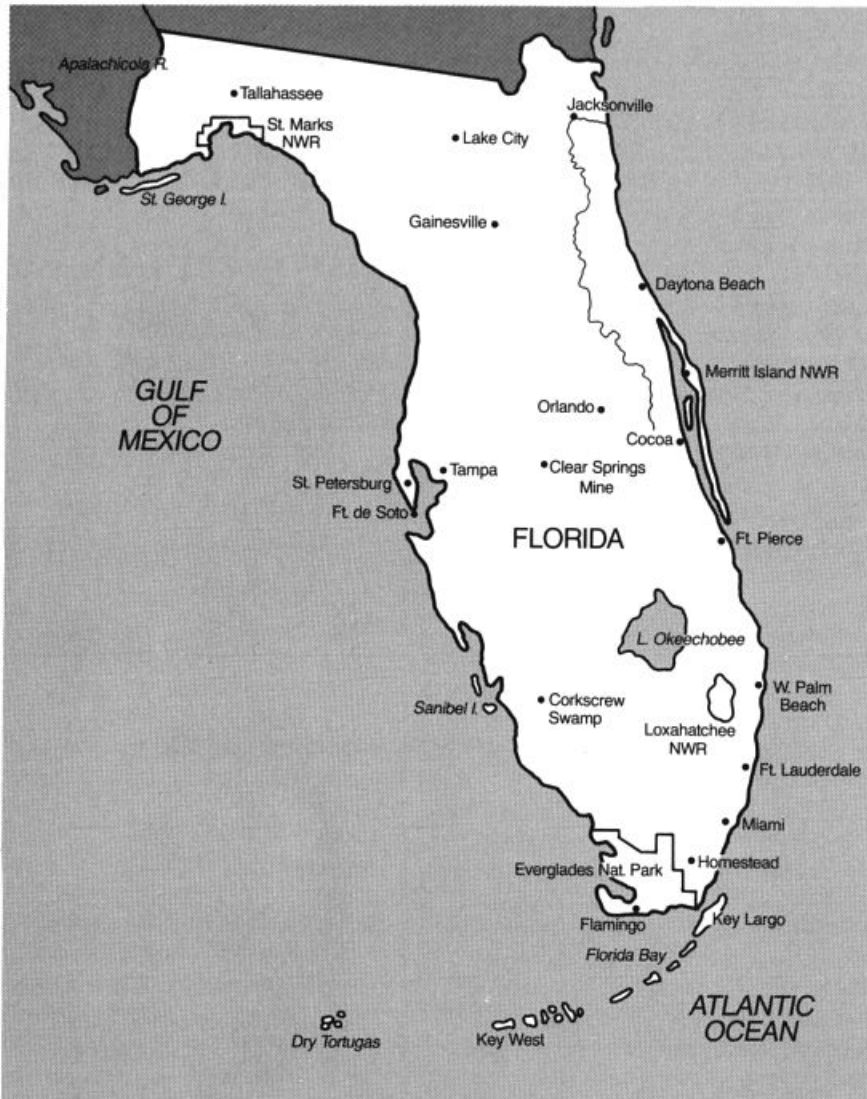


florida region



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This summer's weather was unexceptional, without tropical storm activity or temperature extremes. June was very dry in Tampa, but wet in Gainesville and at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. July brought more typical rainy season conditions throughout the Region. Springtime nesting, of course, was affected by conditions earlier in the year; most areas reported a dry early spring followed by April storms, which caused flooding in Tampa Bay and blew down pelican nests near Marco. The Everglades system featured a

strong dry down as the spring began, but water level "reversals" by early April halted most nesting. Estimated wader nests south of Lake Okeechobee totaled about 12,850, down 26% from 1996's estimate of 17,280, reported Dale Gawlik.

We greatly appreciate Bill Pranty's generosity in sharing his draft *Florida Field Naturalist* report. We also relied heavily on the excellent *South Florida Wading Bird Report*, compiled by Gawlik of the South Florida Water Management District. Very tight space limitations forced the deletion of many sightings and observers from this report. To all, named and unnamed, our thanks.

