

CENTRAL FLORIDA - USA 6th-28th January 2009

After last year's very successful trip to Southern Florida and the Keys we decided to return this January and try and visit some of the central portion of the state with an obligatory short return to Sanibel Island! We booked our own flights and car hire through Virgin Atlantic and we can still recommend their service. The car hire firm was Dollar and after upgrading to the Platinum package we found out that it worked out considerably cheaper than Alamo in 2008 or perhaps we were just wiser. The car was a Chrysler PT Cruiser which was fine to drive and plenty of room for just two but does not have much ground clearance and there were a couple of tracks I didn't risk driving down. We also booked a few of the motels in advance, via the internet, at Kissimmee, Fort Pierce, Sanibel Island (essential), Sarasota & Sebring. We shortened our initial stay in Kissimmee (it is truly an awful & overblown sight!) as it was time-consuming driving through the heavy traffic and decamped to Titusville on the Atlantic coast which was much better. We had no trouble booking odd motels while there as we needed them.



Sunshine Skyway, Tampa Bay

Health : As last year, nothing special required but even though we took lots of insect repellent we didn't really need it. The usual precautions with sun block and a hat were again needed on several days. We didn't see as many alligators as last year (and unfortunately no snakes) but there were the usual plethora of 'health & safety' signs about them like the one below. What do people get up to?



You have got to be joking!!!

Field Guides, etc. : I used Sibley's *Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America* again which was perfectly adequate in the field and also had the *National Geographic Guide* as a back-up. Bill Pranty's *A Birder's Guide to Florida* (ABA/Lane Birdfinding Guide) was invaluable. I had read a few reports from the internet (Surfbirds, etc.) and had downloaded and printed out the Central Florida Birding Trail section of the Great Florida Birding Trail (www.FloridaBirdingTrail.com) which also gave some useful detail about state parks, etc. in the area.

Itinerary :

- 6th January 2009 With the prospect of heavy snow forecast we abandoned our plans to drive to Manchester in the very early hours of 7th and set off mid-afternoon and stayed overnight at the Airport Travel Lodge. We can't really recommend this as an overnigher; you have to pay for car parking outside and the rooms seem to lack many things like enough pillows, towels, etc. Although we got everything we asked for eventually it's a pain having to go and ask along with all the other guests in the queue doing the same! The room was clean and warm however.
- 7th January 2009 A very early start for the relatively short drive to the Hanford Dean BCP where we dropped off the car and caught the courtesy bus to Manchester Airport. The Virgin flight 075 took off at 10:50 hrs (slightly late) and after a ten hour flight touched down at Orlando International Airport at 14:45 hrs (local time). After the usual long wait for Homeland Security checks we picked up our car from Dollar and out into the relatively light traffic around the airport. This changed quickly as we approached Kissimmee and we had some difficulty locating the Best Western motel we were booked into for the next few nights! I thought that most of Kissimmee was an amazingly awful and plastic sight but someone must love it!
- 8th January 2009 A first-light look at the lake next to the motel showed that a number of duck roost there including 37 Ring-necked Ducks. After breakfast we set off into the traffic again and headed for Kissimmee Lakefront Park & Brinson Park. On the edge of the massive lake we had a couple of hours birding with a Limpkin greeting us as it walked along a footpath next to the water! Moved on to Kaliga Park at St. Cloud where we found a couple of Snail Kites, one perched on a post at the entrance to the boat ramp. Had a return visit to Brinson Park on the way back and saw a Bald Eagle which was scared off by a helicopter apparently spraying mosquitoes on the lake. Searched in vain for the breeding parakeets!
- 9th January 2009 Drove out of Kissimmee and headed across to Merritt Island NWR on the Atlantic coast. After crossing on to the island from Titusville we drove slowly around E. Gator Creek Road stopping to view various things including a lot of wildfowl and waders, a Caspian Tern and a couple of Northern Harriers. Next was a slow drive around Black Point Wildlife Drive where there were even more birds. Loads of duck on the areas of open water being spooked by at least three Bald Eagles in the area. Found a couple of Green-winged Teal among the Blue-wingeds. Quite a few waders also here but only a single American Avocet. Had a quick look at the Visitor's Centre then drove out to Canaveral Beach to look at the launch pads in the distance. Ended up at the Scrub Ridge Trail where we quickly located the ridiculously tame Florida Scrub Jays, one landing on Ann's head even though we had offered no encouragement (feeding them is strictly prohibited). Returned to the delights of Kissimmee in the early evening.
- 10th January 2009 An early start to head down Canoe Creek Road south of St. Cloud and then worked our way along the dusty Joe Overstreet Road which proved to be an excellent site. Eastern Meadowlarks were singing and a good-sized party of warblers etc., including a couple of Brown-headed Nuthatches and two Eastern Bluebirds moved through some pines. Two Hooded Mergansers were on a most unlikely-looking field pond, a puddle really, and an unexpected Merlin was flushed from the roadside. At the boat ramp area down at Lake Kissimmee there were, among others, masses of blackbirds & grackles in the trees making a racket and a single Snail Kite over the reeds. It was getting quite hot and we retraced our route back to the main road and then drove down to Three Lakes WMA. After paying the entrance fee we had driven only a couple of hundred metres when we found our target species, Red-cockaded Woodpecker. Eventually we watched about four of these scarce birds feeding unconcernedly among the Longleaf Pines just off the track. I had not realised that they could 'walk' backwards down the trunk! Other small birds were present in the open woodland including scolding House Wrens and Eastern Bluebirds.

