

The season began with near-average temperatures until mid-December brought several nights of freezing temperatures to the northern portion of the Region. Thereafter, freezing temperatures did not extend as far south as Orlando. Overall, the season was rather mild and rainfall was below normal. Early in the season, American Goldfinches were reported as absent in many parts of the Region, but near-normal numbers were present through the northern and central portions by the end of the season. Cedar Waxwings were very scarce throughout until the latter half of February. There were unconfirmed reports of Gray Heron in Orange County and Broad-billed Hummingbird in Alachua County, both of them potentially new species for Florida.

Abbreviations/definitions: C.A. (Conservation Area); R.A. (Restoration Area); report (any observation); record (only those reports verifiable from photograph, videotape, or specimen evidence).

LOONS THROUGH CARACARA

One Pacific Loon was identified at Alligator Pt., Franklin, in company of 5 Red-throated Loons 24 Jan (JM, JDo). At L. Santa Fe near Gainesville, Bolte reported high inland counts of 50 Common Loons and 105 Horned Grebes 18 Dec. Eared Grebes were at Lakeland, Polk 20 Dec (PF), Quarantine I., Duval 28 Dec (BRi), and Polk phosphate mines 8 Jan–26 Feb (PF et al.).

Rare in winter, 2 Brown Boobies were off St. Lucie Inlet, Martin 3 Jan (JG, JaH). Single Magnificent Frigatebirds over Honeymoon I. S.P., Pinellas 31 Dec (WY) and Cedar Key, Levy 2 Jan (DHe et al.) were far n., while one over Wakulla 25 Feb (John Murphy) was early. A 4th for Pasco was a juv. Great White Heron 42 km inland 22 Dec (EH et al., vt. BP), while another was documented at Crystal River, Citrus 27 Dec (Ken Spilios et al., ph.). Pink ibis in Pasco 22 Dec (RoS) and Duval 1 Feb+ (Charlene Green et al.) were apparently hybrid White Ibis x Scarlet Ibis. A species becoming annual in the Region, a White-faced Ibis was at Lake City, Columbia 17–21 Jan (JHi, DR et al.). Two Roseate Spoonbills at Brooksville, Hernando 19–25 Jan (Kristen Wood et al.) and one at Crystal River 17 Feb (Betty Smyth) were far north.

Nine Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks at Zephyrhills 22 Dec (KT et al.) provided the 2nd report for Pasco. At Emerald Marsh C.A., Lake, 18 Fulvous Whistling-Ducks 5 Dec (JP) and 93 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks 17 Jan (PMA) were high counts that far north. Four other Fulvous were seen 17 Dec at Newnans L., Alachua (AKr). The only Greater White-fronted Goose reported was one on L. Davis, downtown Orlando,

Florida



Orange the last week in Feb (Andy Boyles, ph. DoF et al.). The bill was bright orange, suggesting the Greenland race *flavirostris*, which is not definitively recorded in Florida. Singles or small groups of Snow Geese were reported from Alachua, Brevard, Franklin, Leon, Orange Pasco, Pinellas, Seminole, and Wakulla (v. o.). In Orange, a group of 10 Chen geese at L. Apopka R. A., Orange 28 Dec included 2 smaller blue morphs believed to have been hybrid Snow Goose x Ross's Goose (DL et al., ph.). Leon hosted 3 Ross's Geese 17–29 Jan (Michael Hill et al.), and one was found in the St. Johns R., Seminole 28 Dec (DSi). Very rare, 3 Brant were discovered at Pelican Island N.W.R., Indian River 3 Jan–16 Feb (John Taylor et al.). Two American Black Ducks were identified at Lake Apopka 11 Feb (HR). A female Mallard in the surf at Jetty Park, Brevard 16 Feb was unusual at that location (JP). A Cinnamon Teal at Myakka River S.P., Sarasota 15 Dec (Ken Alvarez, Belinda Perry) was the only Regional report. Three Surf Scoters were at Indian River Lagoon, Brevard 20 Dec (DSi), with another at Ft. Island Gulf Beach, Citrus 22 Feb

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(MGa). Small numbers of Black Scoters were distributed along both coasts as far s. as Lee (v. o.) and Martin (JaH). For the 3rd year, a Common Goldeneye visited a pond at Punta Gorda, Lee 27 Nov–4 Dec (JBo, MGo). Casual in the Region, a male Common Merganser was found at the mouth of the St. Johns R., Duval 27 Dec (Nancy Penny et al.). Some 28 Buffleheads visited L. Santa Fe 18 Dec (JaB et al.); other high inland counts were of 18 Red-breasted Mergansers at Gainesville 2 Dec (Mary Landsman) and 12,000 Ruddy Ducks on L. Apopka 4 Feb (HR).

