



Field Guides Tour Report

Florida: Mangroves & Migrants 2018

Apr 28, 2018 to May 6, 2018
Doug Gochfeld & Mitch Lysinger

For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).



Bridled Terns were in full courtship mode during our visit to Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas, and we got an eyeful of these very elegant tropical terns. Photo by guide Doug Gochfeld.

This year marked the inaugural running of this tour highlighting a wide swath of Florida's wonderful ecology and biodiversity. We were blessed with clear conditions under which to experience it all, and it truly didn't disappoint. We saw plenty of specialty bird species found nowhere or virtually nowhere else in the US, such as Florida Scrub-Jay, Mangrove Cuckoo, Antillean Nighthawk, White-crowned Pigeon, Black-whiskered Vireo, Brown and Black noddies, Sooty and Bridled terns, and Masked Boobies, and we did it while experiencing a wide range of interesting habitats, and fascinating flora and non-avian fauna (such as the Florida Tree Snails, Gopher Tortoise, a Florida Softshell Turtle, and the pocket-sized Key Deer).

We met up in Miami for orientation and a wonderful dinner at a nearby Cuban restaurant, and then it was off to bed in preparation for our morning southbound departure. On our way south the next morning, we took our first shot at Mangrove Cuckoo, and though we heard it well, the appointed hour for us to lay eyes on this species was not yet upon us. Our eyes did, however, connect with a day roosting Eastern Screech-Owl peering out of its roost hole, a lovely punctuation to our first morning.

Our three nights based in the Keys were eventful, and we found ourselves filled to the gills with migrants and south Florida specialties by the end of our sojourn in the southernmost portion of our southernmost state. Seventeen species of warbler, seven species of tern (including five that are very range restricted within the US!), tanagers, buntings, thrushes, and Bobolink were all on the scene, but they didn't overshadow the specialties: White-crowned Pigeons, Black-whiskered Vireos, Shiny Cowbirds, Antillean Nighthawks, and an innumerable quantity of Gray Kingbirds. Our day trip to Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas was an unquestionable highlight. The seabird spectacle was breathtaking, with thousands of Sooty Terns and Brown Noddies, hundreds of Magnificent Frigatebirds, dozens upon dozens of Masked Boobies on Hospital Key, several Bridled Terns (including some very frisky ones!), and a nice showing by a single Black Noddy. There were also plenty of migrant passerines to sort through inside the fort itself. A Hooded Warbler hopping around on the flagstones out in the open next to singles of Veery and Gray-cheeked Thrush while a Bobolink looked on from a nearby tree summed up the land birding very well: the numbers weren't overwhelming, but the diversity was great! The boat ride out there also produced several Brown Boobies and a few warblers making a go of it as they migrated east towards Key West over the open water of the Straits of Florida.

Our 24 hours in the western part of the state were chock full of quality birds as well. Our arrival afternoon on the left coast was spent ogling some excellent Burrowing Owls at close range, including some unbearably adorable youngsters trying to figure out how to be real owls. The next morning we ventured into the southern piney-woods, an incomparable habitat due to its flora, fauna, and overall serene beauty. In addition to hearing the woods wake up with the songs and calls of Eastern Meadowlarks, Northern Bobwhites, Pine Warblers, Great Crested Flycatchers and Eastern Bluebirds, we tracked down a very cute squeaky-toy sounding family of Brown-headed Nuthatches, a male Bachman's Sparrow singing on territory, and of course the headliners: a pair of endangered Red-cockaded Woodpeckers! We even had some time to ogle a few close Limpkin on the way out. From there, a short journey north netted us the also-endangered (and declining) Florida Scrub-Jay. Buoyed by our morning success we continued up the west coast, as far north as the Tampa-St. Petersburg area, where a visit to Sawgrass Lake Park allowed us to connect with a pair of Short-tailed Hawks! We then headed due east, to the interior of the state, and finished out our day's birding at the Tohopekaliga Lakes, where Fulvous Whistling-Duck was on the menu as a pre-dinner appetizer.

The next day saw us dropping back down from the center of the state and heading back for South Florida, but not before getting a mind-blowingly intimate experience with a couple of Snail Kites and some more Limpkin at Joe Overstreet Landing. We also were treated to a nice view of Apple Snails

and their bright pink egg masses that were clustered on some of the reeds in the lake. Other nice finds on the way south were the endangered Gopher Tortoise, Crested Caracara, and a massive Florida Softshell Turtle which we had to extract from the road! Despite all of these highlights, our birding wasn't yet done for the day. Our arrival in the West Palm area put us in prime position for one of the big highlights of the week for many people: the Wakodahatchee Wetlands. Here we soaked up the phenomenal numbers, density, and diversity of breeding waterbirds, just about all of which were at point blank range. What an experience to round out our penultimate day of birding!