- 11th January 2009 A relatively quiet day birding-wise as we decamped from Kissimmee to a Best Western Motel in Titusville. A quick visit to a shopping mall produced a Great White Egret standing on the entrance arch! A short trip to Merritt Island gave us nothing new but good views of Savannah Sparrows, lots of Tree Swallows moving through and a thermalling party of 70+ American White Pelicans. A little time spent at the Manatee Centre just off the island was rewarded with a cow and calf coming right in and continuing up the old warm-water outflow!
- 12th January 2009 My birthday! Celebrated with a gift of a UNICEF goat for Malawi from my wife and the whole afternoon spent in the biggest sewage farm I have ever been in – brilliant! A morning visit to Merritt Island and another circuit of the Black Point Wildlife Drive which was heaving with birds. About 45 Hooded Mergansers included a flock of 29, 79 American Avocets were in a tight pack, many more waders and wildfowl with over-flying Northern Harriers and Roseate Spoonbills to complete the scene. Snow and Ross's Geese were unexpected but apparently had arrived a few days before. The afternoon was spent at the Blue Heron Wetlands Treatment Facility (a sewage farm to Brits!) in Titusville. Here we drove around the various impoundments where there were masses of birds with Yellow-rumped Warblers jumping about everywhere. Towards late afternoon more birds were obviously arriving in the form of egrets and many crows presumably to roost here. This site really deserved more time! Evening meal in the Durango Saloon (or whatever) in the company of a 20+ stone gun-toting female Highway Patrol officer. What a birthday!
- 13th January 2009 Back on to Merritt Island and around the Drive again! Spent some time just digi-scoping various things but showers were starting. Visited the Biolab Road and boat ramp area in the search for various sparrows we were told had been there but mainly without success although we did pick up our first Royal Terns of the trip and a couple of obliging Eastern Phoebes. I walked along the Oak Hammock Trail and disturbed a feeding flock of about 50 American Robins from the trees. During the afternoon I paid another visit to the Blue Heron Wetlands Treatment Facility which produced just as many birds including a Cooper's Hawk disturbed from exactly the same perch as the previous day! Nice views of White-eyed Vireo and a couple of Red-shouldered Hawks near the entrance. In the evening a long string of crows (including many American Crows judging by call) flew over the motel en route to their roost.
- 14th January 2009 Off reasonably early to drive down Interstate 95 southwards. Spent the morning at the Viera Wetlands (another treatment works!) which is amazingly well-organised to allow birders to drive around. Lots of birds here including the highlight of my first Crested Caracara flying over. About half a dozen Wilson's Snipe were resting in relatively short grass near the road and there was a good collection of herons, etc while birds of prey included an adult Bald Eagle, three Red-tailed Hawks and an Northern Harrier. Continuing down the I-95 we passed a huge gathering of Turkey Vultures over a land-fill site north of Fort Pierce. Had a quick look around Jetty Park, Fort Pierce before dark and found a nice Yellow-throated Warbler high up in some palms.
- 15th January 2009 After breakfast we visited Fort Pierce State Park and had a walk around. A gathering of waders and gulls on the beach included 46 Willets and 79 Black Skimmers. The Coastal Hammock was fairly quiet although there was an obliging Prairie Warbler near the car park. We drove over to Jack Island Preserve SP and crossed the foot bridge and did quite a walk through the surrounding mangrove habitat. This again was fairly quiet and difficult to pick things up but included surprises like two more Hooded Mergansers in among the trees. As we came back a rail ran across the path ahead of us and disappeared but we couldn't identify it with certainty. After lunch we visited the Oxbow Eco Centre and had a walk around a couple of the short trails. The best here was two close Limpkins one of which took off and flew around the open woods calling and displaying – an eerie sound. A very pre-occupied Armadillo was snuffling around just a few feet away. The temperatures were dropping today (about 57F).
- 16th January 2009 A cool day with strong NW winds. Visited the Savannas Recreation Area and Savannas Preserve SP where we had a good selection of typical birds but nothing startling! Spent most of the afternoon being tourists and getting ready for a longish drive across to the Gulf Coast.

