Wetlands and a single migrant at Fort Jefferson that looked out of place

Roseate Spoonbill *Platalea ajaja* - Best seen at Green Cay Wetlands, a beautiful species

ACCIPITRIFORMS

Cathartidae

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus* - Common

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura* - Common

Pandionidae

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* - Daily sightings, including many active nests

Accipitridae

Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus* - We saw this stunning raptor in many places, but seeing three swooping low right next to the road in the Everglades was special.

Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis* - First we had an adult male fly right over us at Shark Valley and then two distant males along the Tamiami Trail.

Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus* - One passed over Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas.

Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii* - A close adult bird at Evergreen Cemetery was first mobbed by Blue Jays, but then was very cooperative, allowing excellent photo opportunities.

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* - Many in the Three Lakes WMA and the Lake Kissimmee area, with an active nest. We saw adults and juveniles.

Red-shouldered Hawk *Buteo lineatus* - The most common raptor in south Florida

Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus* - One seen by some in the Dry Tortugas

GRUIFORMES**Rallidae**

King Rail (H) *Rallus elegans* - Heard only in the Everglades. The species is listed as Near-threatened.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinicus* - A few seen, including one with recently hatched chicks at Green Cay Wetlands

Grey-headed Swamphen *Porphyrio poliocephalus* - A pair of this introduced but countable species was scoped well at Green Cay Wetlands.

Common Gallinule *Gallinula galeata* - Fairly common

American Coot *Fulica americana* - Fairly common

Aramidae

Limpkin *Aramus guarauna* - We saw the first one at Loxahatchee NWR and then more at Lake Kissimmee and in the Sarasota area, a unique species that specializes in feeding on aquatic snails.

Gruidae

Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis* - Several seen well in the Three Lakes WMA



Sandhill Crane

CHARADRIIFORMES**Recurvirostridae**

Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus* - First seen at Green Cay Wetlands

Haematopodidae

American Oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus* - A pair of this colorful shorebird was seen well at Fort De Soto Park.

Charadriidae

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* – Seen at Fort De Soto Park, Bahia Honda State Park, Dry Tortugas

Wilson's Plover *Charadrius wilsonia* - A bird scoped nicely at Fort De Soto Park

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* - Seen at several coastal locations

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* – Seen at Kendall Baptist Hospital

Scolopacidae

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius* - Best seen at Flamingo in the Everglades, where one bird was in nearly full breeding plumage

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* - A pair at Lake Kissimmee

Willet *Tringa semipalmata* - Fort De Soto Park had many.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* – Seen at Fort De Soto Park, Dry Tortugas, where they wandered among the picnic benches, and Bahia Honda State Park

Red Knot *Calidris canutus* - At least a dozen at Fort De Soto Park, with some in breeding plumage, allowed great scope studies of this declining shorebird.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* – Seen at Fort De Soto Park and Bahia Honda State Park

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* - Several at Fort De Soto Park

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* - Seen at Fort De Soto Park and Bahia Honda State Park

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* - Fort De Soto Park had several, which we studied well, some in breeding plumage.

Stercorariidae

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* - A great bonus during our ferry crossing, we saw a group of three right out of Key West, with full adult "spoon-shaped" tails, and another one on the way back.

Laridae

Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla* - Abundant

European Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* - A few first cycle birds at Fort De Soto Park

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* - Hundreds in the Dry Tortugas, where we observed the only colony of this species in the United States; about 4,000 nest on Bush Key. We also had great close studies of birds roosting on the old coaling docks.

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus* - Hundreds in the Dry Tortugas, the only major breeding colony of the species in the United States

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* - Two flushed from buoys en route to the Dry Tortugas; a difficult species and we were glad we saw some.

