

Florida Region

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Mild winters, better observer awareness, and increased retention of hummingbird feeders in winter are probably factors leading to the greatly increased winter hummingbird reports for Florida in recent years. Some feeder watchers report the same species again the following winter (such as a Buff-bellied Hummingbird reported five of six winters up though 1994–1995), strongly suggesting that the wintering birds survive with sufficient vigor to return. Perhaps their offspring also have a propensity for wintering in Florida. This winter the Florida Region added Calliope Hummingbird as a new species, and the Central Southern Region lists other hummingbird firsts in panhandle Florida.

Abbreviations: A.B.S. (*Archbold Biological Station*), C.P. (*County Park*), E.N.P. (*Everglades N.P.*), F.O.S.R.C. (*Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee*), S.R.A. (*State Recreation Area*), S.T.F. (*Sewage Treatment Facility*), U.C.F. (*University of Central Florida*).



Loons to Waterfowl

Red-throated Loons were in their most likely locales: seven at Fort Clinch S.P., *Nassau*, Feb. 10 (RC) and one at St. Marks N.W.R., *Wakulla*, Feb. 11 (JS, LP). A Pacific Loon, always a difficult call, was reported off St. George I., *Franklin*, Jan. 11–20 (JS, RP). An Eared Grebe was already in breeding plumage at Bienville Plantation, *Hamilton*, Feb. 26 (RC). A late flock of 300 Am. White Pelicans was moving E off Alligator Pt., *Franklin*, Jan. 3 (JD), possibly becoming part of the 4400 wintering at the *Polk* phosphate mines Feb. 8 (PF). Four Brown Pelicans, rare inland n. of L. Okeechobee, were tallied on the Lakeland CBC, Dec. 16 (B&F Henry). A ♂ Least Bittern wintered at Gainesville Jan. 10–Feb. 10 (FD).

A high count of 121 Fulvous Whistling-Ducks congregated at L. Kissimmee, *Osceola*, Feb. 15 (TP). Two imm. Tundra Swans wintered at L. Lafayette, *Leon*, Dec. 29 (B. Stoutamire, GM *et al.*) and at nearby Buck L. through Mar. 10 (HH *et al.*). Snow Geese were infrequently reported, with only a flock of seven in *Duval* Dec. 3–Jan. 3 (RC), and blue individuals at Freedom L. City Park, *Pinellas*, Dec. 9–16 (LH, RS, DG *et al.*), Gainesville Dec. 22–Jan. 12 (JHi), and *Polk* phosphate mines Jan. 12 (B&LC) & 21 (L. Lane). More common were 1000 N. Shovelers and 1500 Ruddy Ducks congregating at Bienville Plantation Feb. 26 (RC), and 1555 Am. Wigeon in the *Polk* mines Feb. 8 (PF). Six Mallards at Honeymoon Island S.R.A., *Pinellas*, Dec. 17 were judged to be wild (RS, BH, M. Hoffman), and 125 flocked at St. Marks N.W.R., Jan. 7 (D. Fellers, PF). A N. Pintail at Honeymoon Island S.R.A., Dec. 17 was the first reported at this coastal park (RS). A ♂ Cinnamon Teal at St. Marks N.W.R., Dec. 8–Feb. 2 (R. Gidden, JR, *et al.*) may have been a returning bird from last year. One Eur. Wigeon was at the *Polk* phosphate mines Feb. 17 (KN, PF, LH *et al.*). Visiting sea ducks included two Oldsquaws off Cedar Key, *Levy*, Dec. 30 (DS, BMC) and two at St. Marks N.W.R., Feb. 11 (JS, LP). Also, 35 Black Scoters were off the *Pinellas* coast Dec. 16 (DG, CB *et al.*) & 24 (KN), and 40 off Holiday, *Pasco*, Dec. 29 (EH, BP,

DG). There were 10 Surf Scoters at St. Marks N.W.R., Jan. 21 (J. Arnett, G. Kokitt), and two White-winged Scoters at Bienville Plantation Dec. 16 (JK, RR). Two Com. Goldeneyes were far south at Palm Harbor, *Pinellas*, Dec. 7–9 (LA, MW), where irregular, and singles visited at 2 different *Polk* mines Jan. 16–Feb. 17 (B&MK, PF *et al.*).