- 17th January 2009 An early start to drive across to the Gulf Coast. The route we took went first to Okeechobee then down to Palmdale and across to Immokalee before making our way to Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary which we had visited last year. The drive across was mostly through orange grove country but there were plenty of roadside birds to keep the interest going including three more Crested Caracaras!
Corkscrew is one of my favourite reserves here and I spent most of the day just walking around the boardwalks again. There seemed to be more small birds this visit with at least eight Black-and-white Warblers, a stunning Yellow-throated Warbler and an amazingly close Worm-eating Warbler. At the feeders there was a Ovenbird and a retiring White-throated Sparrow among the usual visitors like Painted Buntings. A Great Crested Flycatcher was a bonus for me along with lots of vocal Carolina Wrens! Eventually we had to press on to Sanibel Island which is Ann's favourite place!
- 18th January 2009 Straight over to the J.N. 'Ding' Darling Wildlife Drive after breakfast to be one of the first in – some hope! Initially not a lot of waders on view but with a rising tide at about 09:30 many more started to arrive at various points along the drive. Lots of Willets, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitchers and Grey Plovers. Longer-legged wading birds were, as usual, plentiful and I counted at least 24 Roseate Spoonbills and seven Reddish Egrets. Several Ospreys were vocal and one carrying a fish was robbed by an immature Bald Eagle which in turn was immediately attacked by a Peregrine! Small birds included Prairie Warbler and White-eyed Vireo. At the Shell Mound Trail I found an Eastern Screech Owl roosting in a hole in a palm.
During the afternoon we visited the Bailey Tract which was hot and quite quiet although there were loads of Tree Swallows passing over. In the evening we went to Bowman's Beach for the sunset and lots of terns on the beach.
- 19th January 2009 I went back to the Bailey Tract just after dawn where I eventually got to grips with a skulking Swamp Sparrow. Half-a-dozen Mottled Ducks were easier! There was the usual Belted Kingfisher on his perch and a Wood Stork thrashing about in the shallows as was a Raccoon. Ann needed some retail therapy so we crossed back off the island and headed for Bunche Beach Preserve. There were plenty of waders on the beach including about 12 Piping Plovers (one of which was colour-ringed). I eventually found three American Oystercatchers, a species I had missed last year. Other waders included about 60 Short-billed Dowitchers and 40 Western Sandpipers. There was also a big gathering of 200+ Black Skimmers doing their usual impressive fly-bys (well they impress me anyway). Several Royal Terns accompanied a single Caspian Tern. Onward to the shopping mall for Ann while I sat in the parking lot watching a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks seeing off a young Red-tailed Hawk – all very vocal. An adult Bald Eagle also flew over while I was waiting. Late afternoon we visited Lighthouse Park back on the island but the highlight was in the sea just metres offshore when two-three Risso's Dolphins came close in and swam parallel to the beach.
- 20th January 2009 I went back to the J.N. 'Ding' Darling Wildlife Drive but it was a bit breezy and decidedly cool. The usual array of wading birds were on show and there seemed to be more Yellowlegs of both species. I had a nice count of 22 Red-breasted Mergansers and nearby located six Hooded Mergansers. The Eastern Screech Owl either wasn't in its roost hole or wasn't playing today but I did manage very good views of a Cooper's Hawk. Spent the rest of the day relaxing as we were on the move again tomorrow!
- 21st January 2009 An early start as we crossed off Sanibel and went down to Bunche Beach again. There were fewer waders today, probably because of the state of the tide which was quite high. A sub-adult Bald Eagle was sitting in the trees and I found a couple of Yellow-crowned Night Herons just below. As we left two Red-shouldered Hawks sat shoulder-to-shoulder near enough in a low tree. We started to head north but first crossed the bridge over to Cape Coral to look for Burrowing Owl. Following instructions in Pranty we soon found one in its obviously-marked burrow entrance – very nice.
We drove part of the way up I75 before pulling off to visit the Babcock/Webb WMA. This extensive area is really quite nice and you can just wander around the tracks casually birding. There were lots of small birds around the campsite many of which turned out to be Pine Warblers which outnumbered the usually common Yellow-rumped Warblers. I found another Wilson's Snipe and a couple of Northern Harriers. Miles from anywhere a car pulled up and the driver said 'Hi Mike' – it was a couple I had known for several years from tours to Lesbos which is the last place that I had seen them! Late in the afternoon we continued on our way arriving at Sarasota where we were booked into the Country Inn Suites and they gave us a free upgrade to a suite!

