

# florida region



**SA** In 1997–1998, El Niño resulted in winter rains that prevented or delayed nesting by wading birds in southern Florida; but in the Tampa Bay area of west-central Florida, the same rains flooded wetlands prior to an extreme spring drought and resulted in the largest nesting effort in more than 20 years. This year the situation was dramatically reversed. Drier conditions in winter 1998–1999 produced the first “typical” drydown in southern Florida in several years. Prey was concentrated during the critical foraging period of the breeding cycle, and the result was the largest Everglades nesting effort since 1992. Nesting of the five priority indicator species (Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Tricolored Heron, White Ibis, and Wood Stork) tripled from 1998 to over 21,000 breeding pairs (Table 1) (DEG, JCO, PCF et al.). Conversely, continuing drought and the absence of the winter rains needed to recharge the wetlands and build up the food base in the Tampa Bay area was associated with a 50% decline in nesting numbers there (RTP, AFS). Other coastal populations exhibited similar declines, including Sarasota Bay (RTP, AFS), Marco I. area (TB), and Pine I. Sound–Matlacha Pass (JC); at the latter site, pollution and disturbance were also implicated.

**RICHARD T. PAUL  
and ANN F. SCHNAPP**

**A**fter a very dry spring, much of the Region experienced above-normal rains in June followed by mostly drier-than-normal conditions, especially in the Keys. No tropical storms influenced local conditions during the period. Severe space restrictions forced deletion of many noteworthy reports, for which we offer our apologies.

**Abbreviations:** C.P. (County Park); C.S.S. (Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary); F.O.S.R.C. (Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee); F.O.C. (Field Observations Committee); F.W.C. (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission); M.C.A. (Marsh Conservation Area); P.P.M. (Polk Phosphate Mines); S.B.P. (State Buffer Preserve); S.R.A. (State Recreation Area); S.R.S.T.F. (Springhill Road Sewage Treatment Facility); T.I.S.P. (Talbot I. State Park).

## **SHEARWATERS THROUGH FALCONS**

A Greater Shearwater, irregular in summer, washed ashore at Vilano Beach, *St. Johns*, 10 Jun (DR, \*Florida Museum of Natural History). Even more unusual was a White-tailed Tropicbird <5 km off Jupiter on 7 Jun, a day with strong E winds (SN). Several reports of Am. White Pelicans were capped by 200 seen at Cedar Key 18 Jul (R&TR). An F.W.C. aerial survey estimated 8650 nesting pairs of Brown Pelicans statewide, up 200 from 1998 but 1100 below the average since

1990. With an average brood size of 1.37, nesting success was below that of recent years (SN, STS). Possible summering Am. Bitterns were found at Orlando Wilderness Park 6 Jun (CP, ph. to F.O.C.) and at Fort Drum M.C.A., *Indian River*, 28 Jun (SR et al.).

Roseate Spoonbills in Florida Bay enjoyed their first successful nesting in several years. The normal November–February effort totaled 621 nests with more than 50% in the n.w. part of Florida Bay, a significant shift away from the traditional n.e. bay colonies. Remarkably, a 2nd effort totaling 260 nests occurred in the n.e. bay in the spring (JL). At least six pairs nested successfully at C.S.S. for the first time this century (RA, EC), and 164 pairs nested at 4 Tampa Bay area sites—including the first successful nest in Clearwater Harbor since the 1870s (AFS, RTP). About 900 pairs of Wood Storks nested at C.S.S. Most failed in May, and no more than 100–300 young fledged (EC, TB, JCO). Another 485 pairs nested in the Everglades, half in the Water Conservation Areas where they were largely successful (PCF); a total of 321 nests were located in 3 Tampa Bay area colonies (AFS, RTP). Greater Flamingos—escapes from 2 Tampa area attractions—were sighted in Hillsborough Bay 3 Jun and 29 Jul (RTP, AFS) and in Ding Darling N.W.R. 23 Jun (JR) and 2 Jul (DTe).

