

Trip Report — Florida: Mangroves & Migrants 2026

April 25-May 4, 2026 with Doug Gochfeld & Chris Benesh



The group (minus photographer Rod Mahaffey) pausing for a photo after a terrific morning at Babcock-Webb Wildlife Management Area.

South Florida is a diverse kind of place. From the bustle of Miami to the relative tranquility of the waters nearing Fort Jefferson, there was so much to take in and appreciate. South Florida is clearly tropical in nature, more closely allied with the Caribbean than with much of the rest of the United States. And for this reason, birders and naturalists flock here to take in the special wildlife found here. This tour is designed to take in several important bird areas, and along with it, a variety of other wildlife both native and naturalized.



The Dry Tortugas were home to thousands of terns including Sooty Terns, such as this one photographed by Doug Gochfeld.

Our trip started off with a trip down from Miami to Black Point Marina for breakfast and birding before heading south to Key Largo and an extended stop. Then we began our journey down the keys, stopping for lunch at Keys Fisheries. While there was a decent mix of birds to be found here, the variety of fishes to be seen was impressive and included massive Atlantic Tarpon, Nurse Shark, and colorful Rainbow Parrotfish. After lunch we made a run up Big Pine Key in search of Key Deer, a tiny subspecies of White-tailed Deer restricted to just a few keys in Florida. After some good views, we continued to our destination, Key West. After checking in to the hotel, we picked up some food for a picnic dinner at Boca Chica Key for some shore-birding, and to watch and listen for Antillean Nighthawk. We enjoyed all that and a spectacular sunset.



We also tracked down a small number of similar-looking Bridled Terns, such as this pair photographed by Rod Mahaffey.

The following morning was spent at Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park. There was a decent mix of birds along with a few surprises. We saw 50+ Roseate Terns streaming past while doing a sea watch. There were several raptors, including Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, and even a colorful Short-eared Owl. Gray Kingbird and Black-whiskered Vireo added Caribbean flair. We then spent time at the Key West Tropical Forest & Botanical Gardens. The species causing the biggest buzz was a Purple Gallinule, of which we had good views.



One of roughly 4,500 Brown Noddies that breed on the Dry Tortugas. Photo by Rod Mahaffey.

The next morning, we were off to the Dry Tortugas. The boat ride was good for sightseeing, birding, and marveling at a few eccentric travelers sharing the ride over to Fort Jefferson. As we approached the Tortugas, we could see big numbers of Masked Boobies hanging out on East Key. Brown Noddies, Sooty Terns, Magnificent Frigatebirds built up in numbers as we arrived. Once off the boat, we headed straight away to enjoy some Bridled Terns, then we explored the fort. There were a few migrants around, though some had left the night before following the passage of a weather front. There were a couple of good Antillean Nighthawk candidates, nice comparisons of Black-whiskered and Red-eyed vireos, a distant Red-footed Booby, and some ever-so-cute, recently hatched tern chicks. All in all, a great experience.

The following morning found us once again traveling through the keys toward Everglades National Park. We spent some time watching shorebirds at Boca Chica, Ohio, and Grassy keys, as well as a stop on Key Largo before heading to Homestead and into Everglades National Park. We made a few

stops on our way to Flamingo with a nice mix of birds and a great study of American Crocodile. At Flamingo we had a flyover Shiny Cowbird and some peeks at Manatee. After dinner we saw a Barred Owl right outside of the restaurant.



Rod Mahaffey's terrific shot of a young female Snail Kite.

We explored the west coast of southern Florida over the next couple of days. A beautiful morning in the Everglades, a run down the Tamiami Trail, a visit to the Oasis Visitors Center at Big Cypress National Preserve, and Burrowing Owling at Marco Island. Another splendid morning at Babcock-Webb Wildlife Management Area, some wonderful piney-woods with Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Bobwhite, and Brown-headed Nuthatch among the highlights. Then we were off to find Florida Scrub-Jays and spend time in the beautiful bald cypress forest at Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve. Harns Marsh provided our first Snail Kites. A nearby stop for Red-headed Woodpecker also featured a distinctively patterned Sherman's Fox Squirrel. Heading east back across the peninsula, we made a stop at Torrey Island at

the south end of the massive Lake Okeechobee. And perhaps the highlight of the day, a visit to Wakodahatchee Wetlands, where we saw so many wonderful waterbirds up close, many nesting with growing chicks.



We also had some splendid views of Swallow-tailed Kite, such as this one photographed by Chris Benesh.