- 22nd January 2009 An early & frosty (!) start to continue up the I75 then across the amazing Sunshine Skyway towards St. Petersburg and down to Fort de Soto Park. A stop at some ponds along the CR679 gave us a number of duck including our first Redheads and a Bald Eagle sitting on a nest. The North Beach and car park area at Fort de Soto held a good variety of species including Yellow-bellied sapsucker, Yellow-throated warbler and loads of Yellow-rumped and Palm Warblers and a noisy party of 15 Monk Parakeets. Unfortunately the heat haze was a problem for seeing shorebirds. The Bay Pier area was also productive where a small fountain near the ranger's house attracted a steady stream of birds to drink and bather including a nice Hermit Thrush. We finished off at the East Beach where there were more waders , a Great Northern Diver (Loon), at least 28 Red-breasted Mergansers and equally un-expected (to me) 29 Slavonian (Horned) Grebes.
- 23rd January 2009 After breakfast we visited Ackerman Park where there were small numbers of waterfowl including four Hooded Mergansers in a ditch, about ten Black-crowned Night Herons and loads of noisy grackles and blackbirds! It was very hot when we got to the Celery Fields where I wanted to search for sparrows – mainly unsuccessfully but one bird was quite likely a Vesper Sparrow. A local birder suggested we visit Cooper Creek Park and gave us directions. A nice place but we saw nothing startling here except for an awesome adult Bald Eagle perched on a power pole. During the afternoon we had a walk along Siesta Key Beach (together with hundreds of other people!) and amazingly found Kentish and Piping Plovers sharing the area with tourists! Also lots of Royal Terns and various gulls hanging around here.
- 24th January 2009 A relatively short drive initially to Myakka River SP, another large and interesting area. At the lake there were good numbers of waders including many 'peeps' but unfortunately the heat haze at any distance was bad. A group of about 15 dowitchers looked like Long-billed but I could not be 100% certain. A couple of Limpkin were wandering around near the boat basin. We walked a couple of trails finding a variety of species including things like Blue-headed Vireo and Tufted Titmouse. Had an interesting walk along the Canopy Walkway (based on one built in Peru I think) which is not for anyone suffering from vertigo! Like many other sites the skies were full of Turkey Vultures and also a lot of Black Vultures. Eventually we had to set off towards Arcadia and then Lake Placid and up to our next stop of Sebring where we had booked into the Kenilworth Lodge for three nights. This is an interesting old hotel with apparently many of the original fittings in bathrooms, etc. and quite possibly some of the original guests!
- 25th January 2009 A quite day but we visited nearby Highlands Hammock SP which I found to be excellent for just walking the trails and general birding. 'Peckers were everywhere including Red-bellied, Downy, Pileated Woodpeckers and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. The Cypress Swamp Trail was very productive with Black-and-white and Yellow-throated Warblers and Blue-headed Vireos. A Great Crested Flycatcher sat obligingly to be digi-scoped. We also drove up to the area around the nicely-named Charlie Bowlegs Creek but did not see a lot here. The rest of the day we spent around Sebring.
- 26th January 2009 Drove back towards Lake Placid and visited the Archbold Biological Station where we saw a few Florida Scrub Jays along the nearby road. There is a short trail here which we followed and saw a range of small birds like Carolina Wrens, Eastern Towhee and a singing male Northern Cardinal. After a drive around the Lake Placid area we went back to Highlands Hammock SP and spent another few hours just general birding. I followed a feeding Pileated Woodpecker for some time through the woods and found a number of other species on the way including a Hairy Woodpecker which I managed to get really good 'scope views of. There were still plenty of birds about but unfortunately quite a lot of people also! A lovely hot day today with little wind.
- 27th January 2009 Following a convoluted route we worked our way back to Joe Overstreet Road this morning and did a repeat of our earlier visit. The journey produced another Crested Caracara and other things like roadside Eastern Meadowlark, Bald Eagle, American Kestrels and Loggerhead Shrikes. At the Lake Kissimmee we watched a pair of Bald Eagles near a nest and in the heat haze five Whooping Cranes, all colour-ringed and part of the re-introduction programme. More meadowlarks were obvious along the dusty roadside and we got quite close to a party of 14 Wild Turkeys. Driving up Canoe Creek Road we found another six turkeys and another Bald Eagle. A quick visit to Kaliga Park in St. Cloud gave us just one Snail Kite. Eventually we drove back into Kissimmee where we booked into the Best Western Lakeside Motel for our last night

28th January 2009

I did a little bit of birding at the lake side while Ann sorted out our bags ready for the flight home. After a(nother) brief shopping stop we went back to the airport and unloaded the car. Orlando International was not a bad experience and we smoothly found ourselves in the departure lounge. Flight V076 was going to be on time departing at 18:30 hrs but as we started to roar down the runway the captain suddenly aborted the take-off and quickly pulled over onto concrete between two runways. You could cut the atmosphere with a knife it was so silent for the next few minutes! Then, with a cheery 'Sorry, we had a small problem but it's ok now' from the captain, the plane was taxied back to the runway and blasted into take-off!

29th January 2009

Landed early morning at Manchester Airport and after retrieving our luggage we were quickly picked up by the courtesy bus and transferred back to Hanford Dean to collect the car. The drive home was cold, foggy and un-inspiring to say the least!



some birds are really shy, retiring, skulking.....