A **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** nest with 16 eggs at Three Forks M.C.A., *Brevard*, 7 Jul (BR, BQ), later depredated (*vide* BPr), was the first ever found in Florida,

**Table 1  
Florida Breeding Waterbird Surveys in 1999**

Species	Mainland Everglades System <sup>1</sup>		Tampa Bay Coastal Colonies <sup>2</sup>	
	# Pairs	% Change from 1998	# Pairs	% Change from 1998
Great Blue Heron	749	+144	196	-38
Great Egret	7781	+89	491	-41
Snowy Egret	1210	+402	611	-28
Little Blue Heron	2101	+69	244	-11
Tricolored Heron	1723	+49	426	-43
Reddish Egret			57	0
Cattle Egret	1606	-34	3355	+41
White Ibis	10,404	+639	5712	-67
Glossy Ibis	49		253	-54
Roseate Spoonbill	47	+370	164	-12
Wood Stork	472	+1840	163	+208
Totals	26,142	+140	11,672	-50

<sup>1</sup>A massive effort of many people and groups, compiled primarily in the “S. Florida Wading Bird Report” of the S. Florida Water Management District (DEG, JCO, PCF et al.).

<sup>2</sup>(RTP, AFS et al.).

although nesting had been suspected based on sightings of adults with young in 1988 and 1990. A male Redhead was at S.R.S.T.F. through the season. Nine Ring-necked Ducks were at L. Jackson 20 Jun (GM et al.). Two Red-breasted Mergansers summered at Zellwood to 12 Jun (HR), and one was at Huguenot Park, *Duval*, to 2 Jul (RC). Ruddy Ducks were at 3 sites: five on 17 Jun and one 12 Jul at P.P.M., and single females through the period at Zellwood and S.R.S.T.F. (m.ob.).

Swallow-tailed Kites at Zellwood peaked at 102 on 20 Jul (HR et al.); there were up to 200 in late July at the former "ag" fields w. of Palm Bay, *Brevard* (SR). A White-tailed Kite nest at Three Lakes W.M.A., *Osceola* (reportedly by a different pair than that noted in Spring), failed in early July (TD et al.). Present throughout the season were one White-tailed at Kicco W.M.A., *Polk* (TD), and three each at St. Johns M.C.A., *Brevard*, and Three Forks M.C.A. (SR). The F.W.C. study of nesting Snail Kites on L. Kissimmee reported 46 nests; clutch sizes were normal, but fledging success was low (0.69 young/nest), apparently because littoral habitats still have not recovered from a lake draw-down 3 years ago (STS). A female Snail Kite was seen at Zellwood 16 Jul (HR), while a Mississippi Kite was at Crystal River S.B.P., *Citrus*, 10 Jun (A&BH).

The state Bald Eagle survey tallied 1043 active territories, another new record for this increasing population (SN); ten years ago we celebrated a new high of 436! An unidentified accipiter w. of Kendall 28 Jul was early, whatever it was (JBo), while two Sharp-shinned summered at Zellwood (HR). Cooper's Hawk nests were monitored in Gainesville, Lakeland, and St. Petersburg, and hunting birds were reported from several more sites (m.ob.). A Crested Caracara at Zellwood 27 Jul (HR) was n. of its usual haunts, while an Am. Kestrel at Homestead 5 Jun (JBo) was presumably an extremely late spring migrant. A Peregrine Falcon in s.w. *Hamilton* 13 Jul furnished a 6th summer season report (KNS, DH).

#### RAILS THROUGH OWLS

A Sora heard at Brasher Park, Port Richey, 26 Jun (KT) may be *Pasco's* first summer record. At Zellwood, 22 Purple Gallinules and 133 Am. Coots (with 5 unsuccessful nests) were the season's high counts (HR). Sandhill Cranes suffered poor nesting success in c. Florida but did well near Gainesville, with young birds comprising 26% of the population in late-season surveys there (SN).

Whooping Cranes venturing from release areas included five s.w. of Bushnell, *Sumter*, on 7 Jun (CB), five in n. *Polk* 2 Jul (NC, TP), and three over Zellwood 6 Jul (HR).