Abbreviations: A.P. (Aquatic Preserve); A.P.A.F.R. (Avon Park Air Force Range); C.P. (County Park); G.F.C. (Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission); Jax (Jacksonville); K.S.C. (Kennedy Space Center = Merritt I. N.W.R.); P.P.M. (Polk Phosphate Mines); R.S.R.S.R. (Rock Springs Run State Reserve); S.T.P. (Sewage Treatment Plant); S.R.S.T.F. (Springhill Road Sewage Treatment Facility); S.R.A. (State Recreation Area).

PETRELS TO FRIGATEBIRDS

Three pelagic trips were made to the Gulf Stream off Marathon June 29 and July 1 & 4 (PH). Later in July, M. Heindel traveled by boat from Charleston, SC, to Ft. Lauderdale, with 3 days in Florida waters. The sightings are summarized in Table 1.

A single Sooty Shearwater was found at Vero Beach June 2 (BW), while another at Shell Key, Pinellas, June 19 was harassed by Laughing Gulls (PB).

Brown Pelicans had a poor nesting year on both coasts (SN, BS, RP, AFS). In the Marco area, perhaps hardest hit of all, nesting pelicans were at their lowest level since 1974 (TB). A single Brown Pelican was unusual inland at P.P.M. July 26 (PT, CG). Double-crested Cormorants near Marco declined for the 3rd consecutive year (TB), but 6 nests in Orange L. were *Alachua's* first since 1974 (M. Meisenburg). Nine hundred Magnificent Frigatebirds at the Marco roost in July nearly doubled the average high count there (TB). Noteworthy on the Atlantic coast was the single frigatebird near Guana River S.P. June 9 (DR).

HERONS TO STORKS

Heron nesting was down this year in Tampa Bay, Merritt I. N.W.R., Marco, and the Everglades (m.ob.). Small herons seemed particularly affected. Raccoons and a bobcat afflicted several Tampa Bay area colonies (RP, AFS), while in one s. Florida colony an epizootic of the parasitic nematode *Eustrongylides ignotus* particularly affected Snowy Egret and Tricolored Heron young (PFR). Great Egrets are holding their own in the Everglades system, where about 3400 pairs were found (DG et al.). Reddish Egrets were down slightly in the Tampa Bay area (66 pairs; RP, AFS), but up to 8 pairs at Marco colonies (TB). Adult Reddish "in the

colony" at New Smyrna Beach June 3 and s. Port Orange June 4 suggested possible nesting (SN, SS).

White Ibises declined on both coasts, to 6800 pairs in Tampa Bay (down 28% from last year; RP, AFS), and to 516 pairs at Merritt I. N.W.R. (down 70% in 2 years, with campers causing abandonment of the largest colony; BS). In the Everglades system, White Ibises increased 70% to 3600 pairs, and timing of nesting approached a more normal pattern, with colonies forming in March and early April (PFR, DB, JCO). About 140 pairs of Roseate Spoonbills nested at 3 Tampa Bay sites (RP, AFS). In March and April, about 175 pairs of Wood Storks nested in the Everglades, with 220 more at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary; all failed (DG, SL).

Among nonbreeding waders, a "Wurde-mann's Heron" was unexpected at St. Pete Beach July 16 (RP, AFS, ND). Northerly Reddish Egrets included two at Yent Bayou, *Franklin*, July 6 (GS), and an immature at St. Marks N.W.R. July 20 (GM, HH). A Glossy Ibis at Cedar Key June 17 furnished the first sighting there in 13 years (DHe).