The final day was all about targets, beginning with the vagrant Bahama Mockingbird that had showed up at a small park nearby our hotel just a couple of days prior. After an hour or so of playing hard to get amid intermittent drizzles, it finally revealed itself in all of its streaky gray glory, wings out in display giving the whole group a phenomenally good and intimate view. Then we were off for south Miami once more, and this time the fates (and cooler, cloudier sky perhaps) were ready to reward us with one of prime targets: Mangrove Cuckoo. Within fifteen minutes of our arrival we had one alongside the road, and circling around us by hopping through the adjacent mangroves. We got some truly extraordinary views of this often hard-to-see skulker, and there was much rejoicing. Enlivened by our great morning we set our sights on nearby Quarry Lake, where an Arctic Tern had been found the day before, and we were fortunate in our timing, as we connected with it during perhaps the last bit of time that it was present on the lake, before it continued its journey north via the stratosphere.

From the laid back keys, to the fascinating urban birding, to the pristine wilderness of the piney-woods and chain of lakes, this week was chock full of fun for both Mitch and me, and it was in large part because you all were such a genial, considerate, and convivial group. Thanks for sharing this adventure with us, and we sincerely hope to travel with you all again sometime on this great big birdy globe.

Cheers!

-Doug

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) – Good numbers at Brinson Park, and then a handful the next day in West Palm.

FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) – One of our species highlights in the north was a pair of these at Brinson Park in Kissimmee.

MUSCOVY DUCK (*Cairina moschata*) – This introduced barnyard duck is seemingly everywhere in south Florida and doing very well. This invasive species is proliferating so much that the state ornithological committee has determined that they're an established part of the state's wild avifauna. [I]

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – A couple at Brinson Park.

MOTTLED DUCK (*Anas fulvigula*) – In several places over the last three days of the tour.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – A surprise was a female flying off a small pond on Key West.

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

NORTHERN BOBWHITE (*Colinus virginianus*) – Amazing views at Babcock-Webb, where they were also a large component of the wonderful dawn chorus in the pineywoods.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – Joe Overstreet Road was our best encounter with this species.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Encountered a couple of times: at Brinson Park at Lake Tohopekaliga, and then a few folks had one in a small roadside pool while driving on the final day.

Ciconiidae (Storks)

WOOD STORK (*Mycteria americana*) – Seen several times over the second half of the tour, but nowhere better than the insane colony in West Palm, where we got some very intimate insight into their ecology and socialization.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata magnificens*) – Fairly widespread across south Florida, but the experience at the Dry Tortugas was head and shoulders above the rest of our encounters with this species.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

MASKED BOOBY (*Sula dactylatra*) – Hospital Key in the Dry Tortugas is the spot for these. In fact, it's the only breeding colony of this species in the USA. We counted over 90 individuals on their sandbar, including some fluffy youngsters.

BROWN BOOBY (ATLANTIC) (*Sula leucogaster leucogaster*) – Some nice concentrations perched on a couple of channel markers on our way out to Garden Key in the Tortugas.

NORTHERN GANNET (*Morus bassanus*) – An immature bird a bit east of the Dry Tortugas was our only one of the tour, though we encountered it and saw it well on both the outbound and returning voyages.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Abundant.

Anhingidae (Anhingas)

ANHINGA (*Anhinga anhinga*) – Widespread and fairly common- regardless of how often we encountered them, every time we saw a snake bird was pretty neat.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans).

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – Common around the coasts.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns).

GREAT BLUE HERON (BLUE FORM) (*Ardea herodias herodias*) – A few scattered here and there.

GREAT BLUE HERON (WHITE FORM) (*Ardea herodias occidentalis*) – We saw a couple of these extremely well in the Keys, where they tend to be more common than the blue form in salt water areas. Our taxonomic understanding of this complex may evolve in the future, as there hasn't been much work done on them. In addition to their obvious color palette differences, the two Great Blue Heron taxa seem to consistently differ morphologically, and they don't seem to intergrade with much regularity.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – Common.

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*) – Common.

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*) – Common and widespread, though we really didn't get great looks until the second half of the tour.

