

# Florida



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Rainfall in June and July was heavy, partially replenishing the drought-diminished wetlands. At the end of the season, the water levels were nearing the bottom of the normal range. Unfortunately, the dry weather pattern returned at the end of the season, leaving the Region in a continuing drought pattern.

**Abbreviations/definitions:** C.P. (county park); E.L.A.P.P. (Environmental Lands Acquisition and Protection Program); E.N.P. (Everglades National Park); L.A.R.A. (L. Apopka Restoration Area; *Orange*); P.P.M. (*Polk* phosphate mines); S.R.A. (state recreation area); W.C.A. (Water Conservation Area).

## LOONS THROUGH STORKS

Single Common Loons, scarce in summer, were at St. Teresa Beach, *Franklin* 7 Jul (JM) and Tram Road S.T.P., *Leon* 16 Jul (GM), and one in definitive alternate plumage was at New Port Richey, *Pasco* 14 Jul (EW). A single Black-capped Petrel was found ca. 19 km off Key Biscayne, *Miami-Dade* 14 Jul (APr). Quite unusual was an out-of-season Northern

Gannet found in a weakened condition inland at Crystal R., *Citrus* 13 Jun. More usual, but still a rarity, was another Northern Gannet at Cedar Key, *Levy* 18 Jul, found dead two days later (JF). An amazing number of American White Pelicans summered at L.A.R.A., with more than 1000 seen on seven dates, and a peak count of **2400** on 27 Jun (HR). Additional summering birds were at Bald Pt., *Franklin* 10–15 Jun (JD), Flamingo, E.N.P. (BR), and the *Miami-Dade* landfill (LM). A statewide Brown Pelican survey conducted 13–19 Jun found 6432 nesting pairs in 39 colonies, well below the statewide average of 9317 since the survey began in 1968. The reduction in number of nesting pairs was most noticeable from the middle Gulf coast southward, with a reduction of 47%, and along the Atlantic coast, with a reduction of 41% as compared to the average from 1968–1990. The reason for this decline is not apparent (SN). Bird I., *Franklin* was host to 269 Brown Pelican nests (JGo). Two key Tampa Bay area colonies were affected by raccoons (RP, AP).

Aerial wading bird surveys in the W.C.A.s indicated that abundances in 2001 were even higher than during 2000, which was 129% higher than in 1999, a year in which counts ran roughly three times higher than in 1998. This continues a trend of more birds coming into

the Everglades in the early dry season than have in the past (DG). The estimated number of wading bird nests (excluding Cattle Egrets, which are not dependent on wetlands) in s Florida was 38,647—down about 5% from last year, which was one of the best years in a decade. Changing water patterns caused a substantial switch of nest locations from last year. In 2000, 81% of the nests were in W.C.A. 3, while only 38% of the nests were there in 2001. On the reverse side was Loxahatchee N.W.R., which contained 51% of the nests this year as compared to only 7% of the nests last year. E.N.P. and Florida Bay continue to contain only about 10% of the total wading bird nests, a trend that must be reversed as part of the ecosystem's restoration. Unfortunately, while nest attempts are normally a good indicator of nest success, this year that was not true, particularly for Great Egrets and especially for birds in W.C.A. 3. This seemed to be caused by continued drought followed by a rainfall event in Apr that caused water levels to increase quickly (DG). Of the 4168 Great Egret nests that were started in W.C.A.s 2 and 3, over 80% were abandoned or failed (PF).

An imm. Great White Heron at Newnans L., *Alachua* 18 Jul + (JN et al.) was unusually far n. Numbers of Snowy Egrets and Little Blue and Tricolored Herons were low again in the Tampa Bay area (RP, AP). Snowy Egret nest numbers in s. Florida were above last year's very high numbers (DG). Reddish Egrets nesting in the Tampa Bay area were likely at a post-plume-hunting high, with 86 pairs at 10 colonies, half of those at the Alafia Bank Sanctuary (RP, AP). Twelve Reddish Egrets were at Hagan's Cove, *Taylor* 30 Jul (JH, HA). A nesting colony of Black-crowned Night-Herons at Kissimmee Prairie Preserve S.P., *Okeechobee* contained 75 pairs (PS). Twenty-seven first-year Roseate Spoonbills were at Holiday, *Pasco* 6 Jul (KT). Roseate Spoonbills were at the same level as last year in the Tampa Bay area, with about 180 nests at 6 sites (RP, AP). White Ibis nest starts in s. Florida were down slightly from last year but still well above the 10-year average (DG). These numbers may be less reliable than usual, as many White Ibis initiated nesting, then abandoned their colonies in W.C.A. 3. Many of these birds apparently attempted to reneat at Loxahatchee N.W.R. or at Pocket colony, likely resulting in fewer nesting pairs than nest attempts (PF). About 335 pairs of Glossy Ibis were found at four sites in the Tampa Bay area, about half the normal number, reflecting the dry foraging numbers (AP, RP). There was no statewide Wood Stork survey this year, but nest numbers were down in the Tampa Bay area (RP, AP) and

