



SOUTH FLORIDA & DRY TORTUGAS - April 2018

Summary by Adrian Binns

Our visit to South Florida this spring included two visits to the Dry Tortugas (April 18-20 and 23-25) with the latter being part of our full South Florida tour (April 21-30). These trips could not have worked out any better. With a number of sub-tropical specialties, exotics and United States endemics found within the region this was the main focus of our 10-day South Florida tour along with the wonderful seabird colonies in the Dry Tortugas.

Not only did the weather cooperate so did the birds! Both 3-day ventures to the Dry Tortugas produced a mega showing of Audubon Shearwaters, feeding flocks numbering in the hundreds, with a few being harassed by Pomarine Jaegers. Not to be outdone, the number of Roseate Terns at sea and on the markers was most impressive numbering well over a hundred. On both these cases the species were the most I have ever recorded in 25 years for running this trip!

At Fort Jefferson the much sought after Black Noddy was found amongst a plethora of Brown Noddies. Migrant passerines showed well with many putting in an appearance at the fountain including Summer Tanager, Dickcissel, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and an assortment of warblers, Cape May, Hooded, Prairie, Blackpoll and Magnolia to mention a few. Add to that Bridled Terns, and a Caribbean Short-eared Owl and Antillean Nighthawk (both on our 2nd trip) and it was a big success. Our late afternoon dingy rides in perfect light along Bush and Long Key gave everyone a chance to experience Sooty Terns up close as they flew around us, as well as seeing male Magnificent Frigatebirds with their red throats inflated trying to impress any females gliding by.

On the mainland, we had a cooperative Mangrove Cuckoo; a Short-tailed Hawk which was seen taking a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and wonderful views of three endemics - Florida Scrub-Jay, Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Bachman's Sparrow. We also tallied an additional four endemics, Fish Crow, Boat-tailed Grackle, Brown-headed Nuthatch, and (Cape Sable) Seaside Sparrow, giving us about half of the countries endemics!

Breeding Caribbean birds seen included Antillean Nighthawk, Black-whiskered Vireo, Shiny Cowbird, White-crowned Pigeon, and the ubiquitous Gray Kingbird. Being in a sub-tropical climate it is not surprising that numerous exotics thrive, even if they got there under dubious circumstances. Spot-breasted Oriole, Red-whiskered Bulbul, Monk, White-winged and Nanday Parakeet, Common and Hill Myna, Gray-headed Swamphen and Egyptian Goose all fall in that category. Several morphs and races are also restricted to this region, these being the white morphs of Great Blue Heron and Reddish Egret, the Caribbean subspecies of Cave Swallow, the resident Cuban Golden race of Yellow Warbler and the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow. All these fell perfectly into place and were seen well as we traversed the south-eastern part of the state!

Notable other wildlife included an assortment of dragonflies such as Green Darner, Roseate Skimmer and Great Pondhawk; Ruddy Daggerwing butterflies, as well as Marsh Rabbits, Green Anole, Brown Basilisks, Northern Curly-tailed Lizards, American Crocodiles and Manatees in the Everglades.

Being out in the natural world, we got to experience both sides of nature - a Merlin with a Yellow-billed Cuckoo in its talons being pursued by a Peregrine until it dropped it for the larger falcon to pick up an easy meal. On another occasion, we watched a Peregrine force an immature Little Blue Heron into the water, where the heron had to duck and flatten itself against the surface of the water each time the falcon swooped in. The Little Blue did manage to escape. Under the category of surreal experiences, watching Snail Kites quartering the aquatic vegetation along the shores of Lake Kissimmee during a noisy Airboat Jamboree was a sight to behold, as was having to stand on a step-stool to peer over a hedgerow to see a Nanday Parakeet at a feeder! A first for me, was having to take shelter as a tornado watch was issued, this being at Green Cay Nature Center! Luckily there was no damage, no one was hurt, and it was just another memory that would go along with everything that made for a perfect trip.