CLASSIFIED LIST

(order follows AOU)

Snow Goose *Chen caerulescens*

Two juveniles were at the Black Point Wildlife Drive, Merritt Island NWR on 12th/13th.

Ross's Goose *Chen rossii*

One was in the company of the two Snow Geese above.

American Wigeon *Anas Americana*

Only seen at Merritt Island NWR where large numbers (several hundred in some flocks) were present along the Black Point Wildlife Drive.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Small numbers noted at three localities at Kissimmee and Sarasota.

Mottled Duck *Anas fulvigula*

One-six seen in about six widespread localities.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*

The largest gatherings were along the Black Point Wildlife Drive, Merritt Island NWR and at Viera Wetlands with much smaller numbers in four other localities.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Noted only at Merritt Island NWR where there were many along the Black Point Wildlife Drive and also East Gator Creek Road.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

As with Shoveler above. This species was judged the second most abundant duck seen at Merritt Island NWR.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Two at the Black Point Wildlife Drive, Merritt Island NWR on 9th were the only ones noted.

Redhead *Aythya americana*

About ten were on a pond at Cabbage Key, near Fort de Soto Park on 22nd.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

Up to 40 were using the lake at the Best Western Motel, Kissimmee as a night-time roost on 8th, 10th & 28th. 15 were at Cabbage Key on 22nd and ten at Sarasota Celery Fields on 23rd.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

Three were off Merritt Island NWR on 12th and four at Ackerman Park and three at Sarasota Celery Fields on 23rd.

Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

Two were on a tiny field pool at Joe Overstreet Road on 10th and an excellent count of 45 at Black Point Wildlife Drive, Merritt Island NWR on 12th. 13 were at the Viera Wetlands on 14th and two-six at four other widespread sites.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

22 were at the J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive on 20th and 28 in the East Beach area of Fort de Soto Park on 23rd. Singles were in three other localities.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*

One was at Ackerman Park, Sarasota on 23rd.

Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo*

A party of 14 was at Joe Overstreet Road on 27th and smaller parties of six and nine along Canoe Creek Road on 10th and 27th.

Great Northern Diver (Common Loon) *Gavia immer*

Singles were at the Bay Pier area and East Beach at Fort de Soto Park on 22nd.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*

Seen on 12 dates in various wetland sites with the largest numbers present at J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive, Sanibel and the Viera Wetlands near Melbourne.

Slavonian Grebe (Horned Grebe) *Podiceps auritus*

A count of 29 at the East Beach area, Fort de Soto Park on 22nd.

American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*

Seen on eight days with the largest counts of 70 at Merritt Island NWR on 11th, 57 at J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive, Sanibel on 18th and 30 at Fort de Soto Park on 22nd.

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*

Seen on 13 days in virtually all coastal and wetland localities.

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*

Widespread and commonly seen.

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga*

Noted in about 14 localities with counts of about 30 at Blue Heron Wetlands Treatment Facility, Titusville on 12th/13th and Viera Wetlands, near Melbourne on 14th.

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*

Seen in widespread localities with up to ten at Black Point Wildlife Drive, Merritt Island NWR on 12th and Viera Wetlands, near Melbourne on 14th.

Great White Egret *Ardea alba egretta*

Widespread and seen in about 22 localities.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*

Widespread and common in many localities.

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea*

Widespread; about 30 along the J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive on 18th.

Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor*

Seen in many widespread localities with a maximum count of about 30 along Black Point Wildlife Drive, Merritt Island NWR on 12th.

Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens*

Seven were counted along the J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive on 18th and two at Fort de Soto Park on 22nd.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Seen in widespread localities, along roadsides, etc.

Green Heron *Butorides virescens*

On 13th singles were at Black Point Wildlife Drive, Merritt Island NWR and Blue Heron Wetlands Treatment Facility, Titusville and another at Viera Wetlands, near Melbourne on 14th.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Ten were at Ackerman Park, Sarasota on 23rd.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron *Nyctanassa violacea*

One was at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary on 17th and with two at J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive on 20th and Bunche Beach Preserve on 21st.

White Ibis *Eudocimus albus*

Widespread and very abundant in some localities.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

Seen on seven days with the largest counts of 42 at Black Point Wildlife Drive, Merritt Island NWR on 12th and 40 at Lake Kissimmee on 10th and Joe Overstreet Road on 27th.

Roseate Spoonbill *Ajaia ajaja*

Up to 12 were seen at Merritt Island NWR and 24 along the J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive.

Wood Stork *Mycteria Americana*

Seen in a number of widespread localities on 15 days with peaks of 13 at the Viera Wetlands on 14th and 12 at Myakka SP on 24th.

American Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus*

Seen in many widespread localities with a maximum count of about 40 on Merritt Island NWR .

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*

Seen daily everywhere! Impossible to miss!

