

South Florida Spring Tour - Sunrise Birding

April 13 - 19, 2014

Tour report and photos by Rafael Galvez



The Sunrise Birding, 2014 “South Florida” Spring tour took place from April 13th through the 19th. Visiting the southernmost tip of the sunshine state during spring offers a great opportunity for encountering a number of bird species characteristic of the region as they prepare for breeding, along with seasonal migrants and specialties associated with the Caribbean. Spring time is a beautiful season in South Florida; bromeliads are in bloom and colorful songbirds can be found making their way through the lush hammocks. Weather at this time of year is typically neither too hot nor wet, and any late fronts from the north or depressions from the south can accentuate and concentrate the migratory activities of birds passing over this region as they make their way to breeding grounds throughout North America.

Although none of our outings were interrupted by unfavorable weather, we did experience some sun showers, and the vestiges of a cold front moving down into the peninsula from the north reached the Keys just in time for our visit to the Dry Tortugas, working in our favor and concentrating birds in the archipelago.

Despite it having been just under a week long, our tour covered much ground, taking us through renowned migrant traps within the hustle and bustle of Miami, to preserved islands off the Atlantic coast; into the unforgettable Keys and the Tortugas, for which we traveled 70 miles into the Caribbean. We eventually returned to the mainland and crossed through the heart of the one and only “river of grass” – the Everglades.

By the end of the trip, we had seen a total of 165 bird taxa, including 159 ABA countable species, 4 established uncountable exotics and 3 subspecific taxa of regional significance. Some of the tour participants that arrived earlier saw even more. We explored over a dozen native habitats, some of which are of Caribbean affiliation and not found elsewhere in the U.S., visited 3 national parks, 4 state parks, and several important protected areas.

With a starting point in Miami, our first venture as a group was a brief visit to one of the last known roosting sites for White-winged Parakeets near our hotel. One of the few established Psittacid species in North America, this small parakeet has been a breeder in South Florida since the late 1960s, but is now unfortunately declining. It is also one of 7 countable parrot species in the ABA region, but its range is being overpowered by the closely related Yellow-chevrons Parakeet, which was also seen by some members of the group on our way from the airport.

Our first evening together was well spent at a Cuban restaurant in the famed Calle Ocho in the heart of Miami's Little Havana. We sampled from a variety of delicious classic dishes including maduros (traditionally prepared sweet plantains), yuca con mojo (yuca in a garlic and citrus sauce), rice and seafood casseroles, and a variety of fish entrees. Our first get-together marked the flavor for what we were to experience in southernmost Florida. Not only are the birds and their habitats unique, but the fusion of cultures creates an unusual opportunity to sample food from throughout the Americas. During our trip, some of us also had the opportunity to sample Caribbean and Peruvian food, as well as the typical fresh fish dishes served throughout the Keys.

Our first full day of birding was a busy one, taking us from an early visit to Crandon Beach in Key Biscayne, to Bill Baggs and the Cape Florida Banding Station, to a number of migrant traps and parks in South Dade as we headed ever-southward towards the Keys. We started off with great looks at shorebirds, including the declining Piping and Wilson's Plovers. The beaches also gave us views of plenty of gulls and terns, including Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Least Terns. We had our first looks at Magnificent Frigatebirds this day. Upon arriving to the Keys, we were greeted by a close encounter with a Golden Yellow Warbler, a mangrove-breeding subspecies with distribution limited to South Florida and the Caribbean. We also had our first encounters with Gray Kingbirds and White-crowned Pigeons as we arrived to our hotel in Key Largo. While we had dinner at a local fishing port, a Great White Heron paced along the docks.

We dedicated our second day to birding in as many locations as possible in the Keys, from the West Indian hardwood hammocks of Dagny Johnson – the largest remaining tract of this imperiled habitat in North America – to the Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge where we saw the miniature White-tailed Deer subspecies endemic to the Keys, ultimately arriving to the beaches of Boca Chica and Key West. One of our primary target birds – the Mangrove Cuckoo – was cooperative at Dagny and we lucked out near the entrance as one perched within the canopy and inspected us momentarily. Highlights included various wading birds, particularly Reddish Egrets “dancing” while they foraged along the shallow coastline. We also saw various raptor species, including the pale-headed Florida Red-shouldered Hawks, Broad-winged Hawks, and a brief glimpse at a dark Short-tailed Hawk as we entered Key West. Some migrants were present at various stopover locations we visited, but the numbers and diversity were relatively low in anticipation of a potential cold front that would be reaching the islands that night.

Our next day was dedicated entirely to visiting the Dry Tortugas National Park, an archipelago of islands southwest of Key West, which can be a fantastic resting location for countless migratory birds returning to North America in the spring. The anticipated cold front worked in our favor, and put a halt to the northward movement of passerines, causing them to congregate in good numbers and diversity in Garden Key. We saw 14 species of warblers that day, including Tennessee and Worm-eating, as well as Blue Grosbeak, Indigo and Painted Buntings, and various Yellow-billed Cuckoos. Migratory Soras skulked in the underbrush, and everywhere over us, numerous Magnificent Frigatebirds lingered motionless in the air. Thousands of Sooty Terns and Brown Noddies flew back and forth from their nests in Bush Key. From the ferry we were able to see Northern Gannets and Brown Boobies, and a colony of Masked Boobies in Hospital Key. We even had Audubon's Shearwaters make an appearance as we crossed the Rebecca Shoals.

