

Generally mild weather across the Region resulted in a lackluster migration, although several areas reported good counts of warblers in late April. On the other hand, it perhaps was a better-than-average year for vagrants, with species from all compass points. Among these were two Red-legged Honeycreepers of unknown provenance. In particular, Dry Tortugas N.P. hosted several mega-rarities, including one of the honeycreepers. At the other end of the spectrum, nesting House Crows were the latest addition to Florida's ever-growing list of exotic birds.

Abbreviations/definitions: C.P. (county park); F.O.S.R.C. (Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee, information provided by Reed Bowman, Secretary); R.A. (restoration area); report (any observation); record (only reports verifiable from photograph, videotape, or specimen evidence).

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Good counts of Common Loons at Gainesville were 32 on 4 Apr (AK) and 7 at Newnans L. 12 May (RR). At Dry Tortugas N.P., there were 55 Masked Boobies 4 May (DP, JHu et al.), up to 68 Brown Boobies 12 Apr–1 May (MGa et al.), and an imm. Red-footed Booby 30 Apr (ABi). Another 20+ Brown Boobies were seen en route to the Tortugas 19 Apr (DP et al.). Ahern observed 500 Northern Gannets off Ft. De Soto C.P., *Pinellas* 21 Mar. A Leach's Storm-Petrel was seen from a cruise ship ca. 340 km wnw. of Key West 21 Apr (BHA, KR).

A pelagic trip out of Islamorada, *Monroe* 5 May yielded 2 Audubon's Shearwaters, one storm-petrel, one Brown Booby, 18 Northern Gannets, one Red-necked Phalarope, one Pomarine Jaeger, and 3 Roseate, 72 Bridled, and 24 Sooty Terns (LMA et al.). American White Pelicans remained at Lake Apopka R.A. all season, with 740 on 29 Mar (HR). This site also contained 17 American Bitterns 26 Mar (HR); a late individual was at Orange Creek R.A., *Alachua* 26 May (MM, BC, RR). A Great White Heron near Sunniland, *Collier* 18 May was unusual inland (TD), while 2 Glossy Ibis were n. to Tallahassee 9 Apr (GM). A small retention pond at Seven Springs, *Pasco* supported 167 Wood Stork nests 7 Apr (KT)!

Southeastern birders take note: Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks continued their explosive range expansion northward, with 10 at Tallahassee 21 Mar (*fide* MC), one at Jacksonville 3–14 May (CA), and 116 at Gainesville 21 May (SHo, MD). Other notable reports were 42 w. of Fort Pierce, *St. Lucie* 24 Mar (D&HH), 12 at Viera Wetlands, *Brevard* 17 May (DF), 12 e. of Zephyrhills, *Pasco* 23 May (KT), and 4 at Orlando Wetlands Park, *Orange* 28–30 May (MS). An unbanded White-faced Whistling-Duck was photographed with a Black-bellied Whistling-Duck at Davie, *Broward* 3 Mar (SHu). Five Canada Geese of unknown provenance surprised Smith by flying in to Ft. De Soto from Tampa Bay, circling, then heading

Florida



back out 26 Apr. Also of unknown provenance was the Mute Swan at Kendall, *Miami-Dade* 11 Mar (JHB).

Two drake Eurasian Wigeons that wintered at Eagle Lakes C.P., *Collier* remained until 8 Mar (MGa, DSu et al.). Other lingering waterfowl were a Ring-necked Duck in *Polk* 26 May (PT, LAI), a Long-tailed Duck at St. Marks N.W.R., *Wakulla* 20 Apr (MC), and 2 Black Scoters at Honeymoon I. S.R.A., *Pinellas* 30 Mar (RoS, LS). A male Surf Scoter at Springhill Road S.T.P., Tallahassee 21 Mar–7 Apr (JS et al., ph. JCa) was casual inland, while 5 female-plumaged Hooded Mergansers at Lake Wales Ridge S.F., *Polk* 28 May (BPr) could have represented a female and independent young.

RAPTORS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Mississippi Kites at the periphery of their breeding range were at Ralph Simmons S.F., *Nassau*, where juvs. were observed 25 May (PL), and at Ocala N.F., *Marion* 28 May (JP). Eighteen Short-tailed Hawks were reported from 11 sites (v.o.), with one n. to St. Marks 19 Apr (LT, MC), one e. to Merritt I. 31 Mar (DF), and a nesting pair at New Port Richey, *Pasco* 8 Apr+ (KT). A Swainson's Hawk was observed

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at Biscayne N.P., *Miami-Dade* 29 Mar (PSy et al.), and a Golden Eagle was over Tall Timbers Research Station, Tallahassee 13 Mar (JCo). A Crested Caracara nest on a tower near Clewiston, *Hendry* 11 Apr (B&LC) is believed to be the state's first reported nest built on an artificial structure. A family of caracaras in May furnished the first report for Lake Wales Ridge S.F. (BPr). Lake Apopka's Eurasian Kestrel remained until 22 Mar (HW, JP et al.); this record was accepted by the F.O.S.R.C.

