

ing through 18 Feb (RR, D. Wahl). Along the coasts there was one at N. Jacksonville, *Duval*, 26 Dec–30 Jan (RoC), and 14 along the *Citrus* coast near Fort I. 17–23 Jan (MG, C. Kelsey). A high inland count of 27 Red-breasted Mergansers, a predominantly coastal species, was noted at L. Weir 30 Jan (ES, I. Franzen).

Swallow-tailed Kites and Short-tailed Hawks are notoriously early migrants. The kite, which winters in South America, was first reported 17 Feb, not a particularly early date, at Babcock-Webb W.M.A., *Charlotte* (VPL). Short-tailed Hawk usually winters from the vicinity of L. Okeechobee and south, however, a wintering bird was found n. at Tiger Creek Preserve, *Polk*, 2 Jan (*vide* TP); elsewhere individuals in *Polk* 9 Feb (L. Lane, M. Chakan et al.) and 19 Feb (PF), and in *Highlands* 19 Feb (B. Ackerman) may have been wintering or early migrants. Three early migrants were reported at Lower Wekiva Preserve, *Seminole/Lake*, 28 Feb (LoM). Up to six White-tailed Kites wintered at H.B.C.F. (JHB et al.).

Attracted by trapped and dying fish as the water levels fell at P.P.S.P., 25 Bald Eagles were counted 19 Dec (RR). Single Broad-winged Hawks wintered n. to M.I.N.W.R. (BAh), L.A.R.A. 18 Jan (HR), and E. Lake Park, *Hillsborough* (DoW, LS). Following a summer rodent plague near Zellwood, *Orange*, hawks were abundant at L.A.R.A. One dark-morph Swainson's Hawk joined the "kettle" from late Dec–21 Jan. About 60 Red-tailed Hawks wintering at L.A.R.A. included normal as well as pale and dark-morph birds. They topped most of the utility poles and woody shrubs in the overgrown fields, causing much speculation as to what races and morphs of other species might be present. There was great excitement when at least three **Rough-legged Hawks** were identified 16 Feb+, with at least two dark-morph individuals and one light-morph imm. photographed, establishing the first verified occurrence in the state (HR, m.ob., ph. KR to F.O.S.R.C.). More than 60 unverified reports have been made since 1939! Another report of this species came from the Lower Wekiva Preserve 28 Feb (LoM).

RAILS THROUGH LARIDS

Two Black Rails were in *Hernando* 27 Dec (BAh et al.). A Purple Gallinule discovered at Wakulla Springs S.P. 6 Feb probably wintered (VPL). On 19 Dec an all-time high count of 5035 Sandhill Cranes in the Gainesville area included a congregation of 4882 at P.P.S.P. (DaH). Individuals of Florida's introduced Whooping Crane population, numbering 87 at the time of this

report, were reported away from the primary release areas in *Pasco*, *Hillsborough*, *Lake*, and *St. Lucie* (W. Stinehelfer, *vide* DHu, BP, LSA, DHu, DB). The low water levels of Newnans L. created mudflats and attracted an unprecedented number of shorebirds, including several species that are rare inland in winter, especially in the north: Black-bellied Plover, W. and Stilt Sandpipers, and Dunlin (RR, MMA). A female Ruff remained 12 Jan+ (RR, BM et al.) for one of the state's few winter reports. Elsewhere, a Black-bellied Plover was seen at L. Jackson, *Leon*, 16 Dec (R. West, GM); up to 38 wintered at L.A.R.A. (HR). An Am. Golden-Plover was found feeding among Black-bellied Plovers at E.N.P. at Snake Bight 3 Feb (SE, KeA). Rare on the Atlantic coast was a Snowy Plover at Talbot Island S.P., *Duval*, 10 Dec–3 Feb (P. Leary, NOW et al.). Far n. of its usual winter range, a lone Black-necked Stilt was a surprise at H.P.M 18 Dec (JK). Also of casual status in the n. part of the state in winter, an Am. Avocet was found at Newnans L., where it remained through the period (RR). Five avocets were seen at L. Jackson 5 Dec (GM), while others were noted in the Big Bend in Jan at S.M.N.W.R. (VPL) and Alligator Harbor (*vide* BBe). Lone Solitary Sandpipers were at P.P.S.P. 7 Jan (MMe), *Sarasota* 22–25 Jan (JeB), Ft. Myers 9 Feb (VPL), while two were in Kendall 19–20 Jan (JHB). From *Pinellas* came reports of 1–2 Whimbrels at two locations (VPL, RaW), and as many Long-billed Curlews at three locations (P. Blair). A late Hudsonian Godwit was found at Hillsborough Bay, *Hillsborough*, 19 Dec (RTP, A. Schnapf). A lone Ruddy Turnstone was inland along the St. Johns River near Geneva, *Seminole/Volusia*, 26 Dec (LoM). A late Pectoral Sandpiper turned up on 10 Dec at Tram Road S.T.F., *Leon*, (GM), and two Stilt Sandpipers were at S.M.N.W.R. 15 Jan (C. Hess, J. Reinman). Purple Sandpipers appeared in numbers along the e. coast, with ≤ 11 present through 28 Jan in *Nassau* (NOW, T. Wamer, KeA), and as many as five at Smyrna Dunes Park, *Volusia*, through 26 Jan (WB, BP, KR). Rare anywhere on the Gulf Coast, one was seen by visiting Georgia birders (J. Pappas) 28 Nov at F.D.C.P., *Pinellas*. Again this winter 1–2 male Am. Woodcocks performed courtship flights at the Croom Tract in the Withlacoochee State Forest, *Hernando*, 13 Dec–6 Jan (BH). Fourteen Red Phalaropes were seen from a boat off Mayport, *Duval*, 2 Jan (RoC).