A big storm front moved through overnight, which brought a mini fallout to the coast the following morning. We spent some time at the Lantana Nature Preserve at Palm Beach and enjoyed an exciting morning there. Among the migrants was remarkably, a singing Bicknell's Thrush. Another nearby park had a terrific roosting Chuck-will's-widow! Having missed a stakeout La Sagra's Flycatcher at Key Largo, we were thrilled by the news that one had shown up near Miami at Highland Oaks Park. We headed over and soon after we arrived the bird appeared. We also connected with a pair of Spot-breasted Orioles here as well. A fitting ending to the tour.



A couple of exciting birds seen at the end of the tour included this singing Bicknell's Thrush that we discovered at the Lantana Nature Reserve. Photo by Doug Gochfeld.

Mammals seen on the Florida Tour:

Marsh Rabbit (*Sylvilagus palustris*)
Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)
Eastern Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)
Sherman's Eastern Fox Squirrel (*Sciurus niger shermani*)
Northern Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)
West Indian Manatee (*Trichechus manatus*)
Key White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus clavium*)
Key (White-tailed) Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus clavium*)

Some of the other critters seen on the tour:

Brown Anole (*Anolis sagrei*)
Peters's Rock Agama (*Agama picticauda*)
Green Iguana (*Iguana iguana*)
Brown Basilisk (*Basiliscus vittatus*)

Northern Curly-tailed Lizard (*Leiocephalus carinatus*)
American Alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*)
American Crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*)
Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*)
Florida Red-bellied Cooter (*Pseudemys nelsoni*)
Cane Toad (*Rhinella marina*)



And finally, a last minute La Sagra's Flycatcher that we tracked down near Miami on the final afternoon. Photo by Chris Benesh.

Thanks to all of you for making the tour such a success. It was a great pleasure for me to get back to Florida after so many years, and with Doug's expert guidance. So many wonderful memories. Good birding to all of you. Look forward to catching up on future trips.

You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this link: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/507329>

You can see my iNaturalist report of non-avian taxa at this link: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/field-guides-florida-tour-2026>

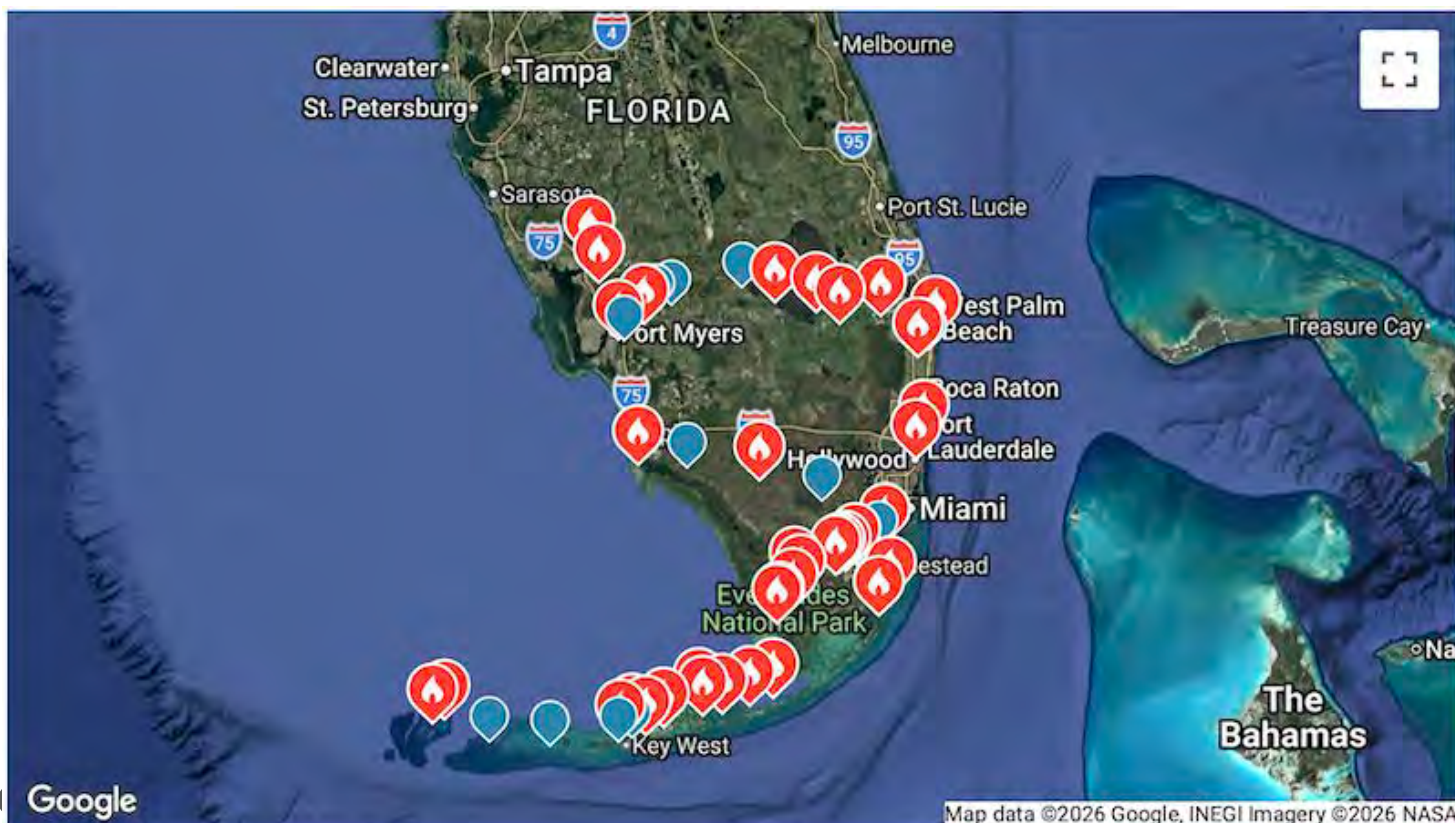
You can download a combined PDF of this page and the eBird report at this link: <https://fieldguides.com/triplists/fla26TRIPLIST.pdf>