Raptors to Cranes

About 1000 Turkey Vultures moved E along the *Franklin* and *Wakulla* coasts Dec. 10–11 (JD), where they sometimes are found in large roosts. An early Swallow-tailed Kite was near Frostproof, *Polk*, Feb. 28 (TP). Two White-tailed Kites, wintering n. of their known breeding range, were found on the L. Placid CBC, *Highlands*, for the 5th consecutive year (*vide* GW); one was near the s. shore of L. Istokpoga, *Highlands*, Feb. 10 (SM) and two were there Feb. 11 (MM, SM, D. Todd). An imm. Snail Kite strayed N to Paynes Prairie State Preserve, *Alachua*, Feb. 3 (FD, I. Fromberg). A light-morph Short-tailed Hawk passed over L. Annie, A.B.S., *Highlands*, Jan. 15 (K. Tarvin); a dark morph at Tiger Cr. Preserve, *Polk*, Feb. 24 (CGe, BBI) was possibly already near its breeding territory. A pale Red-tailed Hawk (Kriider's?) seen at St. Marks N.W.R., Feb. 20 (JR) was possibly one of two pale Red-taileds wintering at Tram Road S.T.F., *Leon* (GM *et al.*). The first winter Golden Eagle for *Polk* was an adult reported at Lakeland Dec. 5 (TP).

Perhaps migrating (because they were high overhead), 332 Sandhill Cranes passed N over Winter Haven, *Polk*, Feb. 19 (B&LC). Over 100 Whooping Cranes have now been released into Florida, but mortality remains high (Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission); it was exciting to see 21 on the n.e. shore of L. Kissimmee Feb. 25 (B&LC, D. Denys, K. Beecher).

SA Six Purple Gallinules were at one small pond n.w. of Dade City, *Pasco*, Dec. 21 (RS, PB, BH) and 16 at Emerald Marsh Conservation Area, *Lake*, Feb. 24 (J. Marburger *et al.*). A item in the Lakeland Ledger elicited responses revealing widespread wintering on *Polk* lakes, where they are regularly fed with bread, sometimes directly from the hand. Flock sizes, when given, usually ranged from 5–15: Lakes Ariana, Bonnie (5–10), Dell (8–10), Haines (8–10), Hartridge (15–20), Henry, Hollingsworth, Howard, Jesse (4–5), Lena, Parker, Pierce, Thomas, and

Tomorrow (12–14); and Eagle, Grassy, Hunter, Reedy (8–15), and Skyview Lakes. Some lakes had multiple feeding stations. Numbers coming to be fed decline beginning in late February, coincident with an increase in territorial behavior. These numbers are consistent with the 100, more or less, reported on the Lakeland and L. Wales CBCs and confirm that many birds remain all winter. Paul Fellows, compiler of these Polk CBCs, stated that wintering behavior predated the widespread feeding, but the birds flocking to food are certainly more easily observed. This species is surely the boldest of North American railids, and the easiest to hand feed.

Shorebirds to Gulls

A Black-bellied Plover made a rare inland appearance at L. Kissimmee Feb. 15 (TP). A good count of 86 Snowy Plovers appeared in *Pasco* and *Pinellas* Jan. 20 (*fide* PB); nine were farther north at Lanark Reef, *Franklin*, Feb. 14 (HB, CGu). These were overshadowed by 179 Piping Plovers in *Pasco* and *Pinellas* Jan. 20 (*fide* PB) and 78 at Lanark Reef Feb. 14 (GS). One Black-necked Stilt in w. *Duval* Dec. 9–22 (M. Dolan) was considered significant, yet 80 were 150 mi s. at *Polk* mines Jan. 13 (Lake Region Audubon Society). Four Am. Avocets on Fort George I., *Duval*, Dec. 7 (RC) were n. of their usual winter range.

Large sandpiper aggregations included 225 Lesser Yellowlegs and 500 Least Sandpipers in a small pond e. of Dade City Dec. 21 (RS, PB, BH), 2550 Willets at Flamingo, E.N.P., *Monroe*, (GS), and 445 Long-billed Dowitchers at *Polk* mines Feb. 12 (PF *et al.*); eight Long-billeds were identified by their call at N. Jacksonville Feb. 14 (RC). Single Solitary Sandpipers at Oscar Scherer S.P., *Sarasota*, Dec. 11 (A. Rawson), at Sawgrass Lake C.P., and in *Pinellas*, Dec. 24+ (MW) were sticky migrants, as were the Long-billed Curlew at Little Talbot Island S.P. (GS), a Stilt Sandpiper at Springhill S.T.F., *Leon*, Dec. 11 & 22 (GM), and a Wilson's Phalarope at Tram Road S.T.F., Dec. 5 (JC). Also, 37 Stilt Sandpipers were n. of Bartow, *Polk*, Dec. 16 (PF). One Purple Sandpiper wintered as far S as Boynton Inlet, *Palm Beach*, Dec. 19–Jan. 3 (R. Hunter, HL, FB *et al.*), whereas ≤ 10 accumulated at the n. end of the state at Fort Clinch S.P. by the end of February (*fide* PP).