For our second-to-final day, we traveled from Key West all the way up to Homestead, just outside of Everglades National Park. Along the way, we made several stops, connecting with birds we missed on our way down the Keys and in the Tortugas. Migratory birds were evident at Fort Zachary Taylor, where we added a number of warblers that had evaded us till then, including striking Kentucky, Hooded and Prothonotary Warblers, and other beautiful migrants such as Scarlet Tanager. The abundance of Green Iguanas throughout the Lower Keys gave us a taste of the persistent problems that introduced invasive reptiles pose on the region's ecosystems. We also made stops at Big Pine and Ohio Keys where we managed to increase our shorebirds by adding Semipalmated, Western and Pectoral Sandpipers, and Short-billed Dowitcher to our list. Although a stop at the extensive Windley Key did not materialize many birds, we finally had closer encounters with the elusive Black-whiskered Vireo, one of which was singing from within the hammock.

That evening was wrapped up by a magical visit to the agricultural area outside of the Everglades, and pastures adjacent to Homestead Airport. A cool breeze swept the fields, and as the sun slowly set and warmed the horizon, we stopped to observe a pair of Burrowing Owls foraging. Nearby, Eastern Meadowlarks sung and pranced along the grasses. Common Nighthawks were out early, and they could be seen and heard taking to flight all around us. A group of Icterids nearby included Bronzed Cowbirds, with their bright red eyes. We finished the day with a wonderful Mexican dinner at an authentic restaurant in historic downtown Homestead.

For our final day, we visited the gem of South Florida – the Everglades. We entered the national park through the Florida City entrance, driving through a number of habitats early in the morning to arrive to a freshwater slough in time to hear – and see – the endangered Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow. Among many highlights, the Everglades presented us opportunities at seeing nesting Wood Stork, Roseate Spoonbills and Anhingas. Swallow-tailed Kites wheeled gracefully at every stop. The flats at Flamingo also gave us a number of terns we had missed elsewhere, including Gull-billed. Frequent comparisons between a few Shiny Cowbirds in a flock of Brown-headed were very helpful. As we wrapped up our day in the unique Pine Rockland habitat dominated by Slash Pines, we rounded up our woodpeckers, adding our final and 23rd warbler species of the trip – Pine, and got close encounters with “white-eyed” Eastern Towhees, typical of the south.

Itinerary:

A: April 13, 2014 – Little Havana, Miami (as a group); University of Miami and A.D. Barnes Park in Westchester (with those picked up from the airport).

B: April 14, 2014 – **i.** Crandon Beach Park and, **ii.** Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park in Key Biscayne; **iii.** Matheson Hammock Park, Miami; **iv.** Kendall; **v.** Black Point Marina, Biscayne National Park, Homestead; **vi.** Card Sound Road and Crocodile Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Upper Keys; **vii.** Dagny Johnson Botanical Hammock State Park.

C: April 15, 2014 – **i.** Dagny Johnson Botanical Hammock State Park, Key Largo; **ii.** Florida Keys Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center, Tavernier; **iii.** Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge; **iv.** Boca Chica Beach; **v.** Key West.

D: April 16, 2014 – **i.** Key West Port; **ii.** Dry Tortugas National Park; **iii.** Fort Zachary Taylor State Park, Key West.

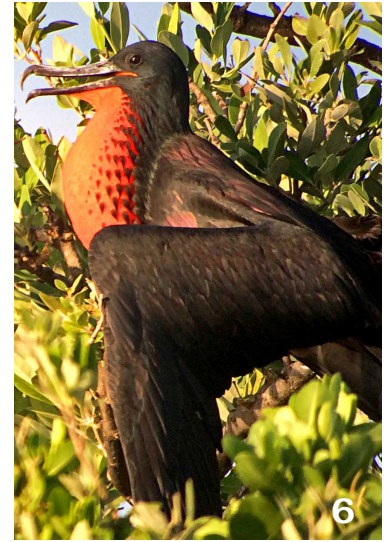
E: April 17, 2014 – **i.** Fort Zachary Taylor State Park; **ii.** Ohio Key; **iii.** Windley Key; **iv.** Homestead Airport and agricultural vicinity.

F: April 18, 2014 – Everglades National Park in the following order – **i.** Anhinga Trail before dark; **ii.** Sawgrass prairies southwest of Mahogany Hammock; **iii.** Paurotis Pond; **iv.** West Lake; **v.** Mrazek Pond; **vi.** Flamingo campgrounds and Eco Pond; **vii.** Mahogany Hammock; **viii.** Long Pine Key; **ix.** Hole-in-the-Donut Restoration Area.

