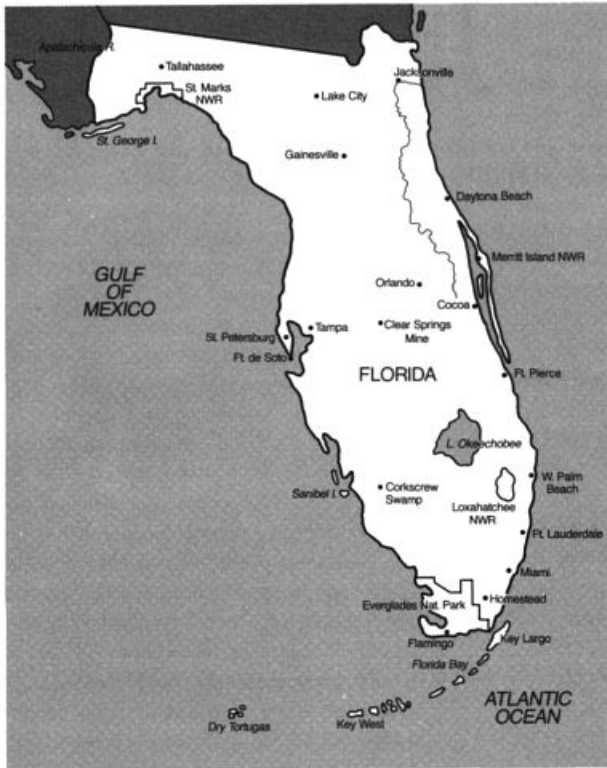


florida region



NOEL WAMER

The Fall 1997 season in the Florida Region was by far the duller since I have been editing this season's report, and one contributor aptly referred to it as a "snoozer." This was no doubt due to the *uneventful*, benign weather conditions that characterized most of the season. Not only did the Region escape the hurricane season without even a whisper of tropical weather, but few cold fronts reached the Region, and most of those that did failed to produce the weather conditions required to ground migrants. The only major weather-related fallout reported was on September 30 in Dade County, as a stationary front brought heavy rains to the southern Peninsula. A wide variety of warblers were found that day in A. D. Barnes County Park, including an estimate of a remarkable 50 Tennessee Warblers.

Just as most common migrants seemed to be in short supply, there was also a paucity of rare migrants and vagrants. The only two really notable vagrants reported were a Kirtland's Warbler and a Lark Bunting. The warbler was probably the first reported

from the Region in this decade. One notable trend is the continued increase of Region's population of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks. This season's reports include a 180-mile northward expansion of the breeding range. The origin of this species' Florida population is uncertain, having been attributed to both natural vagrancy and releases or escapes.

The concentration of migrating falcons along the beaches in northeastern Florida has been long recognized, but never studied systematically. This year Bob Stoll conducted regular watches at Guana River State Park. His seasonal totals of 70 Merlins and 430 Peregrine Falcons were remarkable.

Finally, I would like to thank the many observers

who contributed reports. Due to space limitations, only about half of the observations could be included in this report. I regret not having been able to include many more. All observations submitted will be published in the *Florida Field Naturalist*. I would especially like to thank Bill Pranty for compiling all the observations, and Linda Cooper, Gail Menk, Peggy Powell, Rex Rowan, and Ron Smith for their efforts as local compilers.

Abbreviations: A.B.S. (*Archbold Biological Station*); A.P.A.F.R. (*Avon Park Air Force Range*); C.A. (*Conservation Area*); C.P. (*County Park*); F.D.C.P. (*Ft. DeSoto C.P., Pinellas Co.*); F.R.B.A. (*Florida Rare Bird Alert*); H.I.S.R.A. (*Honeymoon Island State Recreational Area, Pinellas Co.*); H.P.M. (*Hamilton Co. Phosphate Mines*); P.P.M. (*Polk Co. Phosphate Mines*); P.P.S.P. (*Paines Prairie State Preserve, Alachua Co.*); S.M.N.W.R. (*St. Marks N.W.R., Wakulla Co.*); S.R.A. (*State Recreational Area*); U.F. (*University of Florida*).

LOONS TO FLAMINGO

Always notable, this season's Red-throated Loon reports were all singles: at H.P.M. Nov. 16 (BB), and at S.M.N.W.R. Nov. 22

(HH) & 30 (RS, BHm et al.). The one or two Com. Loons at the P.P.M. Nov. 19–22 (PF, MH) were local rarities. Surprising both in number and the early date were 13 Horned Grebes at H.P.M. Sept. 20 (JK). The 49 Horned Grebes at Newnans L., *Alachua*, Nov. 11 (RR, GM) provided a notable inland count. The moribund imm. Masked Booby found on the beach at Egmont Key N.W.R. Aug. 13 (*vide* RS, *A.B.S.) provided at least the 2nd fall record for *Pinellas*. The Great Cormorant seen at Oldsmar, *Pinellas*, Oct. 21–29 (GS et al.) and found dead Oct. 30 (*A.B.S.) provided the earliest fall report for the state by 2 days.