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Present in many widespread localities and seen daily. Many very public sites with nesting platforms provided which certainly wouldn't happen in the UK!

Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis*

One-two seen at Lake Kissimmee and Kaliga Park, St. Cloud.

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Seen on eleven days in widespread localities including active nests at Cabbage Key and near Joe Overstreet Road.

Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus hudsonius*

Up to four different birds were seen on visits to Merritt Island NWR and one-two in six other localities. Most were ring-tails but adult males were at Babcock/Webb WMA and near Corkscrew Swamp and Myakka SP.

Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii*

One, possibly the same bird, was seen at the Blue Heron Wetlands Treatment Facility on 12th & 13th and another at J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive on 20th.

Red-shouldered Hawk *Buteo lineatus*

Seen (and often heard) almost daily in many areas including a pair evidently defending territory at a shopping-mall near Bunche Beach!

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

Three were at Viera Wetlands on 14th and singles in five other sites.

Crested Caracara *Caracara cheriway*

One was at Viera Wetlands on 14th, three seen on the drive between Fort Pierce to Corkscrew Swamp on 17th and another just south of Joe Overstreet Road on 27th.

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*

Common in many areas including along roadsides. See almost daily. About seven were along Joe Overstreet Road on 27th.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

A single, unexpected bird, was flushed along Joe Overstreet Road on 10th.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

One was at the J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive on 18th.

American Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus cachinnans*

Reasonable numbers seen and heard in widespread wetland localities.

American Coot *Fulica americana*

Common and widespread with some very large numbers present on wetlands. Possibly the greatest concentration was at the Viera Wetlands.

Limpkin *Aramus guarauna*

These were not hard to see contrary to some reports! One-two noted at Brinson Park area, Kaliga Park, Ackerman Park and the Celery Fields at Sarasota, Myakka SP and the Oxbow Eco Centre at Fort Pierce where one bird was loudly flight calling and displaying.

Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis*

Seen in many areas with quite large numbers at the end of Joe Overstreet Road.

Whooping Crane *Grus americana*

Five birds (all colour-ringed as part of the re-introduction scheme) were in fields at the lake end of Joe Overstreet Road on 27th.

Grey (Black-bellied) Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Good numbers were seen in coastal sites visited, particularly on the Gulf Coast and one was at Myakka SP on 24th.

Kentish (Snowy) Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

About five were on a crowded Siesta Key beach, Sarasota on 23rd.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

Noted at Bunche Beach Preserve and along the J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive with the largest numbers at the latter site.

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus*

Up to 12 were on Bunche Beach Preserve on 19th & 21st including a colour-ringed (banded) individual which had been marked as a breeding adult on the Missouri River near Vermillion, South Dakota in June 2008. The information received back from this sighting also included "The researchers have completed four years of studying piping plover use of sandbars constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to provide breeding habitat for piping plovers and least terns on the Missouri". Two were also seen on Siesta Key Beach, Sarasota on 23rd.



Killdeer *Charadrius vociferous*

Common and seen in widespread localities on 15 days.

American Oystercatcher *Haematopus bachmani*

Three were at Bunche Beach Preserve on 19th.

Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*

Three were at Myakka SP on 24th.

American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana*

Only a single was seen in flight along the Black Point Wildlife Drive, Merritt Island on 9th but up to 79 were counted there on 12th/13th.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*

Singles were at the J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive on 18th & 20th and at Myakka SP on 24th.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*

Up to 40 were counted at the Black Point Wildlife Drive/E. Gator Creek Road area between 9th-13th and one-four at J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive, Sarasota Celery Fields and Myakka SP.

Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*

About 60 were along East Gator Creek Road on 9th and 46 at Fort Pierce SP on 15th. Many noted at the J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive and Bunche Beach Preserve on the Gulf coast.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*

A single was at east Gator Creek Road, Merritt Island NWR on 9th but c25 along the Black Point Wildlife Drive on 12th. About 19 were seen at J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive on 20th and three at Sarasota Celery Fields and Myakka SP on 23rd/24th.

Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*

A single was at Bunche Beach Preserve, near Sanibel Island on 19th.

Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa*

Three were at Bunche Beach Preserve on 19th.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Up to 40 were seen at Merritt Island NWR and 21 at the J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive with smaller numbers at Fort Pierce SP and Fort de Soto Park.

Knot *Calidris canutus*

Up to five were along the J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive on 18th & 20th.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Noted in a number of typical coastal locations with the largest numbers at Bunche Beach Preserve near Sanibel Island.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*

About 40 at Bunche Beach Preserve on 19th were the only ones noted.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*

Seen in about seven localities with a maximum count of 150 along the J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive on 18th.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Many noted at the J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive on 18th and Bunche Beach Preserve, near Sanibel Island on 19th.