Birds:

Muscovy Duck (feral): Although this bird is questionably “countable” in its feral form (if you are a stickler for listing standards by the American Birding Association) – it is a widespread introduced duck that is nearly ubiquitous throughout South Florida and is in effect part of the region’s avifauna. We saw Muscovy Ducks at a number of locations. 4/13 – 4/14/14

Blue-winged Teal: We saw a few birds – perhaps migrants or post-winter lingering individuals – at the Everglades, in West Lake, Mrazek Pond and other brackish locations. 4/18/14



Egyptian Goose: The most recent addition to Florida's official bird list. It has been clearly demonstrated that this attractive species is now well-established and increasing in South Florida. Introduced via escapes from aviaries or private collections, it is originally from Africa. Photo #4. 4/14/14

Pied-billed Grebe: A few seen in Everglades freshwater ponds. 4/18/14

Audubon's Shearwater: Two birds were seen flying low over the water from the ferry on our way to the Dry Tortugas. 4/17/14

Magnificent Frigatebird: We first saw frigatebirds on our way to Key Biscayne, outside of Miami. Many more were visible lingering overhead as we drove through the Keys. Hundreds congregated over the Dry Tortugas – the last place in Florida where these enormous birds breed. Photo #6. 4/14 – 4/17/14

Masked Booby: As the ferry passed by Hospital Key, in the Dry Tortugas archipelago, dozens of Masked Boobies could be seen standing on the sandy island, where they breed. A few were seen flying over deep waters as we approached the islands. 4/16/14

Brown Booby: Although this is often the more common of the two booby species, we only saw a couple flying over deep waters as we approached the Tortugas, and two sitting on buoys surrounding Bush Key as the ferry surrounded the island to dock. Interestingly, the species does not breed in the Tortugas. 4/16/14

Northern Gannet: Seen cruising over deep waters on way to Dry Tortugas. 4/16/14

Double-crested Cormorant: This nearly ubiquitous species was seen throughout our tour, from coastal areas outside Miami, throughout the Keys and in freshwater sloughs in the Everglades. 4/14 – 4/15, 4/17 – 4/18/14

Anhinga: Seen primarily in Everglades National Park, where some birds still had active nests with young. Photo #5. 4/14, 4/18/14

American White Pelican: Seen over Coastal Prairie habitat in southernmost Everglades National Park. 4/18/14

Brown Pelican: Seen along coastal areas outside of Miami, on the way down the Keys and in the Everglades. 4/14 – 4/15, 4/17 – 4/18

Great Blue Heron: Primarily seen in freshwater areas in the Everglades. Common in Anhinga Trail and Taylor Slough. 4/17 – 4/18/14

Great White Heron: Although still classified as a subspecies of the Great Blue Heron, this taxonomic form has regional significance since its North American distribution is limited almost entirely to saline flats and islands of Florida Bay and the Keys. We saw this huge heron in the Upper Keys, as we dined in Key Largo, and in Florida Bay. 4/14, 4/18/14

Great Egret: Seen nearly every day in a variety of freshwater and coastal habitats. Photo #2. 4/14 – 4/15, 4/17 – 4/18/14

Snowy Egret: We only saw this dainty species in Everglades National Park. 4/18/14

Little Blue Heron: We saw this slender dark heron in freshwater areas outside of Miami and in the Keys. 4/14 – 4/15, 4/17/14

Tricolored Heron: Seen in the Keys and in the Everglades. 4/15, 4/18/14

Reddish Egret: We saw this spectacular species in the Keys and in the Everglades. A particularly memorable encounter was in Boca Chica, where a pair of birds ran across the shallows in their distinctive dance-like foraging style. Photo #7. 4/15, 4/18/14

Cattle Egret: A common bird throughout South Florida; we encountered it nearly daily. 4/14 – 4/15, 4/17 – 4/18/14

Green Heron: We saw a couple of birds here and there in the mainland. We also saw migrants in the Dry Tortugas. There were several breeding and immature birds in Anhinga Trail, Everglades. 4/14, 4/17 – 4/18/14

Black-crowned Night-Heron: In Everglades National Park. 4/18/14

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: A few of us saw one bird resting at the edge of a canal after pick up from the airport. Unfortunately, the species eluded us in the Everglades. 4/13/14

White Ibis: A common species seen throughout our tour in a variety of habitats. 4/13 – 4/15, 4/17 – 4/18/14

Glossy Ibis: Much less common in southernmost Florida than the White Ibis, we only saw this species in the Hole-in-the-Donut restoration area of Everglades National Park. 4/18/14

Roseate Spoonbill: We saw spoonbills in the Keys, but they were most striking at Paurotis Pond, where they flew over us frequently and could be seen landing on the island rookeries across the water. Photo #1. 4/15, 4/18/14





Wood Stork: We saw several in Everglades National Park, in freshwater expanses near Pa-Hay-Okee and over Paurotis. Many of the birds at Paurotis were engaged in breeding behavior; this is one of the largest remaining rookeries for the species in the park. Photo #8. 4/18/14

Black Vulture: During our first morning's outing to Crandon Park, we found several birds resting on the ground in areas surrounding the beach. Black Vultures in some areas have become quite trusting of human proximity, and can be approached quite closely. This is perhaps most notable in Anhinga Trail, where as expected, we saw many loitering atop vehicles and other low perches. 4/14, 4/18/14

Turkey Vulture: The species was nearly ubiquitous and seen in flight at a variety of locations throughout our tour. We found it everywhere except in the Dry Tortugas. 4/14 – 4/15, 4/17 – 4/18/14

Osprey: The species is a year-round resident in South Florida. Although we saw it in flight at a number of places, it wasn't until we arrived to the Everglades that we got close encounters. At Flamingo, we had the opportunity to get extremely close one of their huge nests. 4/14 – 4/15, 4/17 – 4/18/14

Swallow-tailed Kite: We did not see this beautiful species until we were in the Everglades. In the glades, we saw several gracefully flying over a number of areas, but more common over brackish swamps and coastal areas. Photo #10. 4/18/14