Around 200 Common Peafowl were estimated at s. Merritt I., with another 200+ nearby at Canaveral City (DF); there are few previous reports from *Brevard*, and none that confirms breeding! A Black Rail was heard at Weekiwachee Preserve, *Hernando* 2 Mar

(MGa, JG). Rails at Lake Apopka R.A. included a Yellow Rail 9 Mar, 12 King Rails 12 Mar, 43 Soras 5 Mar, and 58 Purple Gallinules 21 Apr (HR). Irregular in the Keys, a Limpkin was spied at Dry Tortugas 29 Apr (MGa et al.).

Two Southern Lapwings (*Vanellus chinensis*) observed in *Alachua* in Feb were relocated at Lake City, *Columbia* 21–24 Apr. The birds are believed to be escapees from a zoo or other collection; one had a color-band on a leg (LD, ph. LIM). American Golden-Plovers were noted at St. Marks 27 Mar (JCa) and Crandon Beach, *Miami-Dade* 9 Mar and 12 Apr (RD). Five of 15 Piping Plovers at Little Talbot Island S.P., *Duval* had color-bands and originated from the Canadian prairies, the Maritimes, and the Great Lakes (PL). Seldom reported from the se. coast, 2 American Oystercatchers graced L. Worth Lagoon, *Palm Beach* 10 May (LIM).

Solitary Sandpipers were reported in good numbers (v.o.), with the earliest at Bayonet Point, *Pasco* 23 Mar (MGa) and the latest at Sarasota 21 May (JBo); 6 others were at Lake Apopka R.A. 24 Apr (HR). A leucistic Willet at Huguenot Memorial Park, *Duval* 25 Apr (BR) must have been an interesting sight. Scarce in spring, 2 Upland Sandpipers were at Gainesville 27 Mar (SS), with another at Apalachicola, *Franklin* 30 Mar (BB). Six Whimbrels at Ohio Key 11 Apr (MGa) made a good count for the Keys, and a Long-billed Curlew lingered at Huguenot Memorial Park until 29 Mar (BR). White-rumped Sandpipers were numerous (v.o.), with 7 at Dry Tortugas 27 Apr (MGa), 11 at Merritt I. 14 May (DF), and 12 at Little Estero Lagoon 31 May (CE), among others. A Baird's Sandpiper, very rare in the state, stopped at Springhill Road S.T.P. 9–10 May (JCa et al.), while 14 Purple Sandpipers lingered at Ft. Clinch, *Nassau* to 14 Mar (JP). An American Woodcock at Merritt I. 14 May (DF) must have been a very late winterer. Two Red-necked Phalaropes were off Ponce Inlet, *Volusia* 17 May (BA et al.).

JAEGERS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Two ad. Long-tailed Jaegers were seen from a cruise ship ca. 340 km wnw. of Key West 21 Apr (KR, BHA). At Little Estero Lagoon, there were 400 Herring Gulls and a Great Black-backed Gull 9 Mar, plus a Lesser Black-backed Gull all season (CE). Other Lesser Black-backed were 4 at Tigertail Beach, *Collier* 24 Apr (HM et al.) and 3 at Crandon Beach to 28 May (RD). Key West's Slaty-backed Gull was observed until 2 May (JHB et al.); this record has been accepted by the F.O.S.R.C.

A Caspian Tern nest with two eggs 31 May furnished the first breeding report for St. Vincent N.W.R., *Franklin* (TL). An Elegant Tern reported at Ft. De Soto 10–12 Apr (JP et al.) has not been reviewed; an Elegant-type Tern at Dry Tortugas 30 Apr–4 May (LMa et al.) was not accepted to species as an Elegant Tern

by F.O.S.R.C. Roseate Terns were observed in good numbers, with 28 at Key West 5 May (JP) and up to 125 at Dry Tortugas 12 Apr–1 May (MGa et al.). Three Black Terns, scarce along the Atlantic coast in spring, were noted at Viera Wetlands 17 May (DF). Nearly annual at the Tortugas, a Black Noddy was first seen 12 Apr (DSi et al., ph. LS).



Presumably the same bird that has frequented Fort De Soto Park, Florida since December 2000 (and that apparently hybridized with a Sandwich Tern in Hillsborough Bay in May 2002), this Elegant Tern and its presumed Sandwich Tern mate made a brief appearance at Fort De Soto Park this spring, 10–12 April 2003. Photograph by John Puschock.