WHISTLING-DUCKS TO HAWKS

Over 250 Fulvous Whistling-Ducks, including young, were found at Zellwood Farms, *Orange*, July 26 (GB, TR). Five Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were at Myakka River S.P. July 5 (BCa, JK), and one was at P.P.M. the same day (PT, CG). Blue-winged Teal may have summered at 3 localities: Myakka River S.P., with two seen June 8 (AGS, RSm); S.R.S.T.F., with "a pair" June 13 (JC); and P.P.M., with seven July 5 and two July 26 (PT, CG). Other "summering" ducks included two N. Shovelers at the *Hamilton* phosphate mines June 6 (RC) and another at P.P.M. July 5 (PT, CG); two Gadwalls at P.P.M. June 8 (PT, CG); a Redhead at Her-nando Beach through June 23 (CB), and three more Redheads in Hillsborough Bay July 26 (RP). At Derrick Key, *Levy*, four Greater Scaup June 26 (JR) were very unusual, if correct, while a White-winged Scoter June 26-30 (JR, DHe) was quite out-of-season. Two female or imm. Ruddy Ducks were present at P.P.M. through July (PT, CG).

Two Swallow-tailed Kites were present all summer at Jax, where they have previously nested (NW). Another 10 were seen June 17 at Wekiwa Springs S.P., *Orange* (SBe), while 27 seen just n. of Wacissa, *Jef-ferson*, July 21 were surely early fall migrants (NW). At least eight Mississippi Kites were found June 3 at the Tram Road

SA Good news continues for Bald Eagles in Florida. The annual Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission survey found 874 active nests, with 1216 young produced—the most in the survey's 25-year history (SN). Some new territories are being established in suburban and even urban areas, a trend which reflects the continuing increase in eagles but also threatens the politically precarious status of nest protection guidelines. Strong guidelines are essential if a healthy population of eagles is to be maintained.

S.T.P., *Leon*, where they have occurred in large numbers in recent years (HH).

Cooper's Hawks continued to show signs of increase, with several summer sightings in c. Florida, including a nest in Winter Haven that fledged a young in June (BCo, LC, m.ob.). A dark-morph Short-tailed Hawk in Key West June 24 was unusual (JO), while two June 6 and one June 17 at Wekiwa Springs suggested nesting (SBe).

GALLINULES TO PHALAROPES

A Purple Gallinule at the Dry Tortugas July 1 seemed between migrations (LS, SC). A Limpkin heard July 21 at the county line Tower Rd. Boat Landing was the first *Leon/Gadsden* report since 1979 (HH). Sandhill Cranes nested late at A.P.A.F.R., with single chicks seen June 25 and July 18 (BP). In e. *Polk*, 40-50 Sandhills roosted in a mall retention pond through the period, a high number for the resident race (BCo,

LC). Sixteen of 28 young Whooping Cranes released this year at 2 locations in *Lake* and *Osceola* died, mostly due to bobcats. At season's end, the wild flock totaled 62 birds. Five pairs have formed, and one built a nest for the 2nd year (SN). On June 3, four Whoopers were found near Center Hill, *Sumter* (CB).

Snowy Plovers continued their precarious existence in *Pinellas*, with 6 pairs reported in June from 3 sites (SJK, PB, AFS, BL). At Three Rooker Bar, *Pinellas*, a thorough count tallied 36 pairs of Wilson's Plovers June 16 (AFS). A Piping Plover at Bald Pt., *Franklin*, July 1-6 was an early fall arrival (GS). Strong April storms flooded nests of Am. Oystercatchers in the Tampa Bay area. Although 121 pairs were counted May-June, most reneating was unsuccessful (RP, AFS). Less common on the e. coast, 3 oystercatcher pairs with young were seen at the s. Port Orange colony June 4 (SN, SS). A Black-necked Stilt was unusual at Piney Z L., *Leon*, June 18 (DHo).