in s Florida, though in s. Florida, the numbers were still well above the 10-year average (DG). As noted above, the large number of nest starts did not correlate with the number of young produced. This was true for Wood Storks as well, as they abandoned one large colony, and the Tamiami West colony had 1400 nests, but only 450 produced 900 young (PF). Four pairs with large downy young on Weeki Wachee R., *Hernando* 12 Jul were extraordinarily late (AP, RP)

### WHISTLING-DUCKS THROUGH PLOVERS

Hundreds of Fulvous Whistling-Ducks along with a few Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were found 8 Jul at Belle Glade Agricultural Station, *Palm Beach* (BH). Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks continue to spread in peninsular Florida, with three reports from *Alachua* (LB, JH) to the n. and one report from Ormond Beach, *Volusia* (CS) on the Atlantic coast. One-hundred-fifty Mottled Ducks were found 16 Jun at Newnans L., *Alachua* (RR), 61 on 4 Jul at L A R A. (HR), and 27 were at L. Hamilton, *Polk* 18 Jul (BC, LC). Out-of-season ducks included a female Northern Pintail at W. Kendall, *Miami-Dade* 10–27 Jul (JB et al.), 4 Blue-winged Teal at P.P.M. 1 Jul (PT, CG), a single Blue-winged Teal on four dates at L A R A. (HR), and 2 Ruddy Ducks at L.A.R.A. 21 Jul (DS, KR). The male **Masked Duck** with the all-blue bill, first found in the spring, was last seen 21 Jun at Pembroke Pines, *Broward* (AH, BH, RM).

A White-tailed Kite in *Palm Beach* 14 Jul (DSa) was the only individual of this scarce species reported. A maximum of 40 Swallow-tailed Kites was at L.A.R.A. 25 Jul (HR). The Wildlife Commission's statewide Bald Eagle survey found 1102 active territories (including a few w. of the Apalachicola R. in the Central Southern region), the highest total since the surveys began in 1973. An estimated 1311 young fledged (SN). Very rare in Florida in the summer, single Sharp-shinned Hawks were seen 22 & 29 Jul at L.A.R.A. (HR). Single Short-tailed Hawks were seen 7 Jul (dark morph) and 28 Jul (light morph) at Weekiwachee Preserve, *Hernando* (CB, AH, BH), 10 Jul (dark morph) at Flamingo, E.N.P. (BR), and 29 Jul (light morph) at Saddle Creek C P, *Polk* (DW, LS, LAl), with 2 (one light and one dark) at Tiger Creek, *Polk* 15 Jul (DGo, BCo) A Red-tailed Hawk summered s. of normal at W. Kendall, *Miami-Dade* (JB). The excellent total of 22 Crested Caracaras was found 25 Jun in *Okeechobee* (LG, PG). Uncommon in Florida in summer, single American Kestrels were found 15 Jul at

L.A.R.A. (HR) and 28 Jul at Sarasota (JD, KJ). A Black Rail was heard calling at the Belle Glade Marina, *Palm Beach* 14 Jul (PB, JV).