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*

Small numbers seen at the Black Point Wildlife Drive and Fort de Soto Park with up to 60 at Bunche Beach Preserve, near Sanibel Island on 19th and many noted with other waders at the J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

A group of 15 dowitchers 'scoped in heat haze at Myakka SP on 24th appeared to be this species.

Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata*

Six were found crouching in short grass just outside Viera Wetlands on 14th. Singles also seen at Merritt Island NWR, Babcock/Webb WMA and Sarasota Celery Fields.

American Woodcock *Scolopax minor*

A bizarre experience with a single bird, presumed to be this species, apparently 'roding' over the Best Western Lakeside Resort, Kissimmee just after dusk on 7th, 8th and 10th. The bird was only seen once from beneath but was obviously a wader and looked just like a Woodcock sp.! It appeared to be flying a circular route quite high (above the surrounding ambient light) and the repeated call was judged identical to first three calls given on the Stokes recording but this is supposed to be given only on the ground. Is there a confusion species I'm missing here?

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*

Widespread and common, seen in at least a dozen localities.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

Widespread and common, seen in many localities.

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus*

Small numbers seen at Merritt Island NWR, Fort Pierce, Fort de Soto Park and Siesta Key Beach, Sarasota.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

An adult was at Fort de Soto Park on 22nd.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

One-two adults were noted at Titusville and at Merritt Island NWR.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

Singles, possibly the same bird, were seen in the Merritt Island NWR on three dates. Another was at Bunche Beach Preserve on 19th and three together at Myakka SP on 24th.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*

Seen in 12 localities with up to 20 at Cooper Creek Park, Sarasota on 23rd and Myakka SP on 24th.

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus*

Small numbers seen on nine dates in widespread localities but there were many loafing about on Siesta Key beach, Sarasota on 23rd including several ringed (banded) individuals.

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

Seen only on the Gulf coast with small numbers at Bowman's Beach & off Lighthouse Park on Sanibel Island, Fort de Soto Park and Siesta key beach, Sarasota.

Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger*

Up to 60 were regularly seen just over the bridge on to Merritt Island NWR, 79 at Fort Pierce SP on 15th, a maximum of c200 at Bunche Beach Preserve, near Sanibel Island on 19th and 11 at the lake end of Joe Overstreet Road on 27th.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* 'feral'

Noted on many days but largely ignored!

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Several noted in a few localities.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica*

Noted only on Sanibel Island on 18th.

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*

Small numbers noted on many days in widespread localities.

Common Ground-dove *Columba passerina*

Seen on several days in six localities with a maximum count of 25 in the Bay Pier area at Fort de Soto Park on 22nd.

Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus*

About 15 were around the North Beach car park area at Fort de Soto Park on 22nd.

Eastern Screech Owl *Otus asio*

One was found roosting at the J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive on 18th.

Burrowing Owl *Athene cunicularia*

One found at a well-marked burrow on Cape Coral on 21st.

Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon*

Widespread. For example six counted along the Black Point Wildlife Drive 12th and on the roadsides between Fort Pierce and Corkscrew Swamp on 17th.

Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*

A single was at Joe Overstreet Road on 10th.

Red-bellied Woodpecker *Melanerpes carolinus*

Seen in nine widespread localities with many noted in Highlands Hammock SP on 25th.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*

One was at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary on 17th, two at Fort de Soto Park on 22nd and up to four in Highlands Hammock SP on 25th/26th.

Downy Woodpecker *Picoides pubescens*

One-three seen on Merritt Island, at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, Myakka SP and Highlands Hammock SP.

Hairy Woodpecker *Picoides villosus*

One was at Highlands Hammock SP on 26th.

Red-cockaded Woodpecker *Picoides borealis*

At least four were found at the well-known locality at Three Lakes WMA on 10th.

Pileated Woodpecker *Dryocopus pileatus*

One was at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary on 17th and up to four at Highlands Hammock SP on 25th/26th.

Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*

Quite widespread with one-two seen in ten localities.

Great Crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus crinitus*

Singles were found at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary on 17th and at Highlands Hammock SP on 25th/26th.

Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus*

Common and widespread with a maximum count of ten on the drive between Fort Pierce to Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary on 17th

White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus*

About three were at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary on 17th and two at Highlands Hammock SP on 25th with singles also seen at Merritt Island Visitor's Centre, Blue Heron Wetlands Treatment Facility and J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive.

Blue-headed Vireo *Vireo solitarius*

Four were at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary on 17th, about three at Highlands Hammock SP on 25th /26th and singles at Fort Pierce SP and Myakka SP.

Blue Jay *Cyanocitta cristata*

A flock of about ten were at the Archbold Biological Station on 26th.

Florida Scrub-Jay *Aphelocoma caerulescens*

About three, ridiculously tame, birds were at the Scrub Ridge Trail on Merritt Island NWR on 9th and about four at the Archbold Biological Station on 26th.