A dark ad. Pomarine Jaeger was found at Fort Clinch S.P., Dec. 22 (RC). One of a group of Franklin's Gulls remained at Springhill S.T.F. until Dec. 7 (JC). One

Lesser Black-backed Gull was seen along the Sunshine Skyway, *Pinellas*, Dec. 16 (LA), two at Fort DeSoto C.P., *Pinellas*, Jan. 2 (LA), one inland at L. Lafayette Jan. 15 (DE), and an adult at Merritt Island N.W.R., *Brevard*, Feb. 18 (A&RS). A first-winter Black-legged Kittiwake wandered S to the L. Worth Pier, *Palm Beach*, Dec. 17 (D. Beech, HL, GH, FB).

Doves to Hummingbirds

The large number (≤ 12) of White-winged Doves in Crystal R., *Citrus*, in January (BS) suggested the birds were not w. United States breeders that moved E for the winter, but represented a 50 mi n.w. extension from the closest known exotic population. Ten more were at Key West Jan. 21 (JO). But the one at St. Marks N.W.R., Dec. 9 (D. Morrow) was presumably a migrant from the west. A Canary-winged Parakeet (race not specified) was reported on the L. Wales CBC, *Polk*, Dec. 30 (*fide* PF). The Groove-billed Ani s.w. of San Antonio, *Pasco*, Dec. 21+ (CB, DG, EH *et al.*, ph. D. Woodard) represented the first for the county; another seen at a *Polk* mine Jan. 9 (B&LC, J. Jackson) was never relocated.

Short-eared Owls invaded the Tallahassee region: \leq three at Tram Road S.T.F. Dec. 1–2 (M. Mullenix), one at Dog I., *Franklin*, Dec. 3 (DE), and two at Lanark Reef Feb. 7 (HB, CGu). A N. Saw-whet Owl reported at Phipps Regional Park, Tallahassee, Dec. 16 (NW) was the first Big Bend report. A Burrowing Owl was again found on a *Franklin* barrier island, (St. George I.) Dec. 2 (H. Horne). A Chuck-will's-widow lingered at Bartow Dec. 16 (M. Bunn). From two–four *Chaetura* swifts, possibly again Vaux's, wintered at Gainesville Dec. 22–Feb. 6 (D. Cimbaro, RR, B. Roberts).

An ad. ♂ Ruby-throated Hummingbird wintering at a feeder in Jacksonville through the period (H. Tyner) is a rarity in n. Florida; an ad. male returned early to Alligator Pt., Feb. 23 (JD). Black-chinned Hummingbirds were widely reported: a female at Pace, a female at St. Leo, *Pasco*, Dec. 10 (RS) and a male there in late January (J&LH, KN); 3 Tallahassee reports: singles present Dec. 23–31 (HH, JC) and Dec. 22–28 (J. Elliot, JC, NW), and two others through the period (NW *et al.*); and a male at Dover, *Hillsborough*, Feb. 22+ (SB). Also, an *Archilochus* hummingbird (more likely Black-chinned than Ruby-throated) wintered in *Polk* through the period (B&LC *et al.*), and at least four were in Jacksonville through the period (*fide* PP), and one at Gainesville Jan. 27+ (*fide* T. Webber). A **Calliope Humming-**

bird, new for Florida, wintered in Jacksonville Dec. 20–Jan. 27 (P. Anderson *et al.*, † to F.O.S.R.C., v.t. NW). A ♂ Rufous Hummingbird remained in Jacksonville through the period, acquiring full ad. plumage by March (PP); at least five birds frequented 3 Tallahassee sites (JC, NW *et al.*). This winter ≥ 35 *Selasphorus* hummingbirds were reported in Florida w. of the Suwannee R., most identified as Rufous Hummingbirds (*fide* GM): ≥ 4 in Jacksonville through the period (*fide* PP), and ≥ 3 wintered in Gainesville and one at Cedar Key (*fide* BMu).