Captured and banded by researchers at Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park 14 April 2003, this Short-eared Owl furnished the northernmost verifiable record in Florida and mainland North America of the Caribbean subspecies. This record also suggests the possibility that the birds may eventually begin breeding in dry prairies and other grassy habitats in the state. Photograph by Paul Miller, Florida Park Service.

Resident White-winged Doves continued their colonization of the n. peninsula, with 3 at St. Petersburg 25 Mar+ (RoS et al.), 3 pairs at Crystal R., *Citrus* mid-Apr+ (BS), 6 at Lake Apopka R.A. 30 Apr (HR), 5 at Gainesville all season (RR), and 30 at Ocala, *Marion* all season (PO). A very high count of 111 Common Ground-Doves was made at Lake Apopka R.A. 21 May (HR). Furnishing the 2nd record e. of the Mississippi R. was the White-tipped Dove (subspecies undetermined) at Dry Tortugas 19 Apr–3 May (JBa et al., ph. LMa); the record is still under review. Thirty Black-hooded Parakeets 12 Apr represented a high count for Largo (JF), while 3 Monk Parakeets at Jupiter Inlet Colony, *Martin* 3 Feb–27 May marked a new location (JHa). Mangrove Cuckoos were noted at Biscayne N.P. 29 Mar (PSy et al.), Dry Tortugas 17 Apr (MGa), and Weedon I. Preserve, *Pinellas* 9 May, with a fledgling there 14 Jun (RoS); 2 ads. were at Darling N.W.R., *Lee* 11 May (CE).

A straggler to Cuba and unknown elsewhere in the Caribbean, a Long-eared Owl at Dry Tortugas 17 Apr (LMa et al., ph.) provided only the 4th verifiable Florida record. Also at the Tortugas were single Caribbean Short-eared Owls 13 Apr–4 May and 20 Apr–5

May (MGa, DG). Other Caribbean Short-eareds were at Key West 12 Apr+ (MGa, ABA et al.) and Kissimmee Prairie Preserve S.P., *Okeechobee* 14 Apr (PSm et al., ph.). The stomach of a Chuck-will's-widow road-killed near Gainesville 20 Apr contained a White-eyed Vireo (TW, *fide* RR)!

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH PIPITS

A Willow Flycatcher, seldom identified specifically in Florida, sang and called at Dry Tortugas 4 May (JHi, TM et al.). Two Least Flycatchers that wintered at Lake Apopka R.A. remained until 2 Apr (HR). Ash-throated Flycatchers were near Hastings, *St. Johns* 14 Mar (JBr) and at St. George I., *Franklin* 28 Apr (JCa). La Sagra's Flycatchers were spotted at A.D. Barnes Park, *Miami-Dade* 27–28 Apr (MR et al.) and Key West 26 Mar (DSi). Spending its 4th winter at Lake Apopka R.A. was the Cassin's Kingbird that remained until 6 Apr (HR et al.; ph. BPr), a record accepted by the F.O.S.R.C. Also at Lake Apopka were 30 Western Kingbirds 29 Mar (HR). A Gray Kingbird arrived early at Jupiter Inlet Colony 9–10 Mar (JHa).

A Blue-headed Vireo at Bald Pt., *Franklin* 26 Apr was late (JD), while single Black-whiskered Vireos at A.D. Barnes 22 Mar (JV) and Biscayne N.P. 28 Mar (JBo) were early. A Philadelphia Vireo enlivened Ft. De Soto 29 Apr (LAI). Two House Crows (*Corvus splendens*), native to India, attended a nest with 3 nestlings at Nokomis Beach, *Sarasota* 19 May (EK, ph.); the birds reportedly had been present for more than a year (OC, PR). Although their provenance is unknown, the adults could have been ship-riders, a habit for which they are famous in the Old World.