White-tailed Kite: We were quite fortunate to find one individual of this uncommon raptor perched over the slough south of Pa-Hay-Okee, while looking for Cape Sable Seaside Sparrows. While a few pairs breed in the Everglades and adjacent agricultural areas, they can be difficult to find and appear to cover a lot of territory during their foraging bouts. Photo #9. 4/18/14

Bald Eagle: Adult and subadult eagles were seen in Everglades National Park. 4/18/14

Sharp-shinned Hawk: One was seen in flight from the Overseas Highway as we drove down southward towards Key West; most likely a migrant. Another was spotted from Highway 9336 as we drove from Paurotis Pond towards Flamingo. 4/15, 4/18/14

Cooper's Hawk: A couple of birds were seen in the Upper Keys, and again in Everglades National Park. This species is a year-round resident of South Florida. 4/15, 4/18/14



Red-shouldered Hawk: The common Buteo of the region, represented by a paler subspecies that shows less rusty coloration than its northern counterparts. We saw this species in South Dade, the Keys and in the Everglades. 4/14 – 4/15, 4/18/14

Broad-winged Hawk: Upon arriving to the Keys and exploring the Dagny Johnson hammocks, we first heard then saw this species. After that we saw a few Broad-wings along the Keys. 4/15/14

Short-tailed Hawk: A much sought-after species, it is common in South Florida in late fall and winter. By springtime, most are quickly moving northward to breeding areas primarily in central parts of the state. 4/15/14

Red-tailed Hawk: Not the most common raptor in southernmost Florida; we saw one in South Dade. 4/14/14

American Kestrel: Spotted on the way back northward through the Keys. 4/17/14

Merlin: Migrants seen in the Dry Tortugas, possibly three birds – one male and two females. 4/16/14

Sora: Upon disembarking from the ferry when we arrived to Garden Key, Dry Tortugas, we found a Sora skulking through a Sea Grape shrub by the docks. Potentially a second Sora was seen in the campgrounds, foraging through the shrubbery. 4/16/14

Common Gallinule: Seen by some after pick up from the airport and a brief stop in South Miami. 4/13/14

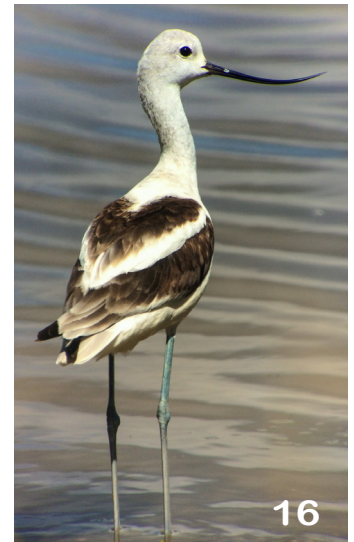
American Coot: Lingering winter birds seen in brackish ponds in Everglades National Park. 4/18/14

Black-bellied Plover: Seen at a number of locations including Crandon Beach, throughout the Keys including Boca Chica and Ohio Key, and at Flamingo in the Everglades. 4/14 – 4/15, 4/17 – 4/18/14

Wilson's Plover: We found a Wilson's Plover at Crandon Beach during our first morning of birding. The bird rested in a group of Semipalmated Plovers, and presented a great opportunity for comparison. We were granted closer inspection of this declining species at Ohio Key in the Middle Keys. Photo #13. 4/14, 4/17/14

Semipalmated Plover: We saw many in Crandon Beach, and also in the Middle and Lower Keys. 4/14, 4/17/14

Piping Plover: We found a few of these small plovers in roped-off areas in Crandon Beach. The birds mingled with many Semipalmated Plovers and presented opportunities for comparison. Photo #11. 4/14/14



Killdeer: Seen in Crandon Beach, the Middle Keys and the Everglades. 4/14, 4/17 – 4/18/14

Black-necked Stilt: Several birds were seen in the Everglades. We got great looks at Eco Pond. Photo #15. 4/18/14

American Avocet: Found at Eco Pond. Photo #16. 4/18/14

Spotted Sandpiper: Seen at Boca Chica, Ohio Key and Everglades National Park. 4/15, 4/17 – 4/18/14

Solitary Sandpiper: A single bird was observed feeding on the back edge of Mrazek Pond, Everglades National Park. 4/18/14

Greater Yellowlegs: We found this species in the Dry Tortugas, in the Keys and in the Everglades. We found a great comparison opportunity at Eco Pond, when 3 Greaters stood with a Lesser Yellowlegs. Photo #14. 4/16 – 4/18/14

Willet: Found at Boca Chica, Ohio Key and Flamingo. 4/15, 4/17 – 4/18/14

Lesser Yellowlegs: Seen in the Keys and Everglades. The single Lesser amidst the Greaters at Eco Pond was decidedly smaller, exhibiting all the field marks that help us differentiate the two – a wonderful opportunity. Photo #14. 4/15, 4/18/14

Ruddy Turnstone: Found daily except at Everglades National Park. 4/14 – 4/17/14

Sanderling: Found at Crandon Beach and Boca Chica. 4/14, 4/17/14

Semipalmated Sandpiper: A few Semipalmated Sandpipers foraged with other Calidridine sandpipers on flats at Ohio Key. 4/17/14

Western Sandpiper: A couple of birds were found in flocks of shorebirds in the vicinity of Ohio Key. 4/17/14

Least Sandpiper: Seen at Crandon Beach and the Keys. 4/14 – 4/15, 4/17/14

Pectoral Sandpiper: One bird found at a saltpan in Ohio Key along with several other species of shorebirds. 4/17/14