Ten Snowy Plovers, including three juveniles, were at Ft. Myers Beach 24 Jun (CE), indicating local nesting success. At Huguenot Park, 29 Wilson's Plovers included five pairs 19 Jun (RC), while 23 at Ft. Myers Beach included five chicks on 24 Jun (CE). Twelve Semipalmated Plovers at Cape Florida S.R.A. 3 Jul were the earliest reported (JBo), as were a Piping at Honeymoon I. S.R.A. 14 Jul (LK) and three more at Shell Key 18 Jul (PMB, KN). Pair counts of Am. Oystercatchers included 86 at Hillsborough Bay, eight at Shell Key, 58 on *Citrus* spoil islands, and nine at Pt. Orange (RTP, AFS, PMB, GB). At T.I.S.P., 31 Black-necked Stilts included four nesting pairs on 25 Jun, with 56 birds present on 31 Jul (RC). Stilts also nested at Kanapaha and Paynes Prairies near Gainesville (STS, RR, JHi, MM). One Am. Avocet was at T.I.S.P. 1 Jul (RC), while 151 in breeding plumage at P.P.M. 5 Jul constituted a high summer count (PT, CGe, LA).

A Spotted Sandpiper at Homestead 5 Jun (JBo) was very tardy, while one at Tierra Verde 11 Jul was the first of the "fall" (MW). An Upland Sandpiper appeared at Zellwood 9 Jul, with up to five present 20–31 Jul (HR). A Whimbrel was at St. Marks N.W.R. 13 Jun (MC); four at Huguenot Park 4 Jul (RC) were perhaps southbound. Single Long-billed Curlews at Zellwood 25 Jun (HR), Shell Key 18 Jul (PMB, KN), and T.I.S.P. 27 Jul (PL) were likely "fall" migrants. Rare in June, two Marbled Godwits 3 Jun and eight 6 Jun were in Hillsborough Bay (RTP, AFS), while St. Marks N.W.R. had two 21 Jun (HVT) and Ft. Myers Beach had two 24 Jun (CE). Ft. Myers Beach also hosted 80 summering Red Knots (CE). Among nearly 20 reports of peeps, noteworthy records included 11 Semipalmated Sandpipers at Zellwood 5 Jun (HR), five summering West-terns at Ft. Myers Beach (CE), two Least at Paynes Prairie 10 Jul—an early *Alachua* date (RR)—and two White-rumped at Zellwood 5 Jun and another 12 Jun (HR). Twelve Pectoral Sandpipers were at Zellwood 12 Jul (HR), and 13 were at Paynes Prairie 21 Jul (JHi, MM). The earliest Stilt Sandpipers were two at Zellwood 14 Jul (HR). Seven Long-billed Dowitchers were heard at T.I.S.P. 25 Jun, with about 50 heard there again on 11 Jul (both RC). One Long-billed was heard at Zellwood 20 Jul (HR). A female breeding-plumaged Wilson's Phalarope decorated T.I.S.P. 25 Jun (RC).

About 23,300 pairs of Laughing Gulls were estimated to be present in 14 colonies statewide, with a few sites not reporting, 73% of these birds were in the Tampa Bay area (GS et al.). Inland, five Laughings appeared at Zellwood 14 Jun (HR). One Ring-billed Gull was at L. Jackson 2 Jul (GM, KM), and two immatures summered at Zellwood (HR). A first-year Great Black-backed Gull was at Ft. Myers Beach 11 Jul (CE et al.), with a 2nd-year bird at Shell Key 18 Jul (PMB, KN).

Always elusive, 38 pairs of Gull-billed Terns were found at 4 sites in n.e. and n.w. Florida (m.ob.). Caspian Terns totaled 199 pairs at 3 sites statewide, Royals 4450 pairs at 5 sites, and Sandwich Terns—down from 1998—349 pairs at 3 sites (m.ob.). Single Forster's Terns were noted at Zellwood 5 Jun–14 Jul (HR) and at Sebastian Inlet 11 Jun (BW). The largest Least Tern colonies reported were 64 pairs at Three Rooker Bar (RTP, AFS), 80 at the *Citrus* spoil islands (RTP, AFS), and 100 at Ft. Myers Beach (CE). No Least nested at Huguenot S.P., while nesting failures were reported for Guana River S.P., Anastasia S.R.A., and Shell Key (m.ob.). "Many" Bridled Terns were noted off Jupiter 7 Jun (SN). A Sooty Tern was found dead w. of Sunrise, *Broward*, 11 Jul (BW), and an immature appeared at Huguenot Park 12 Jul (RC). Black Terns appeared mid-state about 17 Jun (m.ob.), with a high count of 100+ at T.I.S.P. on 27 Jul (PL). Black Skimmers totaled 1365 pairs at 7 colonies in the Tampa Bay area (RTP, AFS, PMB, BB). At Big Marco Pass, 243 pairs of skimmers nested but fledged fewer than 70 chicks (TB). Skimmer sightings included two at Zellwood 22 Jun (HR), 492 at PPM 12 Jul (PF, B&LC), and 300+ (some nesting) at Bird I. in Nassau Sound on 27 Jul (PL)