Two rare Franklin's Gulls wintered near the Gulf; adults were inland at L. Jackson 1–9 Jan (JCa, G.&S. Hampton) and among Laughing Gulls on Redington Beach 13

SA During the winter of 1999–2000 Noel Wamer conducted regular seawatches from a number of locations in southern *Duval* and northern *St. Johns* on the state's northern Atlantic Coast. The results of this study show that both Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers are regular components of the area's near-shore birdlife throughout the winter. No relationship between jaeger observations and storms was found. In fact, the only watches during which jaegers were not observed were periods of windy weather and rough seas following the passage of cold fronts. Obtaining accurate counts of jaegers was difficult, since the birds were foraging over wide areas and multiple observations of the same individuals were likely. However, estimates were made of as many as 15 individuals during 30-minute watches. It was clear that Pomarines outnumbered Parasitics, probably by a factor of more than three to one. The majority of birds of both species were in adult/sub-adult plumage. There were five additional reports of 1–2 Parasitic Jaegers identified from shore in *Pasco* and *Pinellas* 13 Jan–10 Feb (W. Yusek, E. Kwater).

Dec+ (JF). A probable **California Gull**, casual in Florida, was identified near East Point, *Franklin*, 11–14 Dec (HoH, T. Kennedy, S. Wright, ph. JCa to F.O.S.R.C.). Rarely seen inland in Florida, a first-year Black-headed Gull appeared at Newnans L. 15 Jan (MMA). Another one-day wonder was an ad. at the Orange Co. E. Water Reclamation Facility 26 Dec (S. Dodgson, ph. F.O.S. Archives). Each bird associated with flocks of 150+ Bonaparte's Gulls. Except along the Big Bend where there were no reports, Lesser Black-backed Gulls were reported along both coasts. Only one turned up inland, at L. Kissimmee, *Osceola*, 16 Jan (JHB). Great Black backed Gulls are rare along the Gulf Coast, where they are expected only in *Pinellas*; this year single birds were reported from three localities in that county (RaW, JF, RS). Rare along the cen. Florida coasts in winter, two Gull-billed Terns were observed in *Hernando* 27 Dec (BP), with one in *Pasco* 1 Jan (KT, ph. to F.O.C.). One was also seen inland at P.P.M. 6 Feb, while 24 Royal Terns were counted there 8 Jan, a high number for an inland location (CG, P. Timmer).