A Swallow-tailed Kite at Myakka River S.P. 15 Dec (Steve Harris et al.) was very late; the earliest "spring" migrant was at Faka Union

Canal, *Collier* 6 Feb (DSu). Found on Virginia Key, *Miami-Dade* 20 Dec was a **Great Black-Hawk** of unknown provenance (RD); black-hawk species have been found in the area since the early 1970s. Reported in the cen. peninsula annually but seldom verified, 2 Broad-winged Hawks wintered at Ft. De Soto (v. o., LA, ph.). A Short-tailed Hawk at New Port Richey, *Pasco* 8 Jan (KT) was likely an early arrival. Single juv. Golden Eagles were over Lake Wales Ridge S.E., *Polk* 12 Dec (vt. BP) and about 4 km e. of Pa-hay-okee, Everglades N.P., *Miami-Dade* 23 Dec (Bob Row et al.). A Crested Caracara pair observed near Mims, *Brevard* 21 Dec represented a slight northward range extension on the e. coast; another caracara at Sanford, *Seminole* 5 Jan was at the northernmost limit of its breeding range (LoM).

RAILS THROUGH TERNS

Black Rails continue to winter in coastal *Hernando* (BP). While not yet officially established, Purple Swampheens are spreading westward from their Pembroke Pines stronghold: 4 were reported at Stormwater Treatment Area 5, *Hendry* 7 Dec+ (Steve Siegel) and 3 at Moonshine Bay, L. Okeechobee, *Glades* 11 Feb (Paul Gray, Chris Farrell). A Purple Gallinule remained at St. Marks N.W.R. 22 Dec–5 Feb (John Erickson et al.), where irregular in winter. The first report of northbound Sandhill Cranes, presumably of race *tabida*, was of three flocks totaling 56 cranes over Lake Wales Ridge S.E. 5 Feb (BP). On 8 Dec, 16 Whooping Cranes in single file followed an ultralight aircraft to complete their journey from Wisconsin to Chassahowitzka N.W.R., *Citrus* (<http://www.bringbackthecranes.org/back/2003fall/12-8-03.htm>). This was the 2nd southbound migration for this flock of migratory trainees, a part of a project to create another migratory population.

Sixty-five Wilson's Plovers at Weeki-wachee Preserve, *Hernando* 14 Feb were early migrants (A&BH). Surprising was a high count of 34 Piping Plovers (2 color-banded in the Canadian Maritimes) far s. on Crandon Beach, *Miami-Dade* (RD). An American Oystercatcher at Miami 20–23 Dec was one of few reports that far s. on the e. coast (BM et al.). Single Solitary Sandpipers were reported in *Alachua* (AKE), *Broward* (Paddy Cunningham), *Collier* (DSu), *Orange* (HR), and *Osceola* (TM), while 2 each were seen in *Polk* (Byron Bratlie et al., SR et al.) and *Sarasota* (Barbara Bringham et al., JP et al.). From one to 5 Long-billed Curlews were found in *Brevard* (v. o.), *Collier* (Ted Below), *Lee* (*vide* CE), and *Pinellas* (v. o.). Three wintered at Cedar Key (DHe et al.), while 3 others were at Honeymoon I. 11 Feb (A&BH). Purple Sandpipers were at their usual haunts, with up to 5 at Ft. Clinch S.P., *Nassau* (J. Rink,

vide BAH), one at Smyrna Dunes S.P., *Volusia* (Stefan Schlick), and up to 2 at Port Canaveral (v. o.). A lone Purple foraging on coquina rocks at Biscayne N.P. 8–12 Dec (LaM et al., ph.) was one of only a few *Miami-Dade* reports.

Now a four-year veteran, Florida's first **Heermann's Gull**, which wanders during winter, appeared at Ft. De Soto 31 Jan+ (ph. LA, IH). A first-basic Iceland Gull was seen at Port Canaveral 25 Jan–3 Feb (v. o., ph. LA). An ad. Glaucous Gull visited the same beach 26 Jan–2 Feb (v. o., ph. LA), as did one in first basic plumage. This latter Glaucous was taken to a local rehab hospital 31 Jan, where it recovered and was released 20 Feb. Small numbers of Great Black-backed Gulls wintered along the Gulf coast, with reports from *Pinellas* (v. o.), *Collier* (MGo et al.), and *Pasco* (MGa), the latter a county first. Up to 12 Great Black-backed Gulls and up to 12 Lesser Black-backed Gulls wintered on Crandon Beach (RD). A first inland report for the Region, a Sabine's Gull was a one-day wonder on L. Emerald, Ft. Lauderdale 20 Feb (Susan Epps). Wintering Gull-billed Terns were found n. along the coasts at Merritt I. (RP, DaF) and *Hernando* (6; BP et al.), as well as inland to *Polk* mines (PF et al.).