-- Chris

Field Guides Birding Tours -- FLORIDA: MANGROVES & MIGRANTS TOUR, 2026 (with guides Doug Gochfeld & Chris Benesh)



26 Apr – 3 May 2026 (8 days) Link-only



 Florida, United States

Broward | Charlotte | Collier | Glades | Hendry | Lee | Miami-Dade | Monroe | Palm Beach

 Chris Benesh, fgi Triplists



For a narrative summary of this tour, including a Field Guides photo gallery and additional...

DATA FOR: **Group (all people)** ▾



170

Species Observed



56

Checklists



1

Species with Photos



2

Species with Audio

Species Observed

[Show all details](#)

610	Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	<i>Dendrocygna autumnalis</i>	▸ 2
35	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i> *	▸ 2
3	Muscovy Duck	<i>Cairina moschata</i> *	▸ 2
5	Wood Duck	<i>Aix sponsa</i>	▸ 1
12	Mottled Duck	<i>Anas fulvigula</i>	▸ 4
6	Northern Bobwhite	<i>Colinus virginianus</i>	▸ 1
5	Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i> *	▸ 3
56	White-crowned Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas leucocephala</i>	▸ 4
62	Eurasian Collared-Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> *	▸ 15

- 11 **Common Ground Dove** *Columbina passerina* ▶  4
- 12 **White-winged Dove** *Zenaida asiatica* ▶  6
- 42 **Mourning Dove** *Zenaida macroura* ▶  15
- 4 **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus americanus* ▶  3
- 2 **Mangrove Cuckoo** *Coccyzus minor* ▶  1
- 11 **Common Nighthawk** *Chordeiles minor* ▶  4
- 5 **Antillean Nighthawk** *Chordeiles gundlachii* ▶  3
- 3 **Chuck-will's-widow** *Antrostomus carolinensis* ▶  2
- 5 **Chimney Swift** *Chaetura pelagica* ▶  3
- 1 **Clapper Rail** *Rallus crepitans* ▶  1
- 28 **Common Gallinule** *Gallinula galeata* ▶  7
- 1 **American Coot** *Fulica americana* ▶  1
- 5 **Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio martinica* ▶  3
- 6 **Gray-headed Swamphen** *Porphyrio poliocephalus* * ▶  2
- 9 **Limpkin** *Aramus guarauna* ▶  2
- 7 **Sandhill Crane** *Antigone canadensis* ▶  2
- 40 **Black-necked Stilt** *Himantopus mexicanus* ▶  2
- 38 **Black-bellied Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* ▶  5
- 1 **American Golden-Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* ▶  1
- 10 **Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* ▶  6