Least Tern *Sternula antillarum* - Common

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* - Seen in flight at Fort De Soto Park

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* - First seen in flight in Marathon, and then we found a dozen roosting on a pier for exceptional scope studies of this rare and threatened species.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* – Seen at Fort De Soto Park

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus* – Seen at Fort De Soto Park and other locations

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis* – Seen at Fort De Soto Park and in Marathon

Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger* - Many seen at Fort De Soto Park and one observed "fishing" with its unique lower mandible in the wetlands at Eagle Lakes Community Park

COLUMBIFORMES**Columbidae**

Rock Dove *Columba livia* - Abundant

White-crowned Pigeon *Patagioenas leucocephala* - First seen in the Everglades, where we scoped a few birds, and then many more sightings in the Keys. The species is listed as Near-threatened.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* - Abundant

Common Ground Dove *Columbina passerina* - Seen at several locations, but best observed at Fort De Soto Park

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica* - Flying birds were relatively common, and we managed good views of birds on the ground in the Homestead area.

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* - Common

CUCULIFORMES**Cuculidae**

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* - Several sightings including Lettuce Lake Park, Key Largo, and the Dry Tortugas

Mangrove Cuckoo *Coccyzus minor* - We finally managed to find a pair on Key Largo and had fantastic close views of this difficult species.



Mangrove Cuckoo

STRIGIFORMES**Strigidae**

Eastern Screech Owl *Megascops asio* - A bird during the day at Green Cay Wetlands was a nice surprise.

Burrowing Owl *Athene cunicularia* - A bird scoped outside its burrow in the Miami area

Barred Owl *Strix varia* - A female calling loudly in the Everglades during our night excursion

PICIFORMES

Picidae

Red-bellied Woodpecker *Melanerpes carolinus* - The most common woodpecker of the trip



Red-bellied Woodpecker

Downy Woodpecker *Dryobates pubescens* - A male was seen well attending an active nest at Evergreen Cemetery.

Red-cockaded Woodpecker *Picoides borealis* - Wow! We had a close encounter with a family group of four at Three Lakes WMA. This species requires open pine forest and living trees infected with fungus to nest. It was great to see one of North America's rarest woodpeckers so well. The species is listed as Near-threatened.

Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus* - A male on a telephone pole that likely harbored a nesting cavity along the Tamiami Trail was scoped well.

Pileated Woodpecker *Dryocopus pileatus* - One in flight in the Three Lakes WMA and two more on a telephone pole near Lake Kissimmee

CAPRIMULGIFORMES**Caprimulgidae**

Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor* - Fairly common, with a bird scoped nicely on a day roost in the Three Lakes WMA

Antillean Nighthawk *Chordeiles gundlachii* - We heard and saw a displaying bird at Tavernier; it was vocalizing and flying right next to a Common Nighthawk for great comparison.

Chuck-will's-widow *Antrostomus carolinensis* - Many heard during our night excursion in the Everglades, with one swooping past us several times

APODIFORMES

Apodidae

Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* - Fairly common and best seen at Evergreen Cemetery and Eagle Lakes. The species is listed as Near-threatened.

Trochilidae

Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris* - Great views of a female feeding on flowers at Lettuce Lake Park

Alcedinidae

Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon* - One briefly flying by in the Everglades was not seen by all.

FALCOMIFORMES

Falconidae

Northern Crested Caracara *Caracara cheriway* - Several en route to the Three Lakes WMA with two perched for great views

Merlin *Falco columbarius* - One or two bombing through at Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* – Seen in the Dry Tortugas

PSITTACIFORMES

Psittacidae

White-winged Parakeet *Brotogeris versicolurus* - We saw them well at a nesting colony in the Miami area the first evening of the tour.



White-winged Parakeet

Yellow-chevroned Parakeet *Brotogeris chiriri* - Best seen during the final morning of the tour in the Miami area

Nanday Parakeet *Aratinga nenday* - Several in flight at Fort De Soto Park, now a countable exotic

Mitred Parakeet *Psittacara mitratus* - this species is becoming established in southern Florida. We saw it well at Kendall Baptist Hospital.

PASSERIFORMES

Tyrannidae

Great Crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus crinitus* - First seen at Three Lakes WMA and again very close at Flamingo in the Everglades, also heard in many locations

Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus* - Seen in the Everglades and the Dry Tortugas

Grey Kingbird *Tyrannus dominicensis* - This south Florida specialty was seen well at the Kendall Baptist Hospital during our first evening, and then it was common in the Everglades and Keys.