DOVES THROUGH PIPITS

White-winged Doves continue to expand along the coasts (v. o.). Short-eared Owls were scarce, with one at its usual haunt near Panacea, St. Marks N.W.R. (v. o.), and 2 at Lake Apopka (HR). Up to 8 Lesser Nighthawks wintered at Eco Pond, Everglades N.P., *Monroe* (v. o.), as did one at Loxahatchee N.W.R., *Palm Beach* (v. o.), both regular wintering sites. The first Chuck-will's-widow was reported singing at Golden Gate Estates, *Collier* 24 Feb (TD). Ace hummingbird-bander Fred Basset again visited the n. Region this winter and banded a total of 40 hummingbirds: 26 Rufous (18 at Tallahassee and 8 in *Alachua*); 6 Ruby-throateds (3 at Tallahassee, 2 at Lakeland, and one at Valrico, *Hillsborough*); 5 Black-chinneds (3 at Tallahassee and 2 at Gainesville); 2 *Calliopes* (Gainesville 28 Dec and Tallahassee 7 Feb); and one *Allen's* (Tallahassee 7 Feb). Another *Calliope* frequented a feeder at Bald Point, *Franklin* 9–12 Dec (JDo, ph.). At least 3 Rufous and one Ruby-throated spent much of the season at Valrico (SB). An unidentified *Selasphorus* was at Cedar Key 7 Jan–25 Feb (DHe).

Least Flycatchers were reported in *Alachua* (JHi et al.), *Highlands* (LA et al., ph.), *Miami-Dade* (up to 3; RD), and *Orange* (up to 20; HR et al.). A male Vermilion Flycatcher wintered near the entrance to Everglades N.P., *Miami-Dade* (v. o.). Other Vermilions were at Gainesville (3) 14 Dec–3

Jan (GMc, RR et al.), Piney Z L., *Leon* 29 Feb (GMe et al.), Lake City, *Columbia* 18 Jan–15 Feb (DR, JHi et al.), and Anclote River Ranch, *Pasco* 15 Jan–21 Feb (Manny Lopez et al.). One Ash-throated Flycatcher was found at Guana River S.P., *St. Johns* 4 Dec (AKE). Several Ash-throateds wintered at L.A.R.A. (v. o.), where regular, but a loose flock of 10 Ash-throateds and one Brown-crested Flycatcher 2 Feb (HR) was unprecedented in the Region and probably in the United States in winter. A Brown-crested was at Matheson Hammock, *Miami-Dade* 27 Dec (Dick Cunningham et al.), with another on Key Largo, *Monroe* 11 Jan (BM). Remaining at L. Apopka from the fall, the **Tropical Kingbird** wintered, whereas the Gray Kingbird was last seen 28 Jan (HR). Other late Grays were singles at Islamorada, *Monroe* 6–7 Dec (BM, ph.) and Black Point Marina, *Miami-Dade* 27 Dec (BM, DL, ph.). The only **Cassin's Kingbirds** were at Lake Apopka R.A. where up to 2 were found throughout the season (BHA, LA, v. o.). Up to 35 Western Kingbirds roosted at Lake Apopka R.A. (BHA, v. o.), where annual. Two Westerns at Gainesville 14 Dec (RR, Lloyd Davis), 2 at Alligator Pt. 30 Dec (SM), and one at Merritt I. 20 Feb (DaF) were likely migrants. One Scissor-tailed Flycatcher again wintered n. to Seven Springs, *Pasco* (KT), with up to 7 others at Lake Apopka R.A. (BHA, v. o.), where regular. Other Scissor-taileds were at Lake City 21 Jan (JHi) and Umatilla, *Lake* 23 Feb+ (JP), and Key West held a flock of up to 17 through the season (v. o.).