A Purple Gallinule was present 1–12 Jun at Boca Ciega Park, *Pinellas* (IH), where the species is very rare. Sandhill Cranes struggle to breed in the increasingly urban areas around Tampa, so a pair with a nearly grown young 2 Jun at Brandon (BP, DP) was encouraging. The reintroduced Whooping Crane again came close to nesting successfully, with 15 pairs formed, 9 territories defended, and 2 nests with eggs (SN). Single inland Black-bellied Plovers were at P.P.M. 17 Jun (PT, CG) and L.A.R.A. 25 Jul (HR). An American Golden-Plover in alternate plumage was at Homestead, *Miami-Dade* 22–27 Jul (VM et al.). Three pairs of Wilson's Plovers with chicks were at the Wolf Branch E.L.A.P.P. site, *Hillsborough* 24 Jun (DP, BP). Thirty Wilson's Plovers were at Lighthouse Pond, St. Marks N.W.R. 8 Jul (TC). The first migrant Semipalmated Plovers were 2 at L.A.R.A. 27 Jul (HR). A single Piping Plover was found 21 Jul at Crandon Beach, *Miami-Dade* (HD), while 4 were found 27 Jul at Ft. De Soto C.P., *Pinellas* (KA).

### OYSTERCATCHER THROUGH TERNS

A statewide American Oystercatcher survey was conducted by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for the first time this year; it found 391 known or probable pairs along with 42 single birds, including some pairs on rooftops, particularly in *Pinellas* (ND). Black-necked Stilts were at L.A.R.A. throughout, with a maximum of 35 there (HR) and up to 8 at Newnans L., *Alachua* 16–26 Jun (RR, MM). Up to 4 American Avocets were at Newnans L. 3–21 Jun (MM, TW), with one at St. Marks N.W.R. 24 Jul (NW). A Greater Yellowlegs 17 Jun at L.A.R.A. (HR) could have been a summering bird, but 4 at St. Sebastian R. Buffer Preserve, *Indian R.* 26 Jun (DS) were certainly migrants, as were 17 Lesser Yellowlegs at the same time. A very unusual summer Solitary Sandpiper was at L.A.R.A. 18–22 Jun (HR). Four Willets 4 Jul at L.A.R.A. (HR) were likely southbound migrants, as was one at Newnans L., *Alachua* 8 Jul (TW). The first returning Spotted Sandpipers were 7 Jul at Green Key, *Pasco* (JMc) and 11 Jul at L.A.R.A. (HR). A Whimbrel was at Flamingo, E.N.P. 17 Jul (BR). Single Long-billed Curlews were at Cedar Key, *Levy* 26 Jul (GK) and Ft. De Soto C.P., *Pinellas* 27 Jul (KA). An Upland Sandpiper was found 27 Jul at L.A.R.A. (HR). An inland Sanderling was at Belle Glade Agricultural Station, *Palm Beach* 14 Jul (PB, JV). The first returning Semipalmated Sandpiper was one 4 Jul at L.A.R.A. (HR),

while the initial southbound Least Sandpipers were 43 at P.P.M. 1 Jul (PT, CG). White-rumped Sandpipers are one of the latest spring migrants. This Jun's records were of one on 7 Jun and 6 on 10 Jun at L.A.R.A. (HR), 2 at P.P.M. 17 Jun (PT, CG), and one at Viera, *Brevard* 21 Jun (AH, BH). The first Pectoral Sandpipers of the southbound migration were singles 15 Jul at L.A.R.A. (HR) and 19 Jul at Homestead, *Miami-Dade* (LM). The first migrant Stilt Sandpipers of the "autumn" were found 8 Jul at L.A.R.A. (HR). Thirty at Homestead 31 Jul + (RW, DL et al.) was the highest count of the season. A lone Buff-breasted Sandpiper was at L.A.R.A. 29 Jul (HR). Female Ruffs (Reeves) were at Viera, *Brevard* 10–11 Jun (DE, RW et al.) and at Homestead 26 Jul (JB et al.). A single Wilson's Phalarope was at Homestead 22 Jul (VM), and 2 were at Big Talbot Island S.P., *Duval* 24 Jul (KA).