77	Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	▶  2
4	Wilson's Plover	<i>Anarhynchus wilsonia</i>	▶  1
218	Short-billed Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus griseus</i>	▶  5
4	Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>	▶  4
1	Solitary Sandpiper	<i>Tringa solitaria</i>	▶  1
1	Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	▶  1
19	Willet	<i>Tringa semipalmata</i>	▶  4
3	Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	▶  3
80	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	▶  4
1	Stilt Sandpiper	<i>Calidris himantopus</i>	▶  1
33	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	▶  2
1	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	▶  1
1	White-rumped Sandpiper	<i>Calidris fuscicollis</i>	▶  1
133	Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>	▶  3
37	Semipalmated Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pusilla</i>	▶  6
156	Laughing Gull	<i>Leucophaeus atricilla</i>	▶  9
200	Brown Noddy	<i>Anous stolidus</i>	▶  1
3002	Sooty Tern	<i>Onychoprion fuscatus</i>	▶  2
17	Bridled Tern	<i>Onychoprion anaethetus</i>	▶  2
80	Least Tern	<i>Sternula antillarum</i>	▶  6

2	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	▶  2
70	Roseate Tern	<i>Sterna dougallii</i>	▶  2
5	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	▶  3
54	Royal Tern	<i>Thalasseus maximus</i>	▶  6
2	Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	▶  1
1	Sargasso Shearwater	<i>Puffinus lherminieri</i>	▶  1
46	Wood Stork	<i>Mycteria americana</i>	▶  4
699	Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>	▶  11
6	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	▶  1
1	Red-footed Booby	<i>Sula sula</i>	▶  1
78	Masked Booby	<i>Sula dactylatra</i>	▶  2
31	Anhinga	<i>Anhinga anhinga</i>	▶  8
22	Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Nannopterum auritum</i>	▶  8
188	White Ibis	<i>Eudocimus albus</i>	▶  10
28	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	▶  6
7	Roseate Spoonbill	<i>Platalea ajaja</i>	▶  3
5	Least Bittern	<i>Botaurus exilis</i>	▶  1
2	Yellow-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>	▶  2
15	Little Blue Heron	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>	▶  9
18	Tricolored Heron	<i>Egretta tricolor</i>	▶  10

4	Reddish Egret	<i>Egretta rufescens</i>	▶  1
64	Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	▶  10
19	Green Heron	<i>Butorides virescens</i>	▶  9
74	Western Cattle-Egret	<i>Ardea ibis</i>	▶  12
29	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	▶  10
21	Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	▶  8
2	American White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>	▶  1
31	Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	▶  7
45	Black Vulture	<i>Coragyps atratus</i>	▶  10
48	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	▶  14
26	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	▶  12
21	Swallow-tailed Kite	<i>Elanoides forficatus</i>	▶  10
1	Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>	▶  1
1	Cooper's Hawk	<i>Astur cooperii</i>	▶  1
3	Northern Harrier	<i>Circus hudsonius</i>	▶  3
4	Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	▶  4
2	Snail Kite	<i>Rostrhamus sociabilis</i>	▶  1
18	Red-shouldered Hawk	<i>Buteo lineatus</i>	▶  11
2	Short-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo brachyurus</i>	▶  2
1	Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	▶  1

3	Eastern Screech-Owl	<i>Megascops asio</i>	▶  3
6	Burrowing Owl	<i>Athene cunicularia</i>	▶  1
1	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	▶  1
1	Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megasceryle alcyon</i>	▶  1
1	Red-headed Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>	▶  1
42	Red-bellied Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes carolinus</i>	▶  16
3	Downy Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates pubescens</i>	▶  3
2	Red-cockaded Woodpecker	<i>Leuconotopicus borealis</i>	▶  1
1	Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Leuconotopicus villosus</i>	▶  1
5	Pileated Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>	▶  4
2	Northern Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>	▶  2
2	American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	▶  1
4	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	▶  2
2	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	▶  1
5	Monk Parakeet	<i>Myiopsitta monachus</i> *	▶  1
10	Great Crested Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus crinitus</i>	▶  8
1	La Sagra's Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus sagrae</i>	▶  6  1
4	Eastern Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>	▶  3
18	Gray Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus dominicensis</i>	▶  6
10	White-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo griseus</i>	▶  3