SPECIES RECORDED APRIL 2018

Dry Tortugas April 18-20

63 bird; 1 mammal; 2 reptiles; 3 butterfly species

Birds: Audubon's Shearwater; Magnificent Frigatebird; Masked Booby; Brown Booby; Northern Gannet; Double-crested Cormorant; Brown Pelican; Great Blue Heron; Great Egret; Snowy Egret; Cattle Egret; Green Heron; Sharp-shinned Hawk; Black-necked Stilt; Black-bellied Plover; Ruddy Turnstone; Short-billed Dowitcher; Spotted Sandpiper; Lesser Yellowlegs; Pomarine Jaeger; Laughing Gull; Brown Noddy; Black Noddy; Sooty Tern; Bridled Tern; Roseate Tern; Royal Tern; Sandwich (Cabot's) Tern; White-winged Dove; Mourning Dove; Yellow-billed Cuckoo; Ruby-throated Hummingbird; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; American Kestrel; Merlin; Peregrine Falcon; Gray Kingbird; White-eyed Vireo; Black-whiskered Vireo; Bank Swallow; Barn Swallow; Gray Catbird; Northern Mockingbird; Ovenbird; Northern Waterthrush; Black-and-white Warbler; Tennessee Warbler; Common Yellowthroat; Hooded Warbler; American Redstart; Cape May Warbler; Northern Parula; Blackpoll Warbler; Black-throated Blue Warbler; Palm Warbler; Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler; Prairie Warbler; Black-throated Green Warbler; Rose-breasted Grosbeak; Indigo Bunting; Dickcissel; Bobolink; Brown-headed Cowbird

Mammals: Atlantic Bottle-nosed Dolphin

Reptiles: Hawksbill Turtle; Brown Anole

Butterflies: Little Yellow; Ceraunus Blue; White Peacock

Dry Tortugas April 23-25

74 bird; 2 mammal; 2 reptile; 3 butterfly species

Birds: Audubon's Shearwater; Magnificent Frigatebird; Masked Booby; Brown Booby; Northern Gannet; Double-crested Cormorant; Brown Pelican; Great White Heron; Wurdemann's Heron; Great Egret; Little Blue Heron; Cattle Egret; Green Heron; Osprey; Black-bellied Plover; Ruddy Turnstone; Greater Yellowlegs; Pomarine Jaeger; Laughing Gull; Brown Noddy; Black Noddy; Sooty Tern; Bridled Tern; Roseate Tern; Royal Tern; Sandwich (Cabot's) Tern; Rock Pigeon; White-winged Dove; Mourning Dove; Yellow-billed Cuckoo; Short-eared (Arawak) Owl; Antillean Nighthawk; Ruby-throated Hummingbird; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; Merlin; Peregrine Falcon; Acadian Flycatcher; Eastern Kingbird; Gray Kingbird; Red-eyed Vireo; Black-whiskered Vireo; Purple Martin; Barn Swallow; Cliff Swallow; Veery; Gray-cheeked Thrush; Swainson's Thrush; Gray Catbird; Northern Mockingbird; Ovenbird; Worm-eating Warbler; Northern Waterthrush; Black-and-white Warbler; Prothonotary Warbler; Tennessee Warbler; Common Yellowthroat; Hooded Warbler; American Redstart; Cape May Warbler; Northern Parula; Magnolia Warbler; Yellow Warbler; Blackpoll Warbler; Black-throated Blue Warbler; Palm Warbler; Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler; Prairie Warbler; Black-throated Green Warbler; Yellow-breasted Chat; Summer Tanager; Rose-breasted Grosbeak; Indigo Bunting; Painted Bunting; Dickcissel; Bobolink; Shiny Cowbird