Short-billed Dowitcher: Found throughout the Keys. 4/17/14

Laughing Gull: Seen every day at a number of locations. The most common gull species in South Florida during this season. 4/14 – 4/18/14

Ring-billed Gull: Seen nearly every day, although less common in the Keys. Not nearly the numbers as Laughing, but a common wintering gull in this region. 4/14, 4/16 – 4/18/14

Herring Gull: A few birds seen at Crandon Beach and the Keys. 4/14 – 4/15/14

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Several birds were seen at Crandon Beach. A species that has increased steadily in South Florida. 4/14/14

Brown Noddy: Hundreds seen arriving into the Dry Tortugas archipelago. Thousands flew back and forth from nesting sites in Bush Key. Photo #3. 4/16/14

Sooty Tern: Thousands nest in Bush Key, in the Dry Tortugas. Many birds could be seen surrounding the Tortugas. Photo #12. 4/16/14

Least Tern: Seen every day along coastal sites. We stopped to watch birds going to and from rooftop nesting sites in Marathon. 4/14 – 4/18/14

Gull-billed Tern: Seen on the Flamingo flats. 4/18/14

Caspian Tern: Seen in Everglades National Park. 4/18/14

Forster's Tern: Seen on the Flamingo flats, Everglades. 4/18/14

Royal Tern: Seen every day throughout the tour. 4/14 – 4/18/14

Sandwich Tern: A couple birds were at Crandon Beach; more numerous in the Keys. 4/14, 4/16 – 4/17/14

Black Skimmer: Seen from the Ferry at the Key West port, and in the Everglades. 4/16, 4/18/14

Rock Pigeon: Seen daily at a number of locations, including the Dry Tortugas. 4/14 – 4/18/14

White-crowned Pigeon: An ever-elusive species; we came within close proximity of these forest pigeons on a number of occasions, yet struggled to get detailed looks. Best looks perhaps in Everglades National Park near Paurotis Pond. Photo #17. 4/14 – 4/15, 4/17 – 4/18/14

Eurasian Collared-Dove: An established exotic species, originally from the Old World. It has spread to nearly every possible habitat in South Florida, although it is typically found in proximity to human settlements. Also breeds in the Dry Tortugas. Some of us watched with amazement as one dove trailed behind the fast ferry some 50 miles southwest of Key West, over the open sea. After a long pursuit on the wing, the bird finally caught up with the ferry and rested, until we arrived to the Tortugas, where it took off and blended in with the resident doves. Photo #18. 4/14 – 4/18/14

White-winged Dove: Seen in the Kendall area, in the Keys and the Homestead area. 4/14, 4/16 – 4/18/14

Mourning Dove: Seen every day. 4/14 – 4/18/14



Common Ground Dove: Seen in Key Biscayne, the Keys and the Everglades. 4/14 – 4/15, 4/17 – 4/18/14

White-winged Parakeet: An established exotic species, it is one of the few ABA countable Psittacid species in North America. It was once considered conspecific with the Yellow-chevroned Parakeet – known then as Canary-winged Parakeet. It was more common in South Florida, but now few known roosts remain in Miami. We saw the birds in palm trees in Little Havana. 4/14/14

Yellow-chevroned Parakeet: A species split from Canary-winged Parakeet, it has now become more common than the closely related White-winged Parakeet, although it is not ABA countable as of yet. 4/13/14

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: Several Yellow-billed Cuckoos were found migrating through the Dry Tortugas, and occupying hidden niches in the trees within the parade grounds of Fort Jefferson, Garden Key. Also seen at Fort Zachary Taylor, in Key West. 4/16 – 4/17/18

Mangrove Cuckoo: The primary elusive target of the trip; it can be a hit or miss due to its terribly skulking behavior, mysterious nature and densely inaccessible habitat. Yet we were fortunate to find one at Dagny Johnson Botanical Hammock State Park in the Upper Keys. We got a brief yet satisfying view of a bird that came to inspect us momentarily from a high perch in the canopy. Photo #19. 4/15/14

Eastern Screech-Owl: Some of us made a nocturnal trek to Dagny Johnson with the hopes of finding this species and other nocturnal birds. We heard as many as 3 or 4 Screech-Owls coming close to us in the dense – and very dark – hammock. Despite repeated efforts, we were never able to see them, though we certainly heard their whinnies and whines. 4/14/14

Burrowing Owl: A late afternoon trek through agricultural Homestead and the fields outside of the regional airport allowed us to see a Burrowing Owl, perched on cones placed near its burrow. A second birds could also be seen – although less clearly – nearby. Photo #20. 4/17/14

Barred Owl: We had fantastic views of a nearby Barred Owl perched along Highway 9336 near Pa-Hay-Okee in the Everglades. Photo #21. 4/18/14

Common Nighthawk: Seen in the Dry Tortugas and Homestead. Many early birds were already in flight and displaying as the sun set over pastures by the airport. Photo #22. 4/16 – 4/18/14



Chuck-will's-widow: During our first morning's visit to Crandon Beach, a Chuck was spooked from its resting spot on a branch of a large Sea Grape tree. The bird did not fly far and seemed to have repositioned itself somewhere deeper in the canopy. We could never relocate it. In the Everglades, we were fortunate to come upon Chucks resting on the road at dark. We were able to drive slowly up to the birds and view them in the light of the headlamps. 4/14, 4/18/14