Four Am. Bitterns at P.P.M. Nov. 22 (*vide* LC) provided a good count for this declining species. A concentration of waders at L. Jessup C.A., *Seminole*, Aug. 16 contained 200 Snowy Egrets, 119 Little Blue Herons, and 141 Tricolored Herons (*vide* LMa). Hagens Cove, *Taylor*, is one of the most dependable places on the n. Gulf Coast to find Reddish Egrets. The eight there Aug. 31 included one white-morph (RR et al.).

The observation of a pink ibis at P.P.M. Nov. 19–22 (PF, MA et al.) indicates that hybridization continues to occur with presumed escaped Scarlet Ibis. The three or four Glossy Ibises in St. Petersburg Aug. 20–Sept. 20 (RS, AS et al.) may be the first fall report for *Pinellas*. Single Roseate Spoonbills dispersed inland to Newnans L. Aug. 9 (DBe); s.w. *Alachua* in mid-August (FS); e. of Avon Park, *Highlands*, Aug. 12 (BP, AMA); and P.P.M. Nov. 19 (PF, MH). The only concentration of Wood Storks reported was of 300 at Zellwood, *Orange*, Aug. 9 (LH et al.). The Greater Flamingos at Snake Bight, *Monroe*, numbered 32 Nov. 9 (LM).

WATERFOWL

Florida's population of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks continues to increase and expand from its recent range in the s.w. Peninsula. There were two in a flooded field e. of Avon Park Aug. 12 (CF, DF et al.), and three were photographed at the more expected location of Zellwood Aug. 25 (KT). The four adults and eight immatures at H.P.M. Oct. 12–16 (BB, JA) provided the first breeding report for the n. Peninsula, and represented about a 180-mi northward

extension of the known breeding range in the state. Other notable counts of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were 26 near Bartow, *Polk*, Nov. 25 through the period (PF), and 82 at P.P.M. Aug. 24 and 109 there Oct. 26 (both PT, CG).

The total of 21 Snow Geese from 8 locations during the period Nov. 5–30 was probably a typical pattern (v.o.). The 415 Blue-winged Teal at Seminole Ranch C.A., *Lake*, Oct. 18 (*vide* LMA), and over 1000 at Myakka River S.P., *Sarasota*, Nov. 9 (RM, PB, BHm) were notable counts. A Blue-winged X Cinnamon Teal in *Leon* Sept. 20 (JCo, KN, AK) was an interesting find. The two Gadwalls at Shell Key Oct. 14 (PB et al.), and three at H.I.S.R.A. Nov. 28 (WY), both *Pinellas*, were in locations where the species is of casual occurrence. The Region's only reported Eur. Wigeon was at the expected location of Merritt I. N.W.R., *Brevard*, Nov. 1 (*vide* F.R.B.A.). Both the Red-head at *Tierra Verde*, *Pinellas*, Aug. 2, and two Lesser Scaup there Aug. 15 (both LA), were probably summering birds. If the female Ring-necked Duck reported from *Hillsborough* Oct. 3 (RW) was not a summer holdover, it would be the earliest Florida report. The only scoters reported were two Surfs Nov. 30 from the traditional Alligator Pt., *Franklin*, location (LA et al.).

RAPTORS TO SHOREBIRDS

A late Swallow-tailed Kite was migrating S over Guana River S.P., *St. Johns*, Oct. 1 (BS). About 20 Short-tailed Hawks were reported during the period (v.o.). The northernmost were two at Newnans L. Oct. 10–14 (LS, RR), in an area where the species is not known to nest. A light-morph Swainson's Hawk at Key West Sept. 19 (JO) was extremely early, and the one at H.P.M. Oct. 3 (JK) was probably the first for *Hamilton*. A dark-morph Red-tailed Hawk was seen over Boot Key, *Monroe*, Oct. 23 (TP), and a possible "Kriders" was seen at the Hague Dairy, *Alachua*, Nov. 11–15 (MM). Stoll maintained a regular hawk watch at Guana River S.P. Sept. 27–Oct. 14. He recorded 70 Merlins and 430 Peregrine Falcons during this period. The previous seasonal high total for Peregrines in the entire Region was only about 150!