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*) – The nests at Sawgrass Lake and Wakodahatchee were the obvious highlight for this species!

REDDISH EGRET (*Egretta rufescens*) – The whole gamut: Dark morph adults, light morph adults, and immatures, oh my!

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Abundant throughout.

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*) – Consistently seen in the second half of the tour.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – A few here and there while driving, but it's surprising how scarce they can be at this time of year.

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – Just a couple, with the best looks coming at a close, low, flyover at Lantana.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills).

WHITE IBIS (*Eudocimus albus*) – Very common.

GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – Nesting in a couple of locations, including Wakodahatchee.

ROSEATE SPOONBILL (*Platalea ajaja*) – One at Wakodahatchee in a group of Wood Storks was the only individual we ran into, but we had excellent frame filling scope views of it!

Cathartidae (New World Vultures).

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*) – Abundant.

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – See above.

Pandionidae (Osprey).

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Abundant, and all the ones we perused were of the expected North American subspecies.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites).

SWALLOW-TAILED KITE (*Elanoides forficatus*) – We encountered these in several places, and each time we saw them they drew oohs and ahs. The most graceful and distinctive raptor in North America (according to Doug). We got some really good looks at them cavorting and chasing each other around and in turn being chased by blackbirds and grackles at Sawgrass Lake.

SNAIL KITE (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*) – Our experience at Joe Overstreet was so intimate and over the top good that we didn't even think about going out of our way to try and see the species more after that. It was special enough to be mentioned by Rita, Dixie, and Janet when it came time to reminisce about their highlights of the week.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*) – Surprisingly only a couple, both towards the end of the tour.

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – A few scattered around.

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK (EXTIMUS) (*Buteo lineatus extimus*) – This distinctively pale subspecies is restricted to Florida, and we got some very nice views along Joe Overstreet Road and then again at Quarry Lake.

SHORT-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo brachyurus*) – A really special experience with a pair around a nest in St. Pete, and a great pickup for the time of year- they range much less widely but are distributed much more widely (and therefore thinly) during the breeding season.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – A couple over the last couple of days of the tour, including really nice views of one perched and in flight near Fort Myers, which appeared to be of the Florida-endemic umbrinus subspecies.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots).

PURPLE GALLINULE (*Porphyrio martinica*) – Great views at Wakodahatchee.

GRAY-HEADED SWAMPHEN (*Porphyrio poliocephalus*) – A very invasive critter introduced from Africa, it is now findable in the greater Miami area, and we did quite well with good looks at them. [I]

COMMON GALLINULE (*Gallinula galeata*) – A few places over the final couple of days of the tour.

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*) – Second half of the tour.

Aramidae (Limpkin).

LIMPKIN (*Aramus guarauna*) – Splendid views of this Apple Snail specialist at several locations, including Joe Overstreet.

Gruidae (Cranes).

SANDHILL CRANE (*Antigone canadensis*) – Fairly common around the central part of the state.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets).

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – A couple scattered here and there, including at the Marathon Airport and in West Palm.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings).

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – A couple of spots including on Key West.

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – Marco Island and Joe Overstreet.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies).

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – The antics of the roving flock at the campground in the Tortugas were rather entertaining.

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – Lower Keys.

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*) – Distant flybys on the way to the Tortugas.

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – Very good looks on Key West.

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Calidris pusilla*) – On the boat ride, then on the Dry Tortugas, and also at Key West.

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus griseus*) – Key West.

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*) – Dry Tortugas.

WILLET (EASTERN) (*Tringa semipalmata semipalmata*) – Flying over and calling while we were in the mangroves on the lower keys.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Abundant.

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*) – Our only ones were some young birds at Fort Zachary Taylor.

BROWN NODDY (*Anous stolidus*) – One of the major highlights of the Dry Tortugas is the huge breeding colony of these out on Garden Key. What a trip!

BLACK NODDY (*Anous minutus*) – There was one being regularly seen on Garden Key when we visited the Tortugas, and we were able to see it on the northern coaling docks. This was perhaps the only individual of this species present in the ABA area at the time!

SOOTY TERN (*Onychoprion fuscatus*) – This species comprises the majority of the terns breeding in the Dry Tortugas, and the constant din of the colony is an integral part of the atmosphere out there. What a wonderful spectacle!

BRIDLED TERN (*Onychoprion anaethetus*) – We had at least three pairs of these tropical terns at various places around Garden Key. In addition to some bill nuzzling courtship behavior, some lucky folks even got to see them getting extra frisky with each other. This was the runner up for the best bird of the trip, since it was a major target for many of us, and we had such a great experience with it.