Nesting Laughing Gull numbers in the Tampa Bay area remained stable, with about 19,300 pairs at four sites. The largest colony in the area and probably in the state was at Egmont Key N.W.R., with possibly 10,000 pairs (RP, AP). A first-year Great Black-backed Gull was near the *Miami-Dade* landfill 6 Jul (LM). Florida's first **Heermann's Gull** continued at Ft. De Soto C.P. throughout the season (LA, m. ob.). Eight Gull-billed Terns were at P.P.M. 17 Jun (PT, CG), and one was at Homestead 23 Jul (JR, MW). Gull-billed Terns nested at two Hillsborough Bay locations, with two and seven pairs present, respectively (RP, AP), and at Bird I., *Franklin*, with 22 nests (JGo). Caspian Tern nest numbers continue to increase slowly in the Tampa Bay area, with 107 pairs at two locations (RP, AP) Bird Island, *Franklin* had 206 nests (JGo). Royal Tern nests were found in the highest numbers in the Tampa Bay area in decades, with 3766 nests at three sites. Almost all the Royal Terns have left Passage Key N.W.R., as that island has eroded, and moved to Egmont Key N.W.R., where 3540 pairs were counted (AP, RP) Rare inland, single Sandwich Terns at L.A.R.A. 1, 4, & 15 Jul (HR) were the 2nd for this location. An astonishing 715 pairs of Sandwich Terns were at Egmont Key N.W.R. (RP, AP) Common Terns are quite scarce in Florida in the summer, and this year was no exception, with one at Huguenot Park, *Duval* 24 Jul (KA), 2 at L. Osprey, Sarasota 30 Jun (JD, JG), and up to 4 at L.A.R.A. (HR) the only reports. After last spring's record number of Arctic Terns, to have one this summer was perhaps not so surprising—but to have one inland was unprecedented. The **Arctic Tern** found by HR at L.A.R.A. 17 Jun was the first ever recorded

inland in Florida. Forster's Terns were present throughout the summer at L.A.R.A., with a maximum of 40 on 13 Jun (HR). About 6 pairs of Least Terns nested (unsuccessfully) at Wolf Branch E.L.A.P.P., *Hillsborough*, with a nest found and photographed 24 Jun (DP, BP). Black Terns were present at L.A.R.A. up to mid-Jul, with a maximum of 8 on 10 Jun (HR). A Black Noddy was seen 9 Jul at Dry Tortugas N.P. (EB).

## DOVES THROUGH GOLDFINCHES

A roost of Eurasian Collared-Doves at Winter Haven, *Polk* had 303 birds on 13 Jul (TP). White-winged Doves were n. of normal at Ocala and Gainesville. Eight Monk Parakeets through the season at Gainesville (DB) may represent a breeding population rather than the normal escapees in n. Florida. Mourning Doves are very common in Florida, but 2120 found 8 Jul at L.A.R.A. (HR) was an impressive count. The northernmost Mangrove Cuckoos reported were single birds at Cockroach Bay, *Hillsborough* 2 Jun (BP, DP) and Weedon I. Preserve, *Pinellas* 18 Jun (RW). A Short-eared Owl flushed from the ground several times 27 Jun at Kissimmee Prairie Preserve S.P., *Osceola* (RMu) provided one of the few summer reports for Florida n. of the Keys. Another out-of-range report was of an Antillean Nighthawk heard calling 1 Jun in *Brevard* (BPa). An impressive 517 Chimney Swifts were noted going into a single chimney at New Port Richey, *Pasco* 18 Jun (KT, LT). A Ruby-throated Hummingbird along the Loop Road, Big Cypress National Preserve, *Monroe* 7 Jul (PB, JV, BPu) was at the extreme s. end of the species's breeding range in Florida. Belted Kingfishers are quite rare in summer in Florida s. of the far n., so a total of six reports, including one from Flamingo, E.N.P. (BR), was definitely more than average.

A **Tropical Kingbird** was seen and heard calling 14 Jun at Ft. De Soto C.P., *Pinellas* (LA). Migrant Eastern Kingbirds were found 21 Jul at Weekiwachee Preserve, *Hernando* (AH, BH) and 28 Jul at Green Key, *Pasco* (KT). Fifteen Gray Kingbirds at Green Key 29 Jul (KT) was a good count. An excellent congregation of 3000 Purple Martins was at Dadeland, *Miami-Dade* 12 Jul (JR). A flock of 342 Rough-winged Swallows was at P.P.M. 1 Jul (PT, CG). Bank Swallows were present throughout the season at L.A.R.A. (HR). Migrant Bank Swallows were detected 12 Jul at St. Marks N.W.R. (TC), 13 Jul at Bald Pt., *Franklin* (CT), 14 Jul at Pahokee, *Palm Beach* (DS), 22 Jul at Playalinda Beach, *Brevard* (DS), and 24 Jul at W. Kendall, *Miami-Dade* (JB). Southbound Cliff Swallows were at St. Marks N.W.R. 8 Jul (JD), at

L.A.R.A. 8, 22, & 29 Jul (HR), and at Brown's Farm Road, *Palm Beach* 14 Jul (PB, JV). Fifty-four Barn Swallow nests were found at L.A.R.A. over the season (HR). Thirty Barn Swallows at Flamingo, E.N.P. 8 Jul (BR) and 20 at Homestead 8 Jul (JB) were likely southbound migrants. Also likely a migrant was a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Largo, *Pinellas* 12 Jul (JFi).