A rare Yellow Rail was captured, photographed, and released at A.P.A.F.R., *Highlands*, Nov. 25 (TD, BP). A calling Black Rail was heard at P.P.S.P. Aug. 8 (RR, JW), and another road-killed one was recovered there Sept. 5 (GR, RR, *U.F.). A road-killed Sora at Gainesville, *Alachua*, Aug. 29 (CR, *U.F.) was an early arrival. American Gold-

en-Plovers were reported from H.P.M., where there were four Sept. 20 and one Nov. 25 (both JK); at Tallahassee, *Leon*, one Sept. 20 (AK, JCo, KN et al.); and at F.D.C.P., one Nov. 17 (LA). A Snowy Plover at Cedar Key Nov. 22–23 (TT, RR) probably provided the first fall report for *Levy*.

The 17 Black-necked Stilts seen e. of Brooksville Aug. 16 (CB) furnished the first fall report for *Hernando*. Notable numbers of Am. Avocets were observed at 3 locations: 250 at MacKay Bay, *Hillsborough*, Oct. 19 (RS, BHm); 65 in n. Jacksonville, *Duval*, Oct. 22 (PP); and 115 at P.P.M. Oct. 26 (PT, CG). Upland Sandpipers were reported from Zellwood, where there were four Aug. 9 (*vide* F.R.B.A.) and 16 Aug. 17 (JH, BM), and from *Leon*, with one Oct. 9 (DHa). The 15 Whimbrels at H.I.S.R.A. Sept. 14 (RS, AS, BHm) provided a locally high count. The 4 reports of single Long-billed Curlews from Shell Key Aug. 17–Oct. 14 (PB et al.); Huguenot Park, *Duval*, Sept. 14 (NW); H.I.S.R.A. Sept. 14–20 (RS et al.); and w. *Franklin* Oct. 10 (GSp) were more than in recent seasons. The only inland report of Ruddy Turnstone was of one at H.P.M. Sept. 21 (JK), and the only White-rumped Sandpiper was at F.D.C.P. Oct. 23 (LA). The three Long-billed Dowitchers e. of Avon Park Aug. 12 (CF, DF, BP et al.) were early.

JAEGERS TO TERNS

A real surprise was a light-morph imm. Parasitic Jaeger on the beach at Egmont Key N.W.R. Oct. 5 (BP, m.ob.). A count of 16 Lesser Black-backed Gulls Oct. 20 at Huguenot Park (RC) further supported an emerging pattern of a mid-season migration peak. On the Gulf Coast, where the species is rare, four were reported Oct. 24–Nov. 20 (v.o.). One was inland, where it is even rarer, at Port Mayaca, *Martin*, Nov. 6 (*vide* F.R.B.A.). The P.P.M. attract interesting numbers of normally coastal species, as evidenced by Sandwich Tern counts of 290 Oct. 26 (PT, CG) and 350 Nov. 6 (PT, BF), as well as 410 Black Skimmers Nov. 19 (PF, MH). Another inland rarity was a Common Tern at H.P.M. Aug. 4 (JK).

CUCKOOS TO THRUSHES

Black-billed Cuckoos are always notable. This season two were at F.D.C.P. Sept. 28 (SB, LA et al.), one was at Tallahassee Oct. 5 (DHa), and one was at St. George I., *Franklin*, Oct. 15 (JC). Three reports of single Groove-billed Anis covered most of the length of the Region's Gulf Coast: Cedar Key Oct. 1 (DH); Key West Oct. 5–7 (JO), and Boyd Hill Nature Park, St. Petersburg,

Oct. 8–10 (RS et al.). Very rare was a Groove-billed Ani inland at Tallahassee Oct 5 (GMe).

The Short-eared Owl found at Estero I., *Lee*, Sept. 16 (PH) was the Region's earliest report by 17 days, making one wonder if it was from the Greater Antillean population. In contrast to the last few seasons, only one western hummingbird was reported, the bird Sept. 10 at Homestead, *Dade*, was considered a Rufous (LM).

A rare Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was seen at F.D.C.P. Sept. 27 (LA, MW), and a calling Willow Flycatcher was there Sept 28 (LA). The only reported Least Flycatchers were one at Tallahassee Sept. 7–12 (DHa), one at A.D. Barnes C.P., *Dade*, Sept 10 (MWh); and another at St. George I. Oct 2 (JC). Two reports of Vermilion, 8 reports of W. Kingbird, and 7 reports of Scissor-tails represented a typical season for western flycatchers. A Scissor-tailed at Huguenot Park Nov. 1 (RC), and two there Nov 2 (NW), provided the first fall report for *Duval*.

The irruption of Red-breasted Nuthatches in the e. states barely reached this Region. The only one reported visited a feeder in Jacksonville Nov. 2 (JWo). A Marsh Wren was feeding two fledglings at Crystal R. Buffer State Preserve, *Citrus*, on the very late date of Oct. 15 (BH, AH). Only two Golden-crowned Kinglets were reported: Newnans L. Nov. 2 (RR) and Lochlossa C.A., *Alachua*, Nov. 26 (MM, RR).