LEAST TERN (*Sternula antillarum*) – The highest concentrations were on Key West and in Marathon.

CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – A group of them flew over us as we were birding the shoulder of the causeway out to Marco Island.

ROSEATE TERN (*Sterna dougallii*) – Excellent views of a calling pair flying around over our heads at Marathon.

ARCTIC TERN (*Sterna paradisaea*) – A big surprise! This adult bird was spotted at Quarry Lake the day before our last day, and we were able to jam it in as one of our final stops on our final day, and lo and behold the tern was still there! This is a mostly pelagic migrant at this latitude, so seeing one in this subtropical climate (in breeding plumage no less) was really remarkable!

FORSTER'S TERN (*Sterna forsteri*) – A flyby at Joe Overstreet Landing.

ROYAL TERN (*Thalasseus maximus*) – Several spots through the Keys.

SANDWICH TERN (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) – Perched on a distant buoy on our boat ride out to the Tortugas.

BLACK SKIMMER (*Rynchops niger*) – Joe Overstreet Landing.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Every day. [H]

WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON (*Patagioenas leucocephala*) – We got some fun views of these really cool tropical pigeons in the Lower Keys.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Most days. Common in settled areas. [H]

COMMON GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina passerina*) – Several spots, including great views on Key Largo and at Three Lakes.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*) – A few around West Palm.

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – Common and widespread.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO (*Coccyzus americanus*) – Jan spotted this one at Fort Zachary Taylor, and it was eventually cooperative for everyone to have scope views of this normally skulking cuckoo!

MANGROVE CUCKOO (*Coccyzus minor*) – Yes! After only hearing it on our first attempt, and then struggling through the Irma-battered mangrove habitat throughout the Keys, we pulled out some phenomenal views of one of these in south Miami on the final day. A big highlight for everyone, this was the runaway choice for top bird of the trip, with eight votes!

Strigidae (Owls)

EASTERN SCREECH-OWL (*Megascops asio*) – Key Largo. Very cool!

BURROWING OWL (*Athene cunicularia*) – What an interesting juxtaposition it is to have these Burrowing Owls embraced by the community down here, where they nest on the front lawns of the abundant luxury real estate.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

COMMON NIGHTHAWK (*Chordeiles minor*) – Calling flyovers at Naples and West Palm.

ANTILLEAN NIGHTHAWK (*Chordeiles gundlachii*) – A real Florida Keys specialty as far as the USA goes. We had some distant views and diagnostic audio at Big Pine Key, and then a fantastic experience the next night at Marathon!

Apodidae (Swifts)

CHIMNEY SWIFT (*Chaetura pelagica*) – Several spots.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus colubris*) – Tortugas and Key West.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes carolinus*) – Common and widespread.

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*) – Babcock Webb.

RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER (*Picoides borealis*) – After having mixed success at a couple of the breeding clusters, we attained awesome views of a pair hanging out and interacting at Babcock Webb. Excellent!

NORTHERN FLICKER (YELLOW-SHAFTED) (*Colaptes auratus auratus*) – On day one and then again at Babcock Webb.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

CRESTED CARACARA (*Caracara cheriway*) – Nice roadside views up in Fellsmere.

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – Terrorizing songbirds inside Fort Jefferson.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*)

Psittacidae (New World and African Parrots).

WHITE-WINGED PARAKEET (*Brotogeris versicolurus*) – A couple of flybys on our very first evening, shortly after heading over to dinner!

YELLOW-CHEVRONED PARAKEET (*Brotogeris chiriri*) – A nice surprise on our very first evening, just before dinner. We had a pair allopreening each other in a tree right above the parking lot!

NANDAY PARAKEET (*Aratinga nenday*) – Brief views on the way south in the northern Keys. [I]

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers).

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus crinitus*) – Common and widespread away from the Keys.

EASTERN KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) – Black Point on day one.

GRAY KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus dominicensis*) – Widespread, common, and very vocal and conspicuous.

Laniidae (Shrikes).

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – We saw this widespread shrike scattered around in several places.

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis).

WHITE-EYED VIREO (*Vireo griseus*) – Several places, including Key Largo, Three Lakes, and Alice Wainwright.

RED-EYED VIREO (*Vireo olivaceus*) – Sugarloaf Key

BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO (*Vireo altiloquus*) – Sugarloaf Key, Dry Tortugas, and Key Largo.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies).

BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – Several locations.

FLORIDA SCRUB-JAY (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) – Yes! We got this very localized state endemic on our way north from Naples. This species is declining because of habitat loss caused by real estate development. [E]

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – In the Big Cypress corridor and on the west coast.

FISH CROW (*Corvus ossifragus*) – Common throughout.

Hirundinidae (Swallows).

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – Fort Jefferson.

PURPLE MARTIN (*Progne subis*) – Several locations, including West Palm and Big Cypress.

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – Fort Jefferson.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – Fort Jefferson and then a few on the final couple of days.

CLIFF SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – Fort Jefferson.

CLIFF SWALLOW X CAVE SWALLOW (HYBRID) (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* x *Petrochelidon fulva*) – A poorly known hybrid combination, this is likely the same individual seen the year prior which was the first documented individual ascribed to this hybrid combination. A very neat bird, with a face much like that of a Cliff Swallow but for some peachy/paler borders and splotches, and the rest of the bird resembling a Cave Swallow.

CAVE SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon fulva*) – Excellent views of birds around the colony, and views of some nests, near Miami.

Sittidae (Nuthatches).

BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH (*Sitta pusilla*) – We heard their adorable squeaky toy sounds and enjoyed their bubbly personalities at Babcock-Webb.

Troglodytidae (Wrens).

CAROLINA WREN (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) – We had an especially good experience at Three Lakes.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies).

EASTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia sialis*) – Babcock Webb and Three Lakes.

VEERY (*Catharus fuscescens*) – Fort Zachary Taylor (under a picnic table no less!), and Fort Jefferson.

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH (*Catharus minimus*) – Quite a few flying around Fort Jefferson, several of which were vocalizing. Some really exceptional looks.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers).

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – Common.

BROWN THRASHER (*Toxostoma rufum*) – A couple of sightings driving south from Kissimmee.

BAHAMA MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus gundlachi*) – Yes! We connected with this Caribbean vagrant at Lantana Nature Preserve on the luxury yacht and house-filled Hypoluxo Island near Fort Lauderdale. After some fleeting glimpses, we finally got to hang out with it for several minutes as it put on a very good show down low in the fairly open vegetation, and we even saw it performing its choppy wings out display. A real highlight. It even made Pat and Bob Reed's list of best moments of the tour!

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Abundant.

Sturnidae (Starlings).

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Present. [I]

COMMON MYNA (*Acridotheres tristis*) – Seen on several days, the local range of this invasive species that was introduced from Asia a few decades ago seems to be expanding while their population density increases as well. [I]

Parulidae (New World Warblers).

OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – Great close views at Fort Jefferson.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*) – Several locations, including both the forts.

TENNESSEE WARBLER (*Oreothlypis peregrina*) – Barry was the lucky one to see this guy inside Fort Jefferson while the rest of the group was off ogling Bridled Terns.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Common in the south, especially in Fort Jefferson.

HOODED WARBLER (*Setophaga citrina*) – Awesome male hopping around on the brick walkway inside Fort Jefferson.

AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – Fairly common.

CAPE MAY WARBLER (*Setophaga tigrina*) – Really good views of these in several locations, including a good migration event in the Marco Island area.

NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*) – Common.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER (*Setophaga magnolia*) – Fort Zachary Taylor.

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER (*Setophaga pensylvanica*) – An uncommon one around south Florida, we had a brilliant male at point blank range low down next to the parking lot at Fort Zach.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER (*Setophaga striata*) – Common and widespread.

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – We had some in active migration over the Straits of Florida on our way out to the Tortugas, and then several in Fort Jefferson itself.

PALM WARBLER (WESTERN) (*Setophaga palmarum palmarum*) – Quite a few.

PINE WARBLER (*Setophaga pinus*) – In the pineywoods, appropriately, of both Babcock-Webb and Three Lakes.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (*Setophaga dominica*) – Intimate views of an adult building a nest at Three Lakes

PRAIRIE WARBLER (*Setophaga discolor*) – In several places in the south, including some stellar views.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER (*Setophaga virens*) – Good scope views in Fort Zachary Taylor of a bird that remained motionless for minutes on end on the same perch.

Passerellidae (New World Buntings and Sparrows)

BACHMAN'S SPARROW (*Peucaea aestivalis*) – A great experience with a singing bird at Babcock-Webb.