American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos*

Noted as widespread (probably!) and some specifically identified on call. A very large evening flight in the Titusville/Blue Heron Wetlands Treatment Facility on 12th/13th could well have included Fish Crows!

Fish Crow *Corvus ossifragus*

Also noted in several localities and a number identified on call (but not all!). For example, about 40 in the Kaliga Park area at St. Cloud on 27th were thought to be this species.

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*

Common and seen in widespread areas. On several days we saw birds obviously moving through an area in quite large numbers presumably feeding movements and on 21st a large 'swarm' of several hundreds were around just one tree off the Interstate 75 near Cape Coral.

Tufted Titmouse *Baccolophus bicolor*

One was at Myakka SP on 24th and two at Highlands Hammock on 25th.

Brown-headed Nuthatch *Sitta pusilla*

On 12th two were in a mixed flock of small birds at Joe Overstreet Road and at Three Lakes WMA.

Carolina Wren *Thryothorus ludovicianus*

On 17th about ten were seen and more particularly heard at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. Up to eight were at Highlands Hammock SP and several at the Archbold Biological Station.

House Wren *Troglodytes aedon*

One-two were at the Visitors Centre on Merritt Island NWR, Three Lakes WMA and Titusville.

Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris*

One was along Black Point Wildlife Drive, Merritt Island NWR on 12th and two at Viera Wetlands on 14th.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *Poliophtila caerulea*

Seen on many dates in widespread localities with a peak count of 20+ at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary on 17th.

Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis*

Two were at Joe Overstreet Road on 10th (& 27th) when two also at Three Lakes WMA and about four at Babcock/Webb WMA on 21st.

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*

One came to a drinking fountain at Fort de Soto Park on 22nd.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius*

About 50 were at the Old Hammock Trail on Merritt Island on 13th and one-five in five other localities.

Gray Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis*

Seen and heard in many localities.

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*

Widespread with small numbers seen on 13 days.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Small numbers noted in a number of areas but some larger flocks also seen for example around Fort Pierce and Cape Coral.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*

The commonest and most widespread warbler with particularly large numbers at the Blue Heron Wetlands Treatment Facility at Titusville and in the Fort de Soto Park area.

Yellow-throated Warbler *Dendroica dominica*

Singles were seen at Jetty Park in Fort Pierce, Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary and Fort de Soto Park. Two were at Highlands Hammock SP on 25th/26th.

Pine Warbler *Dendroica pinus*

Seen in several localities but noted particularly at the Babcock/Webb WMA on 21st where there were many even outnumbering Yellow-rumped Warblers.

Prairie Warbler *Dendroica discolor*

Singles were at Fort Pierce SP on 15th and the J.N. Ding Darling Wildlife Drive on 18th.

Palm Warbler *Dendroica palmarum*

Common and widespread. Seen almost daily.

Black and White Warbler *Mniotilta varia*

Up to eight were seen at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary on 17th and about six at Highlands Hammock SP on 25th/26th.

Worm-eating Warbler *Helmitheros vermivora*

One gave incredibly close 'in-your-face' views whilst feeding in dead leaf clusters at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary on 17th.

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus*

One was beneath the feeders at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary on 17th.

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*

Small numbers seen on five days in typical habitat at Merritt Island NWR, Oxbow Eco Centre at Fort Pierce, Corkscrew Swamp Preserve and the Bailey Tract on Sanibel Island.

Eastern Towhee *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*

Singles were at Three Lakes WMA, Oxbow Eco Centre and two at the Archbold Biological Station.

Vesper Sparrow *Pooecetes gramineus*

A bird seen very briefly at Sarasota Celery Fields on 23rd was thought to be this species.

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis*

About six were at Joe Overstreet Road on 10th and small numbers at Merritt Island NWR and in the Ackerman Park & Sarasota Celery Fields area.

Swamp Sparrow *Melospiza Georgiana*

A single was seen well at the Bailey Tract, Sanibel Island on 19th.

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*

One was at the feeders at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary on 17th.

Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis*

Small numbers seen in widespread localities including one male singing at the Archbold Biological Station on 26th.

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris*

Three, two males, were at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary on 17th.

Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*

Noted on 12 days sometimes in good numbers as at the Blue Heron Wetlands Treatment Facility at Titusville.

Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna*

Up to eight seen on both visits to Joe Overstreet Road and others on roadsides between there and Seebring.

Common Grackle *Quiscalus quiscula*

Small numbers seen in several widespread localities.

Boat-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus major*

Common and widespread (and very vocal occasionally!) in many localities.

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*

Small numbers seen around Kissimmee and St. Cloud with much larger numbers with grackles at the boat ramp at the end of Joe Overstreet Road. About 20 were also seen at Cape Coral.

American Goldfinch *Carduelis tristis*

Eight were at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary on 17th and three at Fort de Soto Park on 22nd.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Small numbers noted in several areas.



Exactly!!!!