Flycatchers to Vireos

A Least Flycatcher was calling in n. *Pinellas* Feb. 24 (J&LH, RS, † to F.O.S.R.C.). Seven Vermilion Flycatchers (three males and four females) wintering in St. Marks N.W.R. through Feb. 4 (J. Harrell, K. Avipa *et al.*) may be the highest Florida count; farther south an ad. male remained s.w. of San Antonio Jan. 4+ (WY, RS, *et al.*); a male wintered at Buck I. Ranch, *Highlands*, (MM *et al.*) for presumably the 2nd consecutive year; and a first-year male was at Parker I., *Highlands*, Feb. 24 (B. Hope) and Mar. 2 (DG, EH *et al.*). An Ash-throated Flycatcher wintered at Turkey Cr. Sanctuary, *Brevard*, through Feb. 23 (B&SH, BBr *et al.*). A calling Brown-crested Flycatcher at Kapok Tree Park, Fort Lauderdale, *Broward*, Dec. 17 was compared with a nearby Great Crested Flycatcher (HL, LM, R. Buccholz). Two calling Great Crested Flycatchers announced spring in *Polk* Feb. 22 (PF), leading to speculation as to how far south these early migrants wintered. The first Florida record of a **Couch's Kingbird** was obtained when one wintered w. of U.S. 27 on the *Broward/Palm Beach* county line Feb. 1–21 (A&B Liberman, C. Kilmer *et al.*, ph. A. Smith to F.O.S.R.C.; *U.C.F.). A W. Kingbird at Melbourne, *Brevard*, in mid-February (BBr *et al.*) was rare locally, as was a straggling Gray Kingbird at Pahokee, *Palm Beach*, Dec. 2 (CW *et al.*).

Spring was also heralded very early by two returning Purple Martins (one purple, one gray) at the A.B.S. martin house beginning Jan. 4 (GW *et al.*), four at L. Alfred, *Polk*, Jan. 9 (PT), and one male at Key West Jan. 10 (JO). A presumed Bank Swallow reported at Tram Road S.T.F., Dec. 1 and regularly in November (GM *et al.*), and the one at Bienville Plantation Dec. 16 (RR, JK) were not cases of mistaken identity by these reliable observers; the latest Florida specimen record is Sept. 12, but sight reports have been accepted through November. A Cliff Swallow seen at Gainesville Dec. 22 (JHi) was a very late migrant, but not

unprecedented for the state.

A newly-discovered site in Crystal R. held 13 Florida Scrub-Jays Dec. 28 (*vide* BS). There was only modest penetration of n. passerines reported in the Florida pen. this winter: one Red-breasted Nuthatch at Gainesville 13 Dec. (D. Levey), one Brown Creeper at Gainesville Dec. 17 (K. Miller), single Winter Wrens at s. Jacksonville Nov. 28–Jan. 30 (B. Rhodes) and at Seahorse Key, *Levy*, Dec. 30 (DS; BMc), and a Golden-crowned Kinglet at Highlands Hammock S.P., *Highlands*, Jan. 20 (HL, GH *et al.*). Two-hundred Am. Pipits s.e. of Ft. Meade, *Polk*, Feb. 20 (C&D Ford, B&MK) represented a notable wintering flock. A Bell's Vireo at Sawgrass Lake C.P., Dec. 16 (BP, DG *et al.*) was the first recorded on that count; a cooperative bird at Kapok Tree Park Dec. 17 (HL, LM) was relocated that day and Dec. 19 by playing taped Bell's Vireo vocalizations (LM *et al.*).

Warblers

Single Blue-winged Warblers were reported at St. Lucie Inlet State Preserve, *Martin*, Dec. 30 (P. Merritt), Ft. Clinch S.P., Jan. 11 (E. Colborn), and E.N.P., Jan. 20 (RS), remarkable for a species lacking a winter specimen or photo from Florida. Equally unusual reports were the ♂ Nashville Warbler at Gainesville Dec. 31 (T. Hoctor) and one at E.N.P., Jan. 20 (RS). The N. Parula at A.B.S., Feb. 9 (G. Butcher, F. Lohrer *et al.*) was probably an early migrant. A unprecedented four Yellow Warblers wintered at Belle Glade Campground, *Palm Beach*, (CW, HL, GH). A Magnolia Warbler s.e. of L. Placid, *Highlands*, Feb. 25 (SB *et al.*), too early for a spring migrant, probably survived the Florida winter. A Cape May Warbler at Auburndale Dec. 14 provided the first winter report for *Polk* (PF, PT); the coastal county report of one at Sawgrass Lake C.P., Dec. 16 was only slightly less unusual (LH *et al.*). A Black-throated Green Warbler lingered at Sawgrass Lake C.P., Dec. 16–Jan. 9 (M. Hopkins, LH, MW); another was seen at Tiger Cr. Preserve Feb. 17 (TP) and two males were there Feb. 24 (CGe, BBi). An Am. Redstart was far north at Talbot Island S.P., *Duval*, Dec. 30 (R. Wears). Two Worm-eating Warblers were reported from E.N.P., Jan. 20 (RS). The N. Waterthrush s.e. of L. Placid Feb. 25 (SB *et al.*) seemed too early to be a migrant. In Gainesville a Louisiana Waterthrush was noted Jan. 6–9 (M. Manetz, RR), and an ad. ♂ Wilson's Warbler Jan. 3–Feb. 3 (D. O'Neill). Several Yellow-breasted Chats were reported; the most northern, at Hickory Mound