Two Greater Yellowlegs were inland near *Lorida, Highlands*, June 18 (BP, TD, DP). Eight Solitary Sandpipers were found at Zellwood July 26 (GB, TR). Nesting Willets are rarely counted, so 34 pairs at Three Rooker Bar June 16 were noteworthy (AFS, BL). The earliest fall Whimbrels reported were three at Derrick Key June 26 (JR). Lone Long-billed Curlews appeared at Larnark Reef June 1-25 (GS), Derrick Key June 27 (DHe), and Alafia Bank June 29 (RP). Possibly summering Marbled Godwits included one at Bald Pt. June 3-14 (GS), two at Alafia Bank June 19 (RP), and two at

SPECIES	JUNE 29	JULY 1	JULY 4	JULY 18	JULY 19	JULY 20
Black-capped Petrel	0	0	0	5	0	0
Cory's Shearwater	0	2	1	55	52	1
Greater Shearwater	0	0	0	7	2	0
Sooty Shearwater	0	1	0	0	0	0
small shearwater sp.	0	0	0	1	0	0
Audubon's Shearwater	1	0	12	2	5	3
storm-petrel sp.	1	0	0	12	1	0
Wilson's Storm-Petrel	1	0	0	15	7	61
Leach's Storm-Petrel	0	0	0	1	1?	0
Band-rumped Storm-Petrel	0	1	0	18	1	0
White-tailed Tropicbird	0	0	0	1	0	1
booby sp.	0	0	0	0	2	0
Masked Booby	0	0	0	1	0	0
Brown Booby	0	4	0	0	0	0
Brown Pelican	0	0	1	0	0	0
Pomarine Jaeger	0	0	0	1	0	0
Royal Tern	0	1	2	2	0	0
Arctic Tern (no †)	0	0	0	0	1	0
Least Tern	0	0	0	0	0	2
Bridled Tern	0	6	13	0	14	11
Sooty Tern	41	130	130	0	0	4
Brown Noddy	0	9	0	0	0	0

Derrick Key June 26–30 (JR, DHe), while 50 at Shell Key July 6 were clearly migrants (PB). White-rumped Sandpipers made 3 early June appearances, with 29 in n. *Duval* June 6 (RC) the highlight. A Stilt Sandpiper at P.P.M. July 5 (PT, CG) was the earliest reported. Late spring visitors were 15 Long-billed Dowitchers at Jax June 6 (RC), and a Wilson's Phalarope at St. Petersburg June 8 (AGS, RSm).

GULLS TO SKIMMER

Altogether, 16,500 pairs of Laughing Gulls nested at 4 Tampa Bay area colonies (RP, AFS, PB, ND), continuing the downward trend of the last 15 years. Two pairs of Gull-billed Terns nested successfully in Hillsborough Bay (RP, AFS), and 6 pairs were noted in Apalachicola Bay (JG). About 40 Gull-billed Terns at Huguenot Park, *Duval*, throughout the breeding season suggested nesting there (KL). Caspian Terns again nested in 2 Florida colonies, with 67 pairs in Hillsborough Bay (RP, AFS) and 39 pairs in Apalachicola Bay (JG). Royal Terns totaled about 4200 pairs at 4 sites (m.ob.). Sandwich Terns numbered a remarkable 546 pairs, the highest state total this century: 528 at 2 Hillsborough Bay colonies (RP, AFS, HG, MH), and 18 in Apalachicola Bay (JG), the first known Sandwich nesting effort there in ca. 30 years.

Reports of Least Terns revealed the usual mixed picture of success and failure (m.ob.). The best news was from the Marco area, where beach nesters have had very rough sledding in recent years. The G.F.C. protected a sandbar colony of 386 pairs, which produced about 0.5 young/pair (TB). Black Skimmer nesting in the Tampa Bay area totaled 1331 pairs at 7 colonies, including 200 pairs tucked behind the Sheraton Sand Key Hotel. Despite being perilously close to human walkways, this colony was quite successful (RP, AFS). On the Marco I. sandbar, 213 nests produced about one young/pair (TB). About 100 pairs of skimmers nested in Huguenot Park (KL).

Among nonbreeding Larid reports: Newnans L., *Alachua*, hosted 77 Laughing Gulls June 2, a high number for that inland location in summer (DC, SBy). Unexpected was a Lesser Black-backed Gull at Smyrna Dunes Park, *Volusia*, June 23 (LM). Two Royal Terns appeared inland at P.P.M. July 26 (PT, CG). High post-nesting counts of Least included 450 birds at Shell Key July 1 (PB, ND) and 252 at P.P.M. July 26 (PT, CG). An ad. Sooty Tern appeared at Huguenot Park July 5 & 13 (NW).