Three White-winged Doves were at Green Cove Springs, *Clay*, 30 Jun (CGr), and four were at McKay Bay, *Hillsborough*, 10 Jul (AGS, RS). At Zellwood, 1760 Mourning Doves and 55 Com. Ground-Doves were high counts on 5 & 12 Jun, respectively (HR). The **Key West Quail-Dove** present since 19 Apr at Cape Florida S.R.A. remained until at least 4 Jun (*vide* DH, HHu). A Ft. Lauderdale parrot roost active for more than 20 years contained more than 100 birds on 24 Jul; most were Red-crowned or Orange-winged parrots, with single Yellow-naped, Yellow-headed, and Mealy parrots (JMD, BPr et al.; ph. to F.O.C.) Three ad. and six juv. Burrowing Owls were noted at Albert Whitted Airport, St. Petersburg, 14 Jun (LS, PBo).

## FLYCATCHERS THROUGH FINCHES

A **Willow Flycatcher** (singing *fitz-bew*) was seen and heard at Zellwood 27 Jul (†HR to F.O.S.R.C.), and a **Tropical Kingbird** was noted at Ft. DeSoto C.P. on 7 Jul (†LSA et al. to F.O.S.R.C.). An E. Kingbird at Weedon I Preserve, *Pinellas*, 24 Jun (LH, PMB) was a late migrant. Dry weather may have affected nesting of Gray Kingbirds in the Keys (RSa, SS4). Ten Red-eyed Vireos at Saddle Creek C.P., *Polk*, 16 Jul (PF) was a high early count. Singing Black-whiskered Vireos were noted at Cayo Costa S.P., *Lee*, 6 Jun (CE, ASa) and Honeymoon Island S R A. 11 Jul (RS). In the Keys, Black-whiskered numbers appeared down, with the 2nd nesting cycle "abbreviated to nonexistent" possibly due to dry conditions and reduced insect populations (RSa, SS4).

Typically early migrants, flocks of 2000+ Purple Martins reached St. Petersburg 12 Jun (JBB), 1935 reached Zellwood 19 Jun (HR), and 1795 were at Zellwood again on 4 Jul (HR). Two Tree Swallows remained at Zellwood to 12 Jul (HR). Two N. Rough-winged Swallows were flying N at Cayo Costa S.P. 6 Jun (CE, ASa); a month later on 5 Jul, 215 were at P.P.M. (CGE, PT, LA). One Rough-winged was noted at L. Jackson 16 Jul (GM, LT), and another was a fall migrant w. of Kendall 29 Jul (JBo). Two Bank Swallows were at Ft. DeSoto C.P. 20 Jul (PMB, LH), one was at Zellwood 20 Jul (HR), and 250 made a showing w. of Kendall 31 Jul (JBo). That same day w. of Kendall, 300 Cliff Swallows and 1000 Barns were also noted (JBo). Two nests of Barn Swallows were documented at Micanopy (LP), and there were many at Zellwood (HR et al.); nesting was also noted at Ft. Drum M C A. (SR) and possibly Fellsmere Grade, *Brevard*, and *Indian River*, where a flock of 30 included juveniles 19 Jul (SR).

The small Blue Jay population in the Upper Keys, where feeders may provide an important food supplement, had a successful nesting season (RSa, SS4). An Am. Robin singing its "evening song" in Gainesville 10 Jun (ZN) and a Brown Thrasher w. of Kendall 18 Jul (JBo) were both s. of normal summer range. Common Mynas, common around s. Florida shopping malls, have now spread to the Keys. On 1 May a pair was found nest-building in Tavernier, with mynas seen there through July (RSa, SS4). Warbler migration began normally in mid-to late July (m.ob.). Early Louisiana Waterthrushes turned up at Tallahassee 24 Jun (FR) and Bald Pt. 7 Jul (JD); a third, at L. Alto 8 Jul (JW), provided the 2nd earliest date for *Alachua* (RR). A singing Yellow-

breasted Chat at Crystal River S.B.P. 10 Jun (A&BH) was near its s. range limit.