EASTERN TOWHEE (WHITE-EYED) (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus rileyi*) – Babcock-Webb.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*) – Brief views of a bird in Fort Jefferson.

SCARLET TANAGER (*Piranga olivacea*) – An awesome male for most folks in the campground at Fort Jefferson.

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – Every day of the tour.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) – A male inside Fort Jefferson.

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*) – Quite a few at Fort Zach, and a carpet of them flushing up inside Fort Jefferson.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

BOBOLINK (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) – Really good looks inside Fort Jefferson, and a couple of vocalizing birds flying over Key Largo the next day.

EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*) – Part of the wonderful avian orchestra that was the soundtrack of the pineywoods sunrise.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Many.

SHINY COWBIRD (*Molothrus bonariensis*) – Awesome! We ran into a pair of these on Sugarloaf Key, and the male even started doing a hovering flight display all around the female while she was perched on a wire. This species has arrived in small numbers in South Florida, and a few pairs are likely breeding, but it still hasn't gained a real strong foothold yet, and so is still a good rarity (though if they ever get established we may end up lamenting the arrival of these aggressive nest parasites of the Neotropics).

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*) – In several locations, but fairly inconspicuous.

COMMON GRACKLE (*Quiscalus quiscula*) – Every day.

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus major*) – Including some great displaying action.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Here and there in settled areas. Surprisingly, and pleasingly, few in the keys. [I]

MAMMALS

MARSH RABBIT (*Sylvilagus palustris*) – In the Cutler area as we made our way over to Black Point on the first morning.

EASTERN COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) – At Babcock-Webb for at least one van.

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – The go-to squirrel down here, though the ones down here do seem to look a little different than the Eastern Gray Squirrels to the north.

COMMON BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN (*Tursiops truncatus*) – On the boat trip to the Dry Tortugas.

WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – During the western and central Florida portions, including at Babcock-Webb.

KEY (WHITE-TAILED) DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus clavium*) – What adorable little ungulates! The ones we saw looked healthy, too, which is a good sign given the common health issues exhibited in this taxon which has become so range restricted that it is now not very genetically diverse.

Herps

BROWN ANOLE (*Anolis sagrei*) – Including some copulation at Fort Zach. [I]

GREEN ANOLE (CAROLINA ANOLE) (*Anolis carolinensis*) – Difficult to tell the native ones from the non-native ones, but there were still some of these native ones bopping about in the south.

RED-HEADED ROCK AGAMA (*Agama agama*) – A very well-marked pair in the parking lot in Florida City on our way north. [I]

GREEN IGUANA (*Iguana iguana*) – Including a gorgeous one on the rocks at Fort Zach. These invasives have proliferated widely in south Florida, unfortunately, to the point where they are now a very common part of the fauna. [I]

STRIPED BASILISK (*Basiliscus vittatus*) – We saw one of these "Jesus Lizards" in the parking lot in Florida City. [I]

NORTHERN CURLY-TAILED LIZARD (*Leiocephalus carinatus armouri*) – Marathon, Fort Zach, and Lantana. [I]

PENINSULA RIBBONSAKE (*Thamnophis sauritus sackeri*) – A cool form of Garter Snake, we had one of these in the road at Babcock-Webb.

AMERICAN ALLIGATOR (*Alligator mississippiensis*) – Especially dense at Big Cypress.

FLORIDA SOFTSHELL TURTLE (*Apalone ferox*) – We got to rescue a huge one from the middle of the road near Fellsmere.

GOPHER TORTOISE (*Gopherus polyphemus*) – A young one of this endangered species along Joe Overstreet Road.

GREEN SEA TURTLE (*Chelonia mydas*) – These were seen (fittingly) on the ride to and from the Dry Tortugas.

Other Creatures of Interest

FLORIDA TREE SNAIL (*Liguus fasciatus*) – A unique addition to our fauna, the common pale one that was all over the place was indeed *rosiatus*, while the scarcer one that we saw with the brown bands was *castaneozonatus*. Although some experts have suggested splitting the various 'color forms' out as separate species, this has never been widely accepted since the forms freely interbreed when they come into contact; this mostly happens through human intervention when they are transferred from one native hammock to another with a different resident color form. Although they do seem to separate out biogeographically in their totally wild state, subspecific ranking is probably as far as any of the color forms will ever make it.

ATLANTIC TARPON (*Megalops atlanticus*) – A big school of these big fish were busting out of the water just off shore at Fort Zachary Taylor.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 157 bird taxa and 6 mammal taxa