American Robins are uncommon nesters in Florida, so one feeding a fledgling at Tallahassee 22 Jun (GM) was noteworthy. A Bahama Mockingbird was found 9 Jul at Dry Tortugas N.P. (EB). A Gray Catbird was at L.A.R.A. 20 Jun (HR), suggesting that it might be a summering bird. Common Mynas nested successfully for the first time at Key West, with a pair and 5 juvs. 31 Jul (JO). Migrant Yellow Warblers were at L.A.R.A. 11 Jul (HR), Magnolia Park, *Orange* 21 Jul (DS, KR), Green Key, *Pasco* 24 Jul (KT), and Dry Tortugas N.P. 26 Jul (NP). Late Black-throated Blue Warblers were found singing at Key West 10 Jun (JO) and A.D. Barnes Park, *Miami-Dade* 20–24 Jun (JR). Migrant Prairie Warblers were found 5 Jul in *Pasco* (BP), 11 Jul at L.A.R.A. (HR), 12 Jul at Largo, *Pinellas* (JFi), and 19 Jul at A.D. Barnes Park, *Miami-Dade* (JR). A Palm Warbler 24 Jul at Green Key, *Pasco* (KT) was very early. Returning Black-and-white Warblers were found 7 Jul at O'Leno S.P., *Alachua* (JH), 15 Jul at Big Pine Key (CBo), and 27 Jul at Key West (JO). A late American Redstart was at West Lake Nature Center, *Broward* 4 Jun (BB), while the first returning individual was found 22 Jul at L.A.R.A. (HR). A Prothonotary Warbler 27 Jul at Green Key, *Pasco* (KT) was the first of the fall. The first southbound Louisiana Waterthrush was detected 5 Jul at Boca Ciega Park (JFi). A Kentucky Warbler was at Bonner Park, Largo, *Pinellas* 24–28 Jul (IH, JFi). A Common Yellowthroat at Big Pine Key 11 Jul (CBo) was likely a migrant, as they are not known to breed in the Keys. The first migrant Hooded Warbler was found 28 Jul at John Chestnut, Jr. C.P., *Pinellas* (RS). A Yellow-breasted Chat was singing at Crystal R. State Buffer Preserve, *Citrus* 4 Jul (BH, AH).

Bachman's Sparrows are known to breed in pine flatwoods throughout their range, but in Florida, they are also found in the same dry prairie habitat as the Florida subspecies of Grasshopper Sparrow. Surveys at Kissimmee Prairie Preserve S.P., *Okeechobee* found over 150 individuals (RMu). These same surveys found an excellent 90 singing male Florida Grasshopper Sparrows, even though they covered only about 9% of the available habitat (RMu). A late Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow

was found 11 Jun at Pablo Creek, *Duval* (SJ, KN). According to Jon Greenlaw (in litt), Nelson's arrive back at their n. breeding areas "notoriously" late, because vegetation in their marshes tends to foliate later than the vegetation in marshes that support breeding Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows, for instance Thirteen Seaside Sparrows were along a 16-km stretch of Bottoms Rd. at St. Marks N.W.R. 8 Jun (JD). A female-plumaged Indigo Bunting at Flamingo, E.N.P. 19 Jun (BR) was s. of normal. A male Dickcissel 29 Jul at Holey Land W.M.A., *Palm Beach* (DL et al) was heard to make some guttural clicks while lightly pumping its tail, behavior that suggests a breeding bird (GB). Three male Shiny Cowbirds were at Ft. De Soto C.P., *Pinellas* 14 Jun (LA); up to 2 females and 6 males summered at Key West (JO). A Bronzed Cowbird on 11 Jul at Princeton, *Miami-Dade* (LM) was only the 2nd ever found in the summer. Two male and 2 female Brown-headed Cowbirds were the first to summer at Key West (JO). Unusual in the summer were single male American Goldfinches at Tallahassee 25 Jun (BS) and N. St. Augustine, *St. Johns* 26 Jun (JHo).

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