Eighty-six N. Cardinals and 32 Blue Grosbeaks were at Zellwood 12 Jun, while up to seven Indigo and eight male Painted buntings (including six immatures) summered there (HR). Thirteen male and at least five female **Dickcissels** also summered at Zellwood; two nests and a female feeding two fledglings established the first Florida breeding record (HR, BPr, GB et al.). Single male Shiny Cowbirds were at St. Petersburg 24 Jun-31 Jul (J&LH) and at Zellwood 12 Jul (HR). Also at Zellwood, 1005 Brown-headed Cowbirds on 16 Jul comprised a high summer count (HR).

A first-year male Orchard Oriole singing through the season at Zellwood and three birds there 6 Jul suggested nesting at this locality on the edge of the species' range (HR et al.). House Finches appear established in Jacksonville where family groups visited feeders this summer (*fide* PP) and at Ft. Lauderdale where seven were at Hugh Taylor Birch S.R.A. 27 Jul and where they bred successfully in 1997 and 1998 (WG). A female Am. Goldfinch at Tallahassee 21 Jul (DM) was the 6th summer report for the state.

**Contributors:** Larry Albright, Ralph Arwood, Lyn S. Atherton, Betsy Baker, Gian Basili, Ted Below, Clay Black, Paul M. Blair, Pam

Bowen (PBo), J. Boyd (JBo), Judith B. Buhrman (JBB), Ed Carlson, Roger Clark, Marvin Collins, Neil Combee, Buck & Linda Cooper, Jorge Coppen, Jon-Mark Davey (JMD), Tylan Dean, Jack Dozier, Charlie Ewell, Paul Fellers, Peter C. Frederick, Dale E. Gawlik, Chuck Geanangel (CGe), Wally George, Charles Greene (CGr), Al & Bev Hansen, John Hintermister (JHi), Dan Hipes, Judi Hopkins (JHo), Larry Hopkins, Dotty Hull, Hank Hull (HHu), Lillian Kinney, Pat Leary, Jerry Lorenz, Keith MacVicar, Mike Manetz, Gail Menk, Don Morrow, Zach Neece, Kris Nelson, Steve Nesbitt, Katy NeSmith (KNS), John C. Ogden, Tom Palmer, Cheri Pierce, Peggy Powell, Bill Pranty (BPr), Leecia Price, Bridgett Quinn, Diane Reed, Harry Robinson, Bill Robson, Ron & Tommie Rogers, Josh Rose, Rex Rowan, Sean Rowe, Fran Rutkovsky, Arlyne Salcedo (ASa), Rick Sawicki (RSa), Stephen T. Schweikert, Austin G. Smith, Ron Smith, Lee Snyder, Gary Sprandel, Alexander Sprunt IV (SS4), Donald Terry (DTe), Larry Thompson, Pete Timmer, Ken Tracey, Hans Van Tal, Billi Wagner, Margie Wilkinson, John Winn.

**Richard T. Paul** and **Ann F. Schnapf**,

National Audubon Society, 410 Ware Boulevard, Suite 702, Tampa, FL 33619

(rpaul@audubon.org,

aschnapf@audubon.org)



## BIRD SLIDES

Nearly 6,000 species worldwide  
Over 90,000 slides available

### SLIDE SETS

Familiar Birds, Eastern Warblers, Raptors, Owls, Endangered Species Bird Behavior, Bird Families of the World, Neotropical Migrants & more

### INDIVIDUAL SLIDES

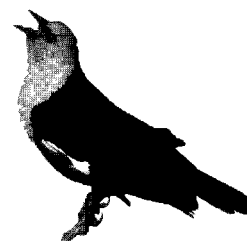
Request our free North American catalog or send a custom list indicating age, sex, behavior, or color morph.

Catalog slides \$3.00 Custom slides \$5.00 Minimum order \$15.00  
Allow 4 weeks for delivery.

*These slides are for non-profit lectures only and may not be duplicated.  
For publication or other reproduction rights, please call us.*

### VIREO (Visual Resources for Ornithology)

The Academy of Natural Sciences  
1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway  
Philadelphia, PA 19103  
(215) 299-1069  
www.acnatsci.org/VIREO



©Tom Vezo/VIREO