Mammals: Atlantic Bottle-nosed Dolphin

Reptiles: Hawksbill Turtle; Brown Anole

Butterflies: Little Yellow; Ceraunus Blue; White Peacock

South Florida & Dry Tortugas April 22-30

183 bird; 11 mammal; 13 reptile; 2 amphibian; 16 butterfly; 11 dragonfly species

Birds: Black-bellied Whistling-Duck; Egyptian Goose; Muscovy Duck*; Wood Duck; Blue-winged Teal; Mottled Duck; Northern Pintail; Red-breasted Merganser; Indian Peafowl*; Red Junglefowl*; Pied-billed Grebe; Audubon's Shearwater; Wood Stork; Magnificent Frigatebird; Masked Booby; Brown Booby; Northern Gannet; Double-crested Cormorant; Anhinga; American White Pelican; Brown Pelican; Least Bittern; Great Blue Heron; Great White Heron*; Wurdemann's Heron*; Great Egret; Snowy Egret; Little Blue Heron; Tricolored Heron; Reddish Egret; Cattle Egret; Green Heron; Black-crowned Night-Heron; Yellow-crowned Night-Heron; White Ibis; Glossy Ibis; Roseate Spoonbill; Black Vulture; Turkey Vulture; Osprey; Swallow-tailed Kite; Snail Kite; Bald Eagle; Red-shouldered Hawk; Broad-winged Hawk; Short-tailed Hawk; Red-tailed Hawk; Purple Gallinule; Gray-headed Swamphen; Common Gallinule; American Coot; Sandhill Crane; Black-necked Stilt; American Oystercatcher; Black-bellied Plover; Semipalmated Plover; Killdeer; Ruddy Turnstone; Dunlin; Least Sandpiper; Semipalmated Sandpiper; Short-billed Dowitcher; Spotted Sandpiper; Solitary Sandpiper; Greater Yellowlegs; Western Willet; Lesser Yellowlegs; Pomarine Jaeger; Laughing Gull; Brown Noddy; Black Noddy; Sooty Tern; Bridled Tern; Least Tern; Roseate Tern; Forster's Tern; Royal Tern; Sandwich (Cabot's) Tern; Black Skimmer; Rock Pigeon; White-crowned Pigeon; Eurasian Collared-Dove; Common Ground-Dove; White-winged Dove; Mourning Dove; Yellow-billed Cuckoo; Mangrove Cuckoo; Barn Owl; Eastern Screech-Owl; Burrowing Owl; Short-eared (Arawak) Owl; Common Nighthawk; Antillean Nighthawk; Chimney Swift; Ruby-throated Hummingbird; Belted Kingfisher; Red-headed Woodpecker; Red-bellied Woodpecker; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; Downy Woodpecker; Red-cockaded Woodpecker; Northern Flicker; Pileated Woodpecker; Crested Caracara; American Kestrel; Merlin; Peregrine Falcon; Budgerigar*; Monk Parakeet; White-winged Parakeet; Nanday Parakeet; Green Parakeet*; Mitred Parakeet*; Acadian Flycatcher; Great Crested Flycatcher; Western Kingbird; Eastern Kingbird; Gray Kingbird; Loggerhead Shrike; White-eyed Vireo; Red-eyed Vireo; Black-whiskered Vireo; Blue Jay; Florida Scrub-Jay; American Crow; Fish Crow; Purple Martin; Barn Swallow; Cliff Swallow; Cave Swallow; Tufted Titmouse; Brown-headed Nuthatch; Carolina Wren; Red-whiskered Bulbul; Eastern Bluebird; Veery; Gray-cheeked Thrush; Swainson's Thrush; Gray Catbird; Northern Mockingbird; Common Hill Myna*; European Starling; Common Myna; Cedar Waxwing; Ovenbird; Worm-eating Warbler; Northern Waterthrush; Black-and-white Warbler; Prothonotary Warbler; Tennessee Warbler; Common Yellowthroat; Hooded Warbler; American Redstart; Cape May Warbler; Northern Parula; Magnolia Warbler; Yellow Warbler; Cuban Golden Warbler*; Blackpoll Warbler; Black-throated Blue Warbler; Palm Warbler; Pine Warbler; Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler; Prairie Warbler; Black-throated Green Warbler; Bachman's Sparrow; (Cape Sable) Seaside Sparrow; Eastern Towhee; Yellow-breasted Chat; Summer Tanager; Northern Cardinal; Rose-breasted Grosbeak; Blue Grosbeak; Indigo Bunting; Painted Bunting; Dickcissel; Bobolink; Eastern Meadowlark; Orchard Oriole; Spot-breasted Oriole; Red-winged Blackbird; Shiny Cowbird; Brown-headed Cowbird; Common Grackle; Boat-tailed Grackle; House Sparrow

* = non-countable ABA

Mammals: Opossum; Evening Bat; Eastern Cottontail; Marsh Rabbit; Eastern Woodrat; Raccoon; Atlantic Bottle-nosed Dolphin; West Indian Manatee; Feral Hog; White-tailed Deer; Key Deer

Reptiles: American Crocodile; American Alligator; Red-eared Slider; Peninsula Cooter; Florida Red-bellied Turtle; Hawksbill Turtle; Florida Soft-shell; Tropical House Gecko; Brown Anole; Green Anole; Brown Basilisk; Green Iguana; Northern Curly-tailed Lizard

Amphibians: Southern Cricket Frog; Pig Frog

Butterflies: Polydamus Swallowtail; Black Swallowtail; Giant Swallowtail; Great Southern White; Cloudless Sulphur; Orange-barred Sulphur; Little Yellow; Ceraunus Blue; Gulf Fritillary; Zebra Longwing; Pearl Crescent; White Peacock; Ruddy Daggerwing; Queen; Mangrove Skipper; Horace's Duskywing

Dragonflies: Regal Darner; Four-spotted Pennant; Halloween Pennant; Scarlet Skimmer; Eastern Pondhawk; Great Pondhawk; Needham's Skimmer; Great Blue Skimmer; Roseate Skimmer; Blue Dasher; Eastern Amberwing