Grey Kingbird

Vireonidae

White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus* - Best seen at Shark Valley and then common on Key Largo

Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons* - A singing bird seen well at Lettuce Lake Park

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* - Seen at Lettuce Lake Park and in the Dry Tortugas

Black-whiskered Vireo *Vireo altiloquus* - Several locations. We saw this south Florida specialty at John U. Lloyd State Park and then had exceptional views in the Dry Tortugas and at Fort Zachary Taylor Park on Key West.

Corvidae

Blue Jay *Cyanocitta cristata* - Common on the Florida mainland

Florida Scrub Jay (E) *Aphelocoma coerulescens* - Everyone but me could see Florida's only endemic species perched on my head at Oscar Scherer State Park. We had exceptional

views of at least two pairs in their preferred scrub habitat. The species is listed as Vulnerable.



Florida Scrub Jay

American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos* - Common in the Everglades

Fish Crow *Corvus ossifragus* - Common throughout coastal areas of the south Florida mainland. We watched birds searching for turtle eggs at Evergreen Cemetery. This species is identified best by voice.

Hirundinidae

Northern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis* - Two or three in the swallow flock on the Dry Tortugas

Purple Martin *Progne subis* - Common, with many seen in "martin condos"

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* – Common, with a large flock in the Dry Tortugas

American Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* - One or two among migrating swallows in the Dry Tortugas

Paridae

Tufted Titmouse *Baeolophus bicolor* - Best seen at Circle B Bar Reserve and Lettuce Lake Park

Sittidae

Brown-headed Nuthatch *Sitta pusilla* - Great, close views of a family group near a nesting cavity at Three Lakes WMA

Troglodytidae

Carolina Wren *Thryothorus ludovicianus* - Best seen at Circle B Bar Reserve

Poliophtidae

Blue-grey Gnatcatcher *Poliophtila caerulea* – Seen at Lettuce Lake and other locations

Pycnonotidae

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* - We started the tour with a bang when we found this uncommon and countable exotic right at the start of the tour in the Miami area.

Laniidae

Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus* - Fairly common in open habitats



Loggerhead Shrike

Turdidae

Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis* - A few in the Three Lakes WMA with stunningly blue males

Veery *Catharus fuscescens* - A bird flushed briefly at Long Key State Park

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* - Seen by some in the Dry Tortugas

Mimidae

Grey Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis* - Fairly common with many sightings

Brown Thrasher *Toxostoma rufum* - Birds seen in flight and heard at Three Lakes WMA and then one out in the open, singing loudly at Fort De Soto Park

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos* - Abundant

Sturnidae

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* - Abundant

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* - This introduced species, now countable, was seen in the Homestead area and at Key Largo and will likely expand its range in the future.

Parulidae

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla* - Two seen out in the open on Key Largo

Worm-eating Warbler *Helmitheros vermivorum* - One was foraging among dead leaves at the Evergreen Cemetery.

Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis* - Seen well foraging on the trail on Key Largo

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* - Several sightings of males and females

Hooded Warbler *Setophaga citrina* - A female seen well in the Dry Tortugas with a male at Fort Zachary Taylor

Yellow-throated Warbler *Setophaga dominica* - A pair high up in a cypress at Three Lakes WMA



Yellow-throated Warbler

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* - Also a common migrating warbler, with birds seen at a number of sites

Cape May Warbler *Setophaga tigrina* - First a few here and there and then at least twenty on Key Largo, feeding in flowering trees; the males are especially stunning.