Chimney Swift: Heard and seen from Homestead, as we were ready to enter La Quebradita Mexican Restaurant for dinner. 4/17/14

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Migrant hummingbirds were seen in the Dry Tortugas, and again at Fort Zachary Taylor, Key West. 4/16, 4/17/14

Belted Kingfisher: We saw kingfishers in the Keys and in the Everglades. 4/15, 4/17, 4/18/14

Red-bellied Woodpecker: The most common woodpecker species in South Florida, we saw the species in Key Biscayne, the Keys, and the Everglades. 4/14, 4/15, 4/17, 4/18/14

Downy Woodpecker: Not until we visited the Pine Rockland habitat of Everglades National Park did we find this small woodpecker, which was first heard, then seen. 4/18/14

Northern Flicker: Although possible in many regional habitats, we only had encounters with this species in the Everglades, at Long Pine Key. 4/18/14

Pileated Woodpecker: This large woodpecker inhabits a wide variety of habitats in the Everglades, and we were fortunate to see it at Long Pine Key. 4/18/14

Great-crested Flycatcher: We first encountered this bird in Crandon Beach, a single bird calling from an exposed perch. We would again see and hear this bird in hardwood hammocks in the Keys, and in a variety of habitats in the Everglades. 4/14, 4/15, 4/17, 4/18/14

Eastern Kingbird: Migrants seen in the Dry Tortugas. 4/16/14

Gray Kingbird: Seen nearly daily, but it wasn't until we arrived to the Keys that we came within close proximity of this charismatic species. South Florida is the northernmost point in the range of this large-billed Caribbean flycatcher. 4/13 – 4/18/14

Loggerheaded Shrike: Seen nearly daily throughout the tour, at all locations except the lowermost Keys and the Dry Tortugas. 4/13 – 4/15, 4/17, 4/18/14

White-eyed Vireo: Seen and heard at Dagny Johnson, where it is a common breeding species. Also one was seen at Fort Zachary Taylor, and others at Everglades National Park. 4/14 – 4/18/14.

Red-eyed Vireo: A few were seen frequenting the Gumbo Limbos in the parade grounds at Dry Tortugas National Park. Also seen at Fort Zachary Taylor along the raised berm trail, associating with a Black-whiskered Vireo. 4/16 – 4/17/14

Black-whiskered Vireo: One Black-whiskered Vireo was found in the Gumbo Limbo stand in the south side of the parade grounds within Fort Jefferson, but it was a relative high and quick view and not all participants got good looks. We were then fortunate to find another within Fort Zachary Taylor in Key West, which may have given us the look we all hoped for. 4/16 – 4/17/14

Blue Jay: This species was seen nearly daily, except for in the Dry Tortugas. Although it is well distributed throughout South Florida, it is not the most common species, particularly in the Florida Keys. 4/13 – 4/15, 4/17 – 4/18/14

American Crow: It was only seen during our last day, when we visited the Everglades, where it is a common species. American Crows are quite uncommon in the Florida Keys. 4/18/14

Fish Crow: A relatively common species along coastal sites in Miami, it was found at Crandon Beach and Cape Florida on our first full day of birding. 4/13 – 4/14/14

Purple Martin: Seen during our day returning from the Lower Keys, at Fort Zachary Taylor in Key West and other locations. Also found at Everglades National Park. 4/17 – 4/18/14

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: A great diversity of swallows was found in the Dry Tortugas. Among these, Northern Rough-wings were found feeding over the parade grounds of the fort. 4/16/14

Bank Swallow: A few Bank Swallows were found amidst other swallows over Fort Jefferson, in the Dry Tortugas. 4/16/14

Cliff Swallow: Several Cliffs were among the swallows over Fort Jefferson, foraging in flight in a swarm of mixed swallow species. 4/16/14

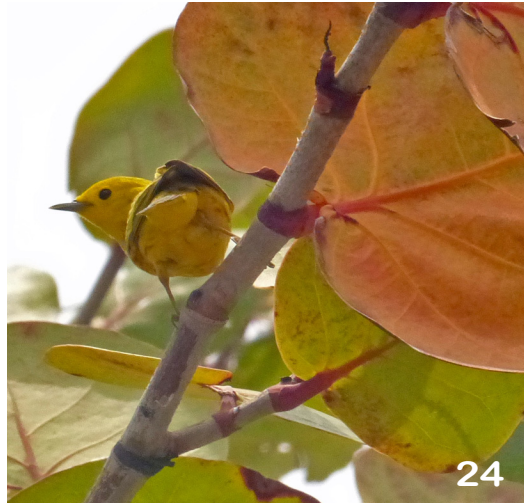
Cave Swallow: A couple of Cave Swallows were found in the mixed flocks of swallows at Fort Jefferson, in the Dry Tortugas. We also visited a well-known nesting site in southern Miami-Dade – an underpass by the Florida Turnpike – where Caribbean Cave Swallows (*Petrochelidon fulva fulva*) have been known to breed since the late 1980's. 4/14 – 4/16/14

Barn Swallow: Numerous migratory Barn Swallows were seen in the Dry Tortugas and from Fort Zachary Taylor. 4/16 – 4/17/14

House Wren: Heard and briefly seen at Everglades National Park. 4/18/14

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Heard and seen at Everglades National Park. 4/18/14