Reflecting the general paucity of migrants, few thrushes were reported. However, a fruiting American beautyberry in a Jacksonville yard held three Veeries, one "Gray-cheeked," and three Swainson's Oct 10 (NW). The "Gray-cheeked" was thought to be a Bicknell's.

VIREOS TO HOUSE SPARROWS

The highlights of vireo reports were a Bell's at St. George I. Oct. 15 (JC); single Philadelphias at Seminole, *Pinellas*, Sept 30 (JF, KN) and St. George I. Oct. 15 (JC), and a very rare Warbling at Cedar Key Sept 22 (DH). A late Red-eyed Vireo was at Newnans L. Nov. 2 (MM). A Black-whiskered Vireo at F.D.C.P. Aug. 3 (LA) was considered a migrant, as the species no longer nests there.

There were 6 reports of *Vermivora* hybrids Sept. 25–Oct. 19 (v.o.), all called "Brewster's" except for the "Lawrence's" at Bonner Park, *Pinellas*, Oct. 19 (JF, KN). An Orange-crowned Warbler closely observed at St. George I. Oct. 28 (JC) was thought to be of the race *lutescens*. This form has not

been previously reported from Florida.

The only reports of rare Nashville Warblers were both from F.D.C.P. One was there Sept. 27–28 (LA, RS), and a different one was seen Sept. 28 (PB). The 75 Yellow Warblers at P.P.M. Aug. 24 (PT, CG) probably established the highest count ever reported for the Region. A **Kirtland's Warbler** seen at Vero Beach, *Indian River*, Oct. 20 (BW) was the first reported in the Region in this decade, and was the highlight of this season's reports. More than 25 Cerulean Warblers were reported during the period Aug. 22–Sept. 22 (v.o.). This is certainly greater than the seasonal average for this declining species.

An Am. Redstart lingered in Gainesville from Nov. 20 through the end of the period (MM). Swainson's Warblers were detected s. of their nesting areas only 3 times. One was at Saddle Creek C.P. Sept. 6 (PF), one was at Bonner Park Sept. 29–30 (KN, JF), and two were at A.D. Barnes C.P. Sept. 30 (JR, MWh, LM). The three Louisiana Waterthrushes in *Pinellas* Aug. 2 (RS, LA, MW) must have been an indication of a major movement of this species. Two Mourning Warblers seen in Tallahassee Sept. 6 (DH, HH) may be the first report of multiple individuals in the Region. Reports of eight Wilson's Warblers during the period Sept. 19–Oct. 22 (v.o.) and six Canada Warblers during the period Sept. 27–Oct. 10 (v.o.) were typical for a fall season.

The Rose-breasted Grosbeak in n.w. *Alachua* Aug. 29 (PBu) was early, and the imm. male Black-headed Grosbeak at Guana River S.P. Oct. 14 (PP) was a notable rarity. The only Dickcissel reported was heard calling in flight at A.P.A.F.R., *Polk*, Nov. 10 (DL, PBA). Only 2 reports of Clay-colored Sparrows were received, which is below the average of recent years. One was near L. Wales, *Polk*, Nov. 9 (CG, PT), and another was at the St. Sebastian R. Buffer Preserve, *Brevard*, Nov. 15 (*vide* F.R.B.A.). The nine Lark Sparrows reported during the period Sept. 7–Sept. 20 were probably above the seasonal average, and included a high count of three at Key West Sept. 7 (JO).

The **Lark Bunting** present in *Wakulla* Aug. 24–Sept. 1 (JD, m.ob.) furnished the earliest and about the 8th Florida report. A Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow at S.M.N.W.R. Nov. 11 (JC) was well documented. The only Fox Sparrow reported was one in s. *Columbia* Nov. 27 (JK), and the only report of Lincoln's Sparrow was of two at P.P.S.P. Nov. 7 (MM, RR). The 11 reports of White-crowned Sparrows received between Oct. 5–Nov. 29 probably repre-

sented an average season's total. An ad. male Yellow-headed Blackbird was in St. Augustine Sept. 30–Oct. 2 (AM, MMo), and one male and two females were at Hague Dairy Oct. 11 through the period (RR, MM).

As many as 10 Shiny Cowbirds were present in Key West through the season (JO), and wintering birds had arrived at the Briggs Nature Center, *Collier*, in late November (v.o.). A Bullock's Oriole was seen at A.D. Barnes C.P. Sept. 29 (JR). House Finches continue to spread, albeit slowly. This fall one was at Crystal R. Oct. 15 (ES, MS), and a female at Cedar Key Oct. 21 was followed by a male there Nov. 21 (both DH). Two House Sparrows on Shell Key Oct. 4 (BP, m.ob.) were a surprise find on a small, undeveloped barrier island.

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