DOVES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A Ringed Turtle-Dove was being bullied by Eur. Collared-Doves at S. Ft. Myers 14 Dec (V. McGrath). A CBC total of 160 Eur. Collared-Doves in Gainesville 19 Dec (*vide* BM) indicates the species is thriving there. With populations firmly established in *Orange*, *Seminole*, and *Volusia*, a White-winged Dove at a Minneola feeder in *Lake*, where not yet reported to breed, was not surprising. Along the coast of the Big Bend and s. to *Hillsborough* where the species occurs only in winter, one was near Valrico 18 Feb (SB), two in *Pasco* 26 Jan (DB), and one at E. Point (SB, DB, K. Avera, JD). *Pasco* is the epicenter of Florida's scattered Budgerigar populations; 52 were counted at Bayonet Pt., while farther s. three were at Anna Maria I., *Manatee*, 25 Dec (L. Snyder). Monk Parakeets are established in most metropolitan areas in the cen. and s. peninsula; several were observed "carrying nesting material" in *Pinellas* 5 Dec, indicating that nest-building occurs year round here (N. Ogden). Although more local in distribution, Black-hooded Parakeets were seen in *Broward*, *Sarasota*, and *Pinellas*; 139 were counted on the St. Petersburg CBC and 50 in *Sarasota* 18 Dec (C. Everly). Casual in the peninsula, single Groove-billed Anis were noted at L.A.R.A. 8 Feb (HR) and Bonita Springs, Lee, 12–16 Dec (LD). Florida's 2nd newly confirmed species this season was a **Snowy Owl** that foraged along the beaches of St. George I. S.P. and Bald Pt., *Franklin*, 8 Dec–9 Jan (m.ob.). Short eared Owls invaded *Leon*, *Wakulla*, *Citrus*, *Alachua*, *Orange*, *Sarasota*, and *Miami-Dade*, where ≤4 remained at H.B.C.F. through the winter (m.ob., ph. JCa to F.O.S.R.C.). As many as a dozen nighthawks were reported at Eco Pond (E.N.P.) this season; four were identified as Lesser Nighthawks 25–26 Jan (DSi). The first "singing" Chuck-will's-widow was heard in *Naples*, *Collier*, 23 Feb (HM).

A Buff-bellied Hummingbird was seen 5–16 Dec near Wellington, *Palm Beach* (*vide* D. Hull); this location is not far from where one bird spent several winters in the early 1990s. Far n. of their usual wintering area in south Florida, three Ruby-throated Hummingbirds wintered in Tallahassee, including an ad. male (JCa et al.). Others were identified in *Alachua*, *Volusia*, and *Polk* (PBU, J. Misiaszek, HaH). Black-chinned Hummingbirds were reported in *Leon* (four), *Alachua* (one), *Pasco* (one), and *Orange* (one) (HaH, JCa, P. Conover, J. O'Malley, D. Beatty, JF, HR). The only *Selasphorus* report came from *Alachua*, where three wintered, including an ad. male Rufous (BR, E. Perry, D. Fagan).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH FINCHES

Flycatchers made an unusually good showing. Least Flycatchers wintered n. to *Pinellas* and *Orange* (LSA). Reports of Vermilion Flycatchers came from *Alachua*, *Brevard*, *Volusia*, *Seminole*, *Orange*, and *Highlands/Okeechobee* at the Kissimmee R. (v.o.). Ash-throated Flycatchers wintered at L.A.R.A. in at least five locations, including three 23 Feb (ph. BP to F.O.C., GB, JeB, BAH, ES, C. Rademaker, KR, HR et al.). Other individuals were reported at Bald Pt. 2 Jan–3 Feb (J.&D. Houle, BH) and Brooker Creek Preserve, *Pinellas*, 26 Dec (RS, AuS). Great Crested Flycatcher reports in *Alachua* 19 Feb (PBU) and 20 Feb (G. Jones) are most likely early migrants. Brown-crested Flycatcher reports came from E.N.P., where one was seen at Anhinga Trail 4 Dec (*vide* JHB) and at Snake Bight 14 Jan (RS). Western Kingbirds wintered in good numbers and were reported inland n. to L.A.R.A. (m.ob.) and along the Gulf Coast n. to Cedar Key, *Levy* (D. Henderson). Impressive numbers remained throughout the period at L.A.R.A. for a second winter, with 31 seen on one day in Feb (HR). Joining these birds at L.A.R.A. was a **Cassin's Kingbird** 4 Dec–29 Feb (HR et al., ph. KR, BP to F.O.C.); there are fewer than 10 records/reports in Florida. Single Scissor-tailed Flycatchers wintered n. to *Hillsborough*, *Pasco*, and *Hernando* (v.o.) and as many as five remained through the season at L.A.R.A. (HR, GB, BP, SR et al.).