Impoundment, *Taylor*, Jan. 15 (RS), provided the first winter report for the county.

Tanagers to Finches

Winter reports were received for 3 tanagers, a ♂ Stripe-headed at L. Worth Dec. 4 (T. Trotsky), a ♂ Summer Tanager at Sawgrass Lake C.P., Dec. 29 (V. Morrison), and a ♂ W. Tanager at Lecanto, *Citrus*, Jan. 7–16 (BS *et al.*). Single Indigo Buntings wintered at Brooker Cr. Preserve, *Pinellas*, Dec. 9–Feb. 10 (LH, RS, WY, D. Gagne) and at Gainesville Feb. 9+ (BMu). A first-year ♂ Painted Bunting was already at Talbot Island S.P., Feb. 26 (RC).

Some Field Sparrows seen off County Rd. 184 n.e. of the Escambia R., *Escambia*, Dec. 25 and Phipps Regional Park Dec. 27 were "quite drab in appearance" with "pure white" breasts, "no rufous on the back and reduced amounts of rufous on the head," suggesting to the observers the possibility of the w. race, *Spizella pusilla arenacea*, apparently never reported in Florida (both J. Dunn, S. Tackett). The only Lark Sparrow reported remained at Turkey Cr. Sanctuary Feb. 23–Mar. 2 (B&SH *et al.*). A Henslow's Sparrow was found at Paynes Prairie Dec. 17 (J. Weimer, A. Kratter), another at Bienville Plantation Jan. 13 (JHi, JK), and three in w. *Duval* Sept. 22+ (RC). I had the privilege of seeing about 20 banded on the Apalachicola N.F. prairies near Sumatra, *Liberty*, Feb. 12 & 13 (with D. McNair *et al.*). A Lincoln's Sparrow at Weedon Island C.P., Dec. 16 (J&LH) was the first reported for the St. Petersburg CBC; individuals were at Fort Clinch S.P., Dec. 22 (RC) and at L. Wales, *Polk*, Feb. 10 (PT, CGe). Other sparrow reports include a Le Conte's at Paynes Prairie Dec. 12–17 (RR), a Fox Sparrow far south at Brooker Cr. Preserve Jan. 28–Feb. 4 (RS, WY *et al.*), and an imm. White-crowned at A.B.S., Jan. 15 (MM). Dark-eyed Juncos were considered more common in Gainesville than in typical years (BMu), and the most southerly one was reported at Pine Ridge, *Citrus*, Dec. 28 (*vide* BS).

Two ad. ♂ Yellow-headed Blackbirds appeared near Lakeland Dec. 16 (TP). Up to 15 Shiny Cowbirds at a feeder in Homestead, *Dade*, late October–early December included ad. males, females, and "probable immatures" (B&B Robertson), and six Bronzed Cowbirds returned to Lakeland for the 7th consecutive winter (B&LC *et al.*). Considerable numbers of Baltimore Orioles winter at sugar-water feeders, including over 65 in w. and s. Jacksonville (RD, J. Cocke); a male was reported at Parker I., Feb. 10 (GW). Among the numbers of Baltimores, a few

Bullock's Orioles were reported, but no reports specified males. The observers and readers should be cautioned that the females vary sufficiently so that they cannot be safely sorted by species in the field (and some say in the hand); field guides do not show this range of variation.

Twelve Purple Finches at Fort Clinch S.P., Jan. 7 (A&RS) was the only flock reported. Thirty House Finches were noted in Gainesville Jan. 26 (D. Wenny) An eager male was singing at Newberry, *Alachua*, in early February (C. Parenteau), they are, indeed, early breeders. Only a single Pine Siskin, at Delray Beach, *Palm Beach*, Jan. 7 (HL), was reported, and a single Evening Grosbeak was at Gainesville Jan. 9 (H. Loescher).

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