Northern Parula *Setophaga americana* - Breeding birds seen at Circle B Bar Reserve and Lettuce Lake Park, with a few migrants here and there

Magnolia Warbler *Setophaga magnolia* - Seen well on Key Largo

Mangrove Warbler *Setophaga petechia* - Individuals seen in the Dry Tortugas and at Fort Zachary Taylor

Blackpoll Warbler *Setophaga striata* - One of the more common migrating warblers, with several stunning males seen on Key Largo

Black-throated Blue Warbler *Setophaga caerulescens* - Another common warbler in south Florida

Palm Warbler *Setophaga palmarum* - Best seen in the Dry Tortugas and at Green Cay Wetlands

Pine Warbler *Setophaga pinus* - One singing male at Three Lakes WMA

Prairie Warbler *Setophaga discolor* - Close views of a singing male at Flamingo in the Everglades and a migrant in the Dry Tortugas

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* - This was one of the most widespread migrants and was seen in several places.

Prothonotary Warbler *Protonotaria citrea* - When we finally found them, they showed really well, a flash of gold in the shaded swamp forest at Lettuce Lake Park.

Emberizidae

Seaside Sparrow *Ammodramus maritimus* - We saw at least three individuals of the Endangered (IUCN) "Cape Sable" subspecies (*A. m. mirabilis*) in the Everglades. Although the birds remained distant, we could see them in the scope and heard their short songs.

Bachman's Sparrow *Peucaea aestivalis* - Great scope views of at least three individuals at the Three Lakes WMA. This is a rare and localized species. The species is listed as Near-threatened.



Bachman's Sparrow

Eastern Towhee *Pipilo erythrophthalmus* – Seen at Three Lakes WMA and even better views in the Oscar Scherer State Park

Passeridae

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* – Common

Cardinalidae

Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea* - A female at Evergreen Cemetery was our only sighting.

Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis* - Common

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* - Seen at Key Largo and Fort De Soto Park

Icteridae

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* - A breeding-plumaged male at Lake Kissimmee was a nice surprise and allowed excellent scope studies. We saw another male on Key Largo.

Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus* - Common

Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna* - Singing birds scoped at Three Lakes WMA

Common Grackle *Quiscalus quiscula* - Abundant

Boat-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus major* - Abundant

Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis* - We saw a male of this rare species among cowbirds at Flamingo in the Everglades, a good find.

Bronzed Cowbird *Molothrus aeneus* - Three birds in the Homestead area, with one doing a hover display

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater* – Seen at Flamingo and Oscar Scherer State Park

Spot-breasted Oriole *Icterus pectoralis* - A pair of this beautiful exotic was seen tending a nest in the Miami area; we watched the parents diligently defend the nest against Fish Crows,

Boat-tailed Grackles, and even a Green Heron!

FLORIDA TOUR SYSTEMATIC MAMMAL LIST, APRIL/MAY 2016

RODENTIA

Sciuridae

Eastern gray squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* - Common

CARNIVORA

Procyonidae

Northern raccoon *Procyon lotor* - Seen well at John U. Lloyd SP and Green Cay Wetlands

Key deer *Odocoileus virginianus clavium* - This small subspecies of the white-tailed deer, endemic to the Florida Keys, was seen on No Name Key, where we got close looks at three of them. The subspecies is listed as Endangered.

Canidae

Coyote *Canis latrans* - Seen en route near Three Lakes WMA

SIRENIA

Trichechidae

West Indian manatee *Trichechus manatus* - Wow! Close looks at one resting on the surface at Flamingo. The species is listed as Vulnerable.



West Indian manatee

FLORIDA TOUR SYSTEMATIC REPTILE LIST, APRIL/MAY 2016

TESTUDINES

Trionychidae

Florida softshell turtle *Apalone ferox* - One laying eggs at Evergreen Cemetery

Emydidae

Red-eared Slider *Trachemys scripta elegans* - This subspecies of the yellow-bellied slider turtle was common.

CROCODYLIA**Crocodylidae**

American crocodile *Crocodylus acutus* - A relatively large individual seen closely at Flamingo. The species is listed as Vulnerable.



American crocodile

Alligatoridae

American alligator *Alligator mississippiensis* - Frequent sightings in the Everglades

SQUAMATA**Colubridae**

Southern Black Racer *Coluber constrictor priapus* - This subspecies of the Eastern Racer was seen at the Circle B Bar Reserve.

Eastern rat snake *Pantherophis alleghaniensis* - No Name Key