Gray-cheeked Thrush: One Gray-cheek was seen briefly at Fort Jefferson, in the Dry Tortugas, walking up the branch of a Seaside Mahoe tree. 4/17/14



Swainson's Thrush: One was seen in the Keys during our "northbound" return to the Florida mainland. 4/18/14

Gray Catbird: The species was seen nearly daily throughout the tour, except for in the Dry Tortugas. 4/13 – 4/18/14

Northern Mockingbird: A common resident species throughout South Florida, we encountered it daily except for in the Tortugas. 4/13 – 4/18/14

European Starling: We found this species in a number of places during our trek southward through South Dade, and into the Keys during our trip south and back north. 4/13 – 4/18/14

Common Myna: We looked for this interesting introduced species in Homestead, where it often frequents vicinities in close proximity to humans, and on our return trip back north through the Keys at a couple of locations. 4/14 – 4/15, 4/17/14

Cedar Waxwing: This species was only seen by some on the day of arrival to South Florida. 4/13/14

Tennessee Warbler: Seen in the Dry Tortugas and in Key West. 4/16 – 4/17/14

Northern Parula: Except for the day of arrival, this species was seen every day at a number of locations. It is a common migrant at this time of year. 4/14 – 4/18/14

Yellow Warbler: One migrant Yellow Warbler was seen in the Gumbo Limbos in the south of Fort Jefferson, in the Dry Tortugas. Photo #24. 4/16/14

Golden Yellow Warbler: We searched for this resident Yellow Warbler, of the *gundlachi* subspecies, which breeds nearly exclusively in mangrove islands, while first arriving into the Keys and traversing the bridge just outside of Crocodile Lake National Wildlife Refuge. 4/14/14

Magnolia Warbler: Some of us saw Magnolia at A.D. Barnes Park during our visit after pickup from the airport. The rest of us had the opportunity to see the bird again at Fort Zachary Taylor, in Key West. 4/13, 4/16/14

Cape May Warbler: Some of us saw a beautiful Cape May at A.D. Barnes Park during our visit after the airport pickup. We again had the opportunity to see the bird during our drive down from Miami through Cape Florida. The bird was again seen in the Fort Zachary Taylor in Key West. 4/13 – 4/14, 4/17/14

Black-throated Blue Warbler: We saw this bird at A.D. Barnes Park in Miami (some of us), again while at Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park, and in the Dry Tortugas. 4/13 – 4/14, 4/16/14

Yellow-rumped Warbler: We encountered this warbler in the Dry Tortugas, and at Fort Zachary Taylor. 4/16 – 4/17/14

Black-throated Green Warbler: We saw this species in the Dry Tortugas and in the Keys on our return trip “northward.” 4/16 – 4/17/14

Yellow-throated Warbler: We saw this beautiful warbler species in the Dry Tortugas and at a couple of locations in Everglades National Park. 4/16, 4/18/14

Pine Warbler: We took some time to hike the Pine Rockland habitat of Everglades National Park during our final day, and encountered clusters of this underappreciated warbler species, foraging through the upperstory of Slash Pines. 4/18/14

Prairie Warbler: This gorgeous warbler species was seen daily except for the day of arrival. It is a relatively common migratory species, and it also breeds in South Florida mangrove habitats (subspecies *paludicola*). Photo #23. 4/14 – 4/18/14

Palm Warbler: When Palm Warblers arrive to South Florida during the fall, they take it by storm. Untold numbers remain in the region through the winter, and eventually leave during the spring migration season. We saw the species nearly daily, except during our drive down through the Key on our way “southward.” 4/14, 4/16 – 4/18/14

Blackpoll Warbler: This species can be a very common spring migrant through South Florida, but we only saw it during a couple of days – during the first day when some of us visited A.D. Barnes Park after the airport pickup, and at Fort Zachary Taylor in Key West. 4/13, 4/17/14

American Redstart: This charismatic species was seen every day during this tour, in a number of locations ranging from hardwood hammocks, coastal forests, mangrove swamps and the islands of the Keys land chain. 4/13 – 4/18/14

Hooded Warbler: This species was encountered in Key West, at Fort Zachary Taylor where they frequent the leafy hammock understory during spring migration. 4/17/14

Prothonotary Warbler: We found this species at Fort Zachary Taylor, in Key West. It often frequents Seagrapes (*Coccoloba uvifera*), where it likes to feed in close proximity to the blooms that flower in spring. Some of us also saw this bird during the first day, after pickup from the airport and a brief stop at A.D. Barnes Park in Miami. 4/13, 4/17/14

Black-and-White Warbler: Seen at A.D. Barnes Park by some participants, and at Fort Zachary Taylor in Key West. 4/13, 4/17/14

Worm-eating Warbler: We encountered this unique warbler species in the Dry Tortugas, as it fed among a stand of Seagrapes and Buttonwoods within the parade grounds at Fort Jefferson. 4/16/14

Ovenbird: We found this species in the Dry Tortugas and in Key West. It winters in South Florida, and can be a common migrant during spring and fall through this region. 4/16/14

Northern Waterthrush: We found this species in the Dry Tortugas and in Key West. It winters in South Florida, and can be a common migrant during spring and fall through this region. 4/16 – 4/17/14

Kentucky Warbler: We were fortunate to find a single individual of this beautiful warbler foraging the understory below hardwoods at Fort Zachary Taylor, in Key West. 4/17/14