2	Red-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	▶  1
7	Black-whiskered Vireo	<i>Vireo altiloquus</i>	▶  6
11	Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	▶  6
25	Blue Jay	<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	▶  10
2	Florida Scrub-Jay	<i>Aphelocoma coerulescens</i>	▶  1
11	American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	▶  6
19	Fish Crow	<i>Corvus ossifragus</i>	▶  7
3	Tufted Titmouse	<i>Baeolophus bicolor</i>	▶  1
1	Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	▶  1
82	Purple Martin	<i>Progne subis</i>	▶  3
1	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>	▶  1
52	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	▶  9
70	Cave Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon fulva</i>	▶  2
3	Brown-headed Nuthatch	<i>Sitta pusilla</i>	▶  1
3	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	<i>Poliophtila caerulea</i>	▶  1
41	European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> *	▶  10
5	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i> *	▶  3
10	Gray Catbird	<i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>	▶  4
2	Brown Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma rufum</i>	▶  2
52	Northern Mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	▶  17

6	Eastern Bluebird	<i>Sialia sialis</i>	▶  1
2	Veery	<i>Catharus fuscescens</i>	▶  2
1	Bicknell's Thrush	<i>Catharus bicknelli</i>	▶  1  1
6	Cedar Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>	▶  1
9	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i> *	▶  2
4	House Finch	<i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i> *	▶  1
3	Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>	▶  1
1	Eastern Towhee	<i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i>	▶  1
30	Bobolink	<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	▶  6
13	Eastern Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella magna</i>	▶  3
2	Spot-breasted Oriole	<i>Icterus pectoralis</i> *	▶  1
69	Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	▶  16
2	Shiny Cowbird	<i>Molothrus bonariensis</i>	▶  1
1	Bronzed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus aeneus</i>	▶  1
26	Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>	▶  2
74	Common Grackle	<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>	▶  19
69	Boat-tailed Grackle	<i>Quiscalus major</i>	▶  13
16	Ovenbird	<i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i>	▶  7
5	Northern Waterthrush	<i>Parkesia noveboracensis</i>	▶  5
20	Black-and-white Warbler	<i>Mniotilta varia</i>	▶  9

1	Tennessee Warbler	<i>Leiothlypis peregrina</i>	▶  1
46	Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	▶  11
1	Hooded Warbler	<i>Setophaga citrina</i>	▶  1
51	American Redstart	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	▶  10
18	Cape May Warbler	<i>Setophaga tigrina</i>	▶  7
20	Northern Parula	<i>Setophaga americana</i>	▶  10
2	Magnolia Warbler	<i>Setophaga magnolia</i>	▶  2
1	Blackburnian Warbler	<i>Setophaga fusca</i>	▶  1
1	Northern Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga aestiva</i>	▶  1
1	Mangrove Yellow Warbler	<i>Setophaga petechia</i>	▶  1
17	Blackpoll Warbler	<i>Setophaga striata</i>	▶  7
17	Black-throated Blue Warbler	<i>Setophaga caerulescens</i>	▶  7
60	Palm Warbler	<i>Setophaga palmarum</i>	▶  6
1	Pine Warbler	<i>Setophaga pinus</i>	▶  1
20	Prairie Warbler	<i>Setophaga discolor</i>	▶  8
2	Black-throated Green Warbler	<i>Setophaga virens</i>	▶  2
54	Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>	▶  18
2	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>	▶  1
4	Indigo Bunting	<i>Passerina cyanea</i>	▶  2

EXOTIC: PROVISIONAL

- 10 **Red Junglefowl** *Gallus gallus* * 1
- 2 **Blue-crowned Parakeet** *Thectocercus acuticaudatus* * 1

ADDITIONAL TAXA

- 1 Greater/Lesser Scaup *Aythya marila/affinis* 1
- 6 nighthawk sp. *Chordeiles sp.* 2
- 5 peep sp. *Calidris sp. (peep sp.)* 1
- 32 shorebird sp. *Charadriiformes sp. (shorebird sp.)* 2
- 1 Sooty/Bridled Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus/anaethetus* 1
- 3 Sterna sp. *Sterna sp.* 1
- 30 tern sp. *Sterninae sp.* 1
- 10 white egret sp. *Egretta/Ardea sp.* 1
- 3 parakeet sp. *Psittaciformes sp. (parakeet sp.)* 1
- 11 American/Fish Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos/ossifragus* 3
- 1 crow sp. *Corvus sp. (crow sp.)* 1
- 1 swallow sp. *Hirundinidae sp.* 1
- 1 Catharus sp. *Catharus sp.* 1
- 1 new world sparrow sp. *Passerellidae sp.* 1
- 7 new world warbler sp. *Parulidae sp.* 3
- 4 bird sp. *Aves sp.* 1