The Bell's Vireo found in Nov at Frog Pond W.M.A., *Miami-Dade* remained until 5 Jan (RD). Up to 2 Yellow-throated Vireos wintered at w. Kendall, *Miami-Dade* through 2 Feb (JHB), with one at Collier-Seminole S.P., *Collier* 24 Jan (TD et al.); another at Street Nature Center, *Polk* 26 Feb (PF) might have been a migrant. The earliest Purple Martin was one observed at Lake Wales, *Polk* 8 Jan (B&LC). A Northern Rough-winged Swallow at Tampa 3 Feb (DW, LS) was early. An early Barn Swallow was at Lake Apopka R.A. 20–22 Feb (Becky Payne et al.). Late, or possibly wintering, was a Bank Swallow at St. Petersburg 20 Dec (RoS). Rarely reported in the Region in winter, one Cliff Swallow was seen at Frog Pond 5 Jan (RD), while 2 Cliffs photographed at Ft. De Soto 26 Feb (LA) furnished the Region's first verified winter record. At Homestead, *Miami-Dade*, 120 Cave Swallows of the resident Antillean race *fulva* were estimated 27 Dec (BB et al.), while one at Frog Pond 11 Jan was believed to be *pelodoma* (JHB, RD). Brown Creepers made it s. to Gainesville, where up to 2 were seen at San Felasco Hammock 28 Dec–8 Feb and another elsewhere 4 Jan (DSt et al.). A Golden-

crowned Kinglet at Sanford 14 Dec (LoM) provided the only Regional report. A Hermit Thrush was s. to Opa Locka, *Miami-Dade* 20 Dec (BRa), as were 60 American Pipits at Frog Pond 5–14 Jan (RD).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Only occasional in winter, single Blue-winged Warblers were found at Hollywood, *Broward* 10 Dec–25 Jan (Russell MacGregor, WG et al., vt.) and Everglades N.P., with sightings at West L. 4 Jan–3 Feb (RD, DE) and Bear L. 3 Feb (DE). Single Nashville Warblers were reported at Cape Florida S.P., *Miami-Dade* 21 Dec–14 Feb (RD), Lake Apopka 15 Dec–14 Jan (HR), and New Port Richey, *Pasco* for the 2nd year (KT). About 10 Northern Parulas at Cape Florida 1 Feb (RD) were early. Lone Yellow Warblers were seen in *Miami-Dade* 14 Jan (RD) and *Palm Beach* 24 Jan (JHB, RD et al.). A Magnolia Warbler was n. to Myakka River S.P. 15 Dec (John Ginaven et al.). A male Black-throated Blue Warbler was seen at Jacksonville 2 Jan+ (Jamie Ross). Black-throated Green Warblers were found n. to *Orange* (Alex Vinokur) and *Pasco* (DG, BP et al.). Lone American Redstarts were n. to Gainesville 14 Dec (Adam Kent) and Henry Park, *Leon* 21 Dec+, with 2 there 24 Feb (David Chaffin, Michael Evans et al.). Five Northern Waterthrushes wintered at Lake Apopka R.A. 4 Feb (HR), while the Louisiana Waterthrush there 11 Feb was early (HR). The MacGillivray's Warbler remained at Davie, *Broward* through 5 Jan (WG). Wilson's Warblers were found in *Alachua* (Pat Burns et al.), *Miami-Dade* (RD, Jill Rosenfield et al.), *Orange* (HR), and *Putnam* (BC). Yellow-breasted Chats were reported in *Duval* (Laura Johannsen), *Miami-Dade* (RD), and *Orange* (HR). Two Summer Tanagers wintered at Tallahassee (PS, Peter Homann), with another at Gainesville 10 Jan+ (Joanna Levine, Ivan Samuels). Western Tanagers were widely found, with singles at Tallahassee 1 Jan+ (FR et al.), Jacksonville 17 Jan (Julie Cocke), *Osprey*, *Sarasota* 20 Dec (Alison Bishop et al.), and Oakland Park 7 Feb (WG, Mark Berney). In *Monroe*, a black-backed male *Western Spindalis* was at

Windley Key Fossil Reef Geological S.P. 23 Jan–6 Feb (Michael O'Brien, ph. LA, m. ob.).