PIGEONS TO VIREOS

White-crowned Pigeon numbers at Key West in June–July peaked at 130, about normal (JO). Surveys revealed 52 nests of Red-headed Woodpeckers at Wekiwa Springs, a welcome count (SBe). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker flew into a window at Cedar Key June 19, a remarkable date (DHe). Thirty E. Kingbirds were identified at P.P.M. June 21, a high number (PT, CG). An Acadian Flycatcher and its nest were seen at R.S.R.S.R. June 14 (MK, RSn). Two N. Rough-winged Swallows at Pass-a-Grille June 21 & 25 and July 1 may have bred locally (AFS, SJK, PB). Four active Barn Swallow nests were discovered under yet another bridge, this time the SR-70 crossing of the C-41 Canal, *Highlands*, June 8 (AGS, RSm). A Bank Swallow in Jax June 6 was a very late spring migrant (RC).

Florida Scrub-Jays are dwindling at Cedar Key, with just 3–4 families totaling 11–16 individuals (T. Webber). A remarkable 111 Tufted Titmice were found in a mist-netting project at Wekiwa Springs July 12 (PS). A juv. Gray Catbird at Keystone Heights, *Clay*, July 27 constituted a noteworthy breeding report (MJW). A flock of 70–80 Cedar Waxwings was in Gainesville June 4, a late date (TT). At Sawgrass Lake C.P., *Pinellas*, July 27, 18 Red-eyed Vireos represented a high number (PFe). Two singing Black-whiskered Vireos at Honey-moon I. S.R.A. June 8 (AGS, RSm) provided the only report of this now-rare (at least on the Gulf coast) species.

WARBLERS TO GOLDFINCHES

On July 31, an impressive 71 N. Parulas were counted at Saddle Creek C.P., *Polk* (CG). One–two Yellow Warblers seen July 5 at St. Marks N.W.R. were extremely early fall migrants (JD). No Prairie Warblers were found at Ft. DeSoto this season (RSm et al.), but in Key West numbers were thought to be increasing (JO). A singing Prairie Warbler, status unknown, was found June 25 in *Seminole* (LM), while the earliest certain migrant was reported from Newnans L. July 16 (RR). Earliest reports of Black-and-white Warblers were two birds at Corkscrew Swamp (DW) and one at Wekiwa Springs (PS), both July 12. American Redstarts were late spring migrants at Waldo, *Alachua*, June 4 (JW) and Newnans L. June 6 (IF, CR), while one at Wekiwa Springs July 12 (PS) furnished the earliest fall report. Louisiana Waterthrushes, always early fall migrants, were found at Seminole State Forest, *Lake*, July 5 (LC) and Wekiwa Springs July 12 (LM). Four singing male

Yellow-breasted Chats were present through June at Paynes Prairie S. P., where nesting still has not been confirmed (RR).

At the A.P.A.F.R., Three Lakes W.M.A., *Osceola*, and Kissimmee Prairie S.P., *Okeechobee*, 41 “Florida” Grasshopper Sparrows were found in season-long surveys (MS, DP, BP et al.). A White-throated Sparrow sang—but was not seen—at River Ranch Acres, *Polk*, June 19, a very late date (AM). Two Shiny Cowbirds visited Jax June 6 (RC), while one was noted in Cedar Key until July 3 (DHe). In Key West, 17 male and three female Shiny Cowbirds were observed June 1, with three–four males and two–three females easily found all summer (JO). Graphically illustrating the recent increase of cowbirds in Florida, a flock of 2130 Brown-headed was spotted at P.P.M. July 26 (PT, CG). Numbers like this were exclusively a winter feature until the last 10–15 years. Two active House Finch nests in downtown Ocala in June indicated a slight southward range extension (MP, JS). An Am. Goldfinch remained in Gainesville until June 12 (BM), and one was at Alligator Pt. June 17 (JD).

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