Casual in winter, a Bell's Vireo was identified at L.A.R.A. 6–16 Feb (HR). The first Purple Martin, seen at Bald Pt. 9 Jan, was early for the Big Bend (J. Stevenson). At H.B.C.F., 22 Cave Swallows were present 5 Dec and 230 were there 26 Jan (JHB); ≤6 were at E.N.P. 9–20 Jan (BBo, E. Kwater). Casual in winter, Barn Swallows were seen at S.M.N.W.R. (2) 23 Dec (VPL et al.), Springhill Road S.T.F. 17 Jan (GM), and L.A.R.A. beginning 16 Feb (HR); the last bird was probably an early migrant. A Carolina Chickadee at Boyd Hill Nature Park, *Pinellas*, 18 Dec–29 Feb was slightly s. of the species' range (RS et al.). One to three Brown Creepers were seen in *Leon*, *Gadsden*, and *Wakulla*, while one at San Felasco Hammock State Preserve, *Alachua*, 12 Dec–25 Feb was unusual (MMA, PBU, et al.). Winter Wrens penetrated the n. peninsula south to Newnans L., where three were seen 6 Jan–1 Feb (MMA, LD et al.). Golden-crowned Kinglets staged a minor invasion; 1–2 were seen south to *Orange*, *Seminole/Lake*, *Pinellas*, and *Polk* (HR, LoM, J&LH et al.). Rare in winter, a Wood Thrush was found in *Naples* 2 Jan (K&TD).

A late Nashville Warbler was seen in Ft Myers 6–7 Dec; reports of single Nashvilles came from M.I.N.W.R. 13–21 Feb (CPa, DSi) and Turkey Creek Sanctuary, *Brevard*, 14 Feb+ (DSi et al.) and may have been early migrants rather than wintering. A wintering or very early N. Parula was in w. *Gadsden* 28 Jan (GM). Rare single Magnolia Warblers were seen during the season in *Pasco* 6 Dec (DB), Lloyd Beach S.R.A., *Broward*, 11 Dec (SE), Lower Wekiva Preserve, *Seminole/Lake*, 31 Dec (LoM), and in E.N.P., Snake Bight 2 Jan (BBo) and Royal Palm Hammock 2–14 Jan (VPL et al., RS). A Black-throated Blue Warbler was found at Key Largo Hammocks State Botanical Site 15 Feb (VPL, MG) Black-throated Green Warblers wintered n. to *Brevard*, *Pinellas*, and *Duval* (v.o.) A male **Townsend's Warbler**, casual in the state, was found at M.I.N.W.R. 19 Feb+ (CPa, m ob) A late Blackburnian Warbler visited Gainesville 2 Dec (J. Taylor), while farther n. a Prairie Warbler wintered in s. Jacksonville 3 Dec–29 Feb (PP). American Redstarts were reported n. to Tallahassee (one on 20 Jan, HoH) and Gainesville (two, one that was observed throughout the season; MMA, AK, RR). Worm-eating Warblers wintered at Lloyd Beach S.R.A. (SE, video to F.O.C.) and Mahogany Hammock, E.N.P., (VPL et al., JeB). Lone N. Waterthrushes wintered n. to *Hillsborough* (RTP) and L.A.R.A. (HR) Totally unexpected, two Hooded Warblers were seen in different areas of P.P.S.P., a male 16 Jan (M. Rose) and a female 11 Feb (AK) Another report of this casual winterer came from and E.N.P. 14 Jan (JeB). Rare but regular throughout the state in winter, Wilson's Warblers were especially numerous (v.o.) *Leon* (two), *Duval* (one), *Alachua* (eight), *Orange* (one), *Brevard* (one), *Pasco* (one), *Highlands* (one), and *Miami-Dade* (one) Solitary Yellow-breasted Chats were seen in *Alachua*, *Seminole*, *Miami-Dade*, and *Monroe* (RR, BHA, BBo, JHB et al.) The Bananaquit first reported last fall at Birch State Park was last seen 2 Dec (W. George) Summer Tanagers, rare but regular, were reported from *Collier*, *Hillsborough*, *Palm Beach*, and *Hernando* (K&TD, P. Jonas, BBo, AH, BH). Very rare, a W. Tanager was found at Melrose, *Alachua*, 18 Feb (B. Lever)

Sparrows were plentiful throughout the central portion of the state. Many rare to uncommon species were locally uncommon to common this winter. Just n. of L A R A at T.B.S., two fields were hopping with Sedge Wrens and at least seven sparrow species that remained through the season Clay-colored Sparrows, once considered rare, were identified in *Hamilton*, *Duval*,