A Chipping Sparrow at Plantation Key, *Monroe* 19 Dec (Ann & Rich Paul) was s. of normal wintering areas. Clay-colored Sparrows were widespread, with one in *Duval* (Roger Clark), 3 in *Miami-Dade* (RD), 4 in *Orange* (HR), and 11 in *Polk* (PTi). Lark Sparrows were also reported widely: 3 were at Homestead 11 Dec–29 Jan (JHB et al.), and singles were seen at Frog Pond 11 Dec (DW), Balm, *Hillsborough* 14 Dec (DG et al.), Lake Apopka R.A. 28 Dec (HR), Umatilla 3 Jan (Mary Remer et al.), and Rye Wilderness Park, *Manatee* 18 Feb (KAN). Single Henslow's and Le Conte's Sparrows were found at Sunnyhill R. A., *Marion* 18 Dec (JP). Other Le Conte's were recorded at San Felasco Hammock 20 Dec–1 Jan (BC et al.) and Lake Apopka R.A. 28 Dec (JBo). Two Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows at Ten Thousand Islands N.W.R., *Collier* 30 Dec (TD) were unexpected. Lone Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows were on the Gulf Coast at St. Marks N.W.R. (JCa) and Caladesi Island S.P., *Pinellas* 27 Dec & 9 Jan (EK). Fox Sparrows were found at two *Alachua* locations: Lochloosa W.M.A. 14–15 Dec (one; MM et al.) and Paynes Prairie Preserve 22 Feb (2; AKe). A Lincoln's Sparrow at Eco Pond, Everglades N.P. 3 Jan (RoS) was rather far s. of typical range; singles were notable in *Alachua* (RR) and *Polk* (PF, SR), and 5 in *Orange* (HR). Single singing White-throated Sparrows were far s. at Cape Florida (RD) and Key Largo (Stuart Pimm). A Harris's Sparrow was located e. of Sunniland Station, *Hendry* 24 Jan–7 Feb (v. o., Arthur Wilson ph.). The only reports of White-crowned Sparrows came from *Highlands* (Rick Lavoy), *Orange* (HR, BHA et al.), and *Polk* (PTi). Dark-eyed Juncos were found at San Felasco Hammock 12–20 Dec (GK, BC), Lake Apopka R.A. 17 Dec (HR), and Tallahassee 14 Feb (2; Harry Hooper). Single Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were at Tallahassee 5 Dec (D Houle), Lake Placid, *Highlands* 31 Dec (JG), and Lake Apopka R.A. 27 Feb (HR). Late Blue Grosbeaks included 3 at

Emeralda Marsh 5 Dec (JP) and 3 in *Alachua* through 7 Dec (Steve Collins et al.); one at Alligator Pt. 7 Feb was early (JDo). Wintering grosbeaks were 2 at Homestead 27 Dec (BB et al.) and 16 at Lake Apopka R.A. 31 Dec (HR). Also at Lake Apopka R.A. were 6 Dickcissels 21 Dec (HR). Rare near the Gulf Coast, a Painted Bunting was in e. *Pasco* 22 Dec (DP, BP). Other Painteds were n. to Jacksonville 1 Jan+ (Anne Turner) and Tallahassee, where one wintered and was joined by a 2nd 18 Feb (Barbara Buford).

A Yellow-headed Blackbird was seen at Dunedin, *Pinellas* 7 Dec (Kris Nelson), and another was at w. Boca Raton, *Palm Beach* 21 Dec (Linda McCandless). Rusty Blackbirds were not reported s. of *Wakulla* (Stephan Barlow) and *Columbia* (JHi). The only Shiny Cowbirds reported were singles at Lake Apopka R.A. 3 Dec (HR) and Cedar Key 12 Dec (JHi, GMc). Bronzed Cowbirds were reported in *Franklin* (SM), *Hillsborough* (DW & LS), *Polk* (B&LC), and *Sarasota* (JP et al.), with up to 40 at Naples, *Collier* (DSu et al.). A first-winter Orchard Oriole at Cape Florida 3 Feb (RD) was early. Very rare in winter, Purple Finches were found in *Franklin* (JDo) and *Leon* (FR). The only Pine Siskin report came from Valrico 24 Jan (SB).

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SA This season brought the 3rd and 4th records of **Red-legged Honeycreeper** to the ABA Area. Both were males, and both were seen in *Miami-Dade*. One was at Cape Florida 18–19 Jan (ph. Alex Harper) and the other at Everglades N.P. 21–26 Feb (ph. Colin Gjervold, v. o.). The nearest known population is in Cuba. While the Florida observations may represent a pattern of vagrancy, escapees cannot be ruled out. Paul Sykes and Larry Manfredi visited several animal dealers and importers in the Miami area in 2003. In addition to finding Yellow-faced Grassquits, Painted Buntings, Cuban Bullfinches, and Greater Antillean Bullfinches for sale, they were told that a Miami dealer has imported 200–300 Red-legged Honeycreepers from Surinam three to four times. Sykes and Manfredi were told by two sources that another importer sells several species of honeycreepers locally. Research by David Cutler indicates that such levels of importation for Red-legged Honeycreeper extend at least back into the late 1960s, which makes the recent discoveries of four birds in relatively remote parts of Florida surprising.