Common Yellowthroat: Seen nearly daily, we only missed it during our “southward” drive through the Keys, perhaps from not visiting appropriate habitat. 4/14, 4/16 – 4/18

Eastern Towhee: When we visited the Everglades, we made a point at stopping at Pine Rockland habitat in hopes of attracting towhees. The “white-eyed” Eastern Towhees of the Southeast are quite particular, both in their light-eyed appearance and in their calls. We got close proximity visits from inquiring individuals. 4/18/14

Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow: We spent some time along the Jamaica Sawgrass prairies of Everglades National Park – near Mahogany Hammock – in hopes of finding this endangered subspecies (*mirabilis*) of the Seaside Sparrow. It is unusual in that it is the only race of the species that breeds in freshwater marshes. Photo #26. 4/18/14

Western Spindalis: A single female of this uncommon visitor from the Caribbean was briefly seen along with a feeding flock of warblers and other species. The species can at times be found at Cape Florida, and reports during this period supported our brief observation. Unfortunately, the bird was not relocated for a more extensive view. 4/14/14

Summer Tanager: Seen in the Dry Tortugas and Fort Zachary Taylor. 4/16 – 4/17/14

Scarlet Tanager: One bird was seen at Fort Zachary Taylor, in hardwoods along the coastal berm beside the fort’s moat. 4/17/14

Northern Cardinal: One may not associate mangrove forests and tropical hardwood hammocks with Northern Cardinals, but this hardy species does well and is a common breeder throughout South Florida, including the Everglades and the Florida Keys. Naturally, we saw several individuals nearly daily, except during our visit to the Dry Tortugas. 4/13 – 4/15, 4/16 – 4/17/14

Blue Grosbeak: One gorgeous bright blue adult male was found resting on a Seagrape on the south side of the Fort Jefferson parade ground. The bird remained there for some time, somewhat secluded behind the large leaves of the coastal tree, yet granting everyone great looks. A small group of Blue Grosbeaks that included adults and immature birds were seen in Flamingo, the southernmost tip of the Everglades, in grassy lots in the campground. Photo #25. 4/16, 4/18/14

Indigo Bunting: Seen in the Dry Tortugas, at Fort Zachary Taylor in Key West, and in the Everglades. 4/16 – 4/18/14

Painted Bunting: Seen in Cape Florida and in the Dry Tortugas. 4/14, 4/16/14

Red-winged Blackbird: We saw Red-wings in the Miami-Dade mainland and throughout the Florida Keys. 4/14 – 4/15, 4/17

Eastern Meadowlark: Upon our return to the mainland from the Keys, we visited the Homestead Airport where we were treated to quite a show of foraging meadowlarks over the grassy plots – their bright yellow breasts lit by the setting sun. Photo #27. 4/17/14

Common Grackle: Relatively common throughout South Florida, we saw this species throughout South Dade and in the Keys. 4/14 – 4/15, 4/17/14

Boat-tailed Grackle: We encountered this large grackle in the mainland, and in Key West – it is a rather uncommon bird in the Keys except for Key West. We also saw a number of them in the Everglades, where they are a resident species. 4/14, 4/17 – 4/18/14

Shiny Cowbird: This Caribbean species was found in Flamingo foraging with Brown-headed Cowbirds. Most of the birds were males in their glossy plumage. Photo #28. 4/18/14

Bronzed Cowbird: We found Bronzed Cowbirds near the Homestead Airport, and in the agricultural fields outside of Everglades National Park. 4/17/14

Brown-headed Cowbird: A sizable flock of cowbirds fed on grassy lots in Flamingo, Everglades, often relocating and flying up to West Indian Mahogany trees. Shiny Cowbirds were among them. Photo #28. 4/18/14

Orchard Oriole: Female-type birds were seen in the Dry Tortugas and at Fort Zachary Taylor. 4/16 – 4/17/14

Baltimore Oriole: Some of us saw this species at A.D. Barnes Park during a brief visit after the airport pickup. We also saw the species at Fort Zachary Taylor in Key West. 4/13, 4/17/14

House Sparrow: We saw this species nearly daily, except for in the Dry Tortugas and in the Everglades. 4/13 – 4/15, 4/17/14



Reptiles:

- Florida Softshell Turtle (*Apalone ferox*) Photo #30
- Florida Cooter (*Pseudemys floridana*)
- American Alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) Photo #29
- Black Spiny-tailed Iguana (*Ctenosaura similis*)
- Green Iguana (*Iguana iguana*)
- Northern Curlytail Lizard (*Leiocephalus carinatus*)
- Brown Anole (*Anolis sagrei*)
- Green Anole (*Anolis carolinensis*)

Butterflies:

- Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanilla*)
- Zebra Heliconian (*Heliconius charithonia*)
- Julia Heliconian (*Dryas iulia*)
- Mangrove Skipper (*Phocides pigmalion*)
- Hammock Skipper (*Polygonus leo*)
- Giant Swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*)
- Orange-barred Sulphur (*Phoebis philea*)
- Cloud-less Sulphur (*Phoebis sennae*)

Spiders:

- Golden Orb Weaver (*Nephila clavipes*) Photo #31
- Spiny-backed Orbweaver (*Gasteracantha cancriformis*)
- Tropical Orb Weaver (*Eriophora ravilla*)
- Orchard Spider (*Leucauge venusta*)

Mammals:

- Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) Photo #32
- Key Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus clavium*)
- Eastern Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