Seminole, Orange, Polk, and Miami-Dade (v.o.); the high report of nine, in *Polk* 30 Jan (CG et al.), does not compare to the flock of 46 birds last year at L.A.R.A., where this season's high count was three 28 Feb (HR). Vesper Sparrow reports included highs of 20 at T.B.S. 31 Jan (DSi et al.) and 15 at L.A.R.A. 29 Feb (HR). The only report of a Lark Sparrow came from *Polk* 2 Jan (*fide* TP). Grasshopper Sparrows were widely distributed and in normal numbers in the peninsula; one was reported in the Big Bend at Springhill Road S.T.F. 8 Feb (GM). The secretive Henslow's Sparrow, often overlooked, was reported from the Tallahassee area (several, 17 Jan; MG), Apalachicola N.F., *Liberty* (five, 10 Dec; DoW, LS), P.P.S.P. (≤ 12 , 4 Dec-1 Jan; JHi et al.), and from Santa Fe Swamp W.M.A., *Bradford* (28 Dec; D. Cimbaro). In *Pasco*, single Henslow's were seen at Withlacoochee C.P. 28 Dec, e. of Dade City 5-21 Dec (RS, AuS), and at Crews Lake C.P. 27 Dec (DRo, T. Rogers et al.). Six Le Conte's Sparrows were carefully identified at T.B.S. 22 Dec+ (K. Allen, BHA, A.&T. Mason, ph. LSA, m.ob.). Although the total number of Le Conte's was probably greater than six, the size of the fields, abundance of grasses, and large numbers of other species, especially Grasshopper Sparrows, made an accurate census of the entire area impossible. Elsewhere, single birds were reported at S.M.N.W.R. 18 Dec (*fide* K. NeSmith); H.P.M. 21 Dec and Lake City, *Columbia*, 24 Dec (JK); and P.P.S.P. 18 Dec (DoW, LS) and 1 Jan (JHi, MMA et al.). A Fox Sparrow was seen in rural *Hamilton* 18 Dec (JK), while two remained at P.P.S.P. 4 Dec-1 Jan (JHi et al.). There were only four reports of single Song Sparrows s. to *Pinellas* (RS, AuS), whereas the usually rarer Lincoln's Sparrow was reported from *Leon, Hamilton, Alachua*, and *Orange* (v.o.), with a high of three in the Tallahassee area. White-throated Sparrows continue to be scarce in the peninsula, with reports coming from *Alachua* and *Polk* only (DoW, LS, VPL). Flocks of up to 12 White-crowned Sparrows were widespread and found in *Nassau, Hamilton, Alachua, Orange, Pinellas*, and *Polk* (v.o.). Single Dark-eyed Juncos wintered s. to *Alachua*, where three were found throughout that county; even in the Big Bend only single birds were noted (GM). Up to three Blue Grosbeaks wintered at L.A.R.A. (HR). Two Painted Buntings were found n. of the species usual winter range in *Alachua* 19 Feb+ (BR, MMA). Dickcissels are rare but regular in the winter; following last summer's breeding record at L.A.R.A., it is surprising that the only report was of a bird that visited a Valrico, *Hillsborough*, feeder 2-18 Dec (SB).

Lone Yellow-headed Blackbirds wintered in *Hernando, Pasco, Polk, Osceola, Charlotte*, and *Collier* (v.o.). A report of two from *Orange* and a total of 68 Rusty Blackbirds from two locations in *Alachua* were the extent of this species invasion into the peninsula (CP, Jhi, C. Lanciani, G. Kiltie et al.). Irregular in winter, one Brewer's Blackbird was discovered at Clearwater, *Pinellas*, 26 Dec (DG, E. Haney et al.). Rare inland, a Shiny Cowbird was found in a flock of Brown-headed at a pig farm in Zellwood 11-19 Feb (KR, CP). Elsewhere, at the feeders at Briggs Nature Center, *Collier*, the only sure place to find these invaders in winter, the high count was four on 21 and 25 Feb (HM). Bronzed Cowbirds were rather widely distributed in the w. peninsula (v.o.), where reports came from *Pasco* (one), *Polk* (21), *Charlotte* (two), and *Collier* (five). Rare in winter, a hatch-year male Orchard Oriole wintered at L.A.R.A. (JeB et al., HR). In the peninsula the House Finch is invading not only from the n. but from presumed escapes in s. Florida. From the north, a female found its way to e. of Dade City 21 Dec (AuS, RS, BAH et al.) for the 2nd county report; four at Haines City, *Polk*, 15 Feb were presumably from the south (A.&H. Wheaton). The only Pine Siskin reported was one at Cedar Key 1 Feb (DaH, B. Lever).

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The weather this year was mild until mid-January, very cold until mid-February, and then moved into an unusually early spring. From 1997 through Feb 2000, precipitation was 10-15% less than usual in Ontario, resulting in record-low water levels in the Great Lakes. Late departures in December and early arrivals in February were once again the order of the day. Lester Pearson airport in Toronto and most other Ontario weather reporting stations recorded their 28th consecutive month with above-average temperatures. Winter finches and owls were scarce, but a few exceptional rarities in the Toronto-Hamilton region more than made up for it.