The 1440 Purple Martins at Lake Apopka R.A. 26 May (HR) were probably composed largely of post-breeders. Three Cliff Swallows, 3 Mexican Cave Swallows, and at least one Caribbean Cave Swallow at Dry Tortugas in the latter half of Apr (MGa, JP, DP et al.) probably challenged the identification skills of the observers. Eight other Cliffs were at Tierra Verde, *Pinellas* 5 Apr (BA). First-arrival Barn Swallows were noted at Tram Road S.T.P., *Tallahassee* 4 Mar (GM) and Weekiwahee Preserve 8 Mar (A&BH). Two Golden-crowned Kinglets remained at Walsingham Park, *Pinellas* until 10 Mar (JF). Meanwhile, far s. was the Ruby-crowned Kinglet at Dry Tortugas 13–27 Apr (MGa et al.). A Veery at Paynes Prairie, *Alachua* 4 May (MM) was late, and Gray-cheeked Thrushes at Tallahassee 28 Apr (JCa) and Gainesville 30 Apr (AK) represented scarce inland reports. Good local sightings for *Pasco* were a Wood Thrush and 6 Swainson's Thrushes along Green Key Road 26 Apr (KT, JMc). Marathon hosted a Bahama Mockingbird 22–23 May (LMa et al.). A new locale for Common Myna was established at Jupiter Inlet Colony 27 May (JHa). Very late was the American Pipit at Gainesville 16–17 May (RR et al.).

Also late was the flock of 75+ Cedar Waxwings at Lake Wales Ridge S.F. 9 May (BPr).

WARBLERS THROUGH MUNIAS

Warbler migration was somewhat lackluster, although a few good days were reported. At Birch S.P., Ft. Lauderdale 26 Apr, over 400 warblers of 16 species were found, including 75+ Common Yellowthroats, and 50 each of Black-throated Blue Warbler, American Redstart, and Ovenbird (WG et al.). Sixteen species were seen at Dry Tortugas 21 Apr (DP, WB et al.), while over 650 warblers of nine species passed the stationary Green Key Road count 20 Apr (KT, RaS). Warblers at Lake Apopka R.A. included 8470 Yellow-rumpeds 5 Mar, a Swainson's 21 Apr, 27 Northern Waterthrushes 27 Apr, and 16 Yellow-breasted Chats 21 May (HR). Other notable warblers seen this spring were a Golden-winged at Cedar Key 19 Apr (IS et al.), a Nashville at L. Seminole C.P., *Pinellas* 7 May (JF), and a Chestnut-sided at Dry Tortugas 19 Apr–1 May (MGa). The Hooded Warbler that wintered at Starkey Wilderness Park, Pasco remained to 6 Mar (KT), while Tallahassee's wintering Wilson's Warbler was seen last 11 Mar (GM). Good numbers of Blackpoll Warblers were 11 at Lake Apopka R.A. 4 May (HR) and 12 at Merritt I. 23 May (BPa). Seldom seen in spring, Cerulean Warblers graced Ft. De Soto 16–17 Apr (JG et al.) and Boca Ciega Park 28 Apr (JF), and male Bay-breasted Warblers enlivened A.D. Barnes 30 Apr–3 May (JHB et al.) and Dry Tortugas 1 May (JP). Early arrival of Prothonotary Warblers was noted at L. Palestine, *Union* 14 Mar (JK) and Gainesville 15 Mar (AK).

Early was the Summer Tanager at Paynes Prairie 14 Mar (BM). A Scarlet Tanager at Tallahassee 11 Apr (RL) was scarce inland, while 5 at Green Key Road 26 Apr (KT, JMc) and 8 at Ft. De Soto 26 Apr (PF et al.) were notable counts. Single Western Tanagers were noted at Gainesville 8–11 Mar (LH, JBr et al.) and Ocala 8 Apr (ES), and a female Western Spindalis graced Dry Tortugas in Mar (SBs). Honeymoon Island's wintering Green-tailed Towhee remained until 29 Mar (RaS et al.); the record was accepted by the F.O.S.R.C. A Chipping Sparrow in *Wakulla* 3 May (SM) was late, as was a Savannah Sparrow at Paynes Prairie 21 May (RR) and a Grasshopper Sparrow at Ft. George I., *Duval* 4 May (BR). A Lark Sparrow was w. of Ft. Pierce 24 Mar (D&HH), and another was at Ft. De Soto 28 Mar (JG, LAt). A leucistic *Ammodramus* species was videotaped at Lake

SA A Tricolored Munia (*Lonchura malacca*) at Dry Tortugas 4 May was captured by a Sharp-shinned Hawk the same day (LMa). Tricolored Munias are present in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Costa Rica, and some observers have suggested that recent Florida occurrences may refer to dispersers or vagrants from these exotic populations.

Although several munias occur in Florida aviculture, recent observations of Tricolored Munias have occurred in areas far from human population centers. Others have been seen at Eco Pond, Everglades N.P. sporadically since Jan 2002 and at Big Cypress National Preserve 28 Jun 2003 (JHB). A Tricolored Munia was photographed at Dry Tortugas 25–26 Jun 1999, but the F.O.S.R.C. did not accept the report because of questions about its provenance. Populations of Tricolored Munia in the Caribbean apparently are expanding, although it is not known that their colonization has proceeded by island-hopping. As with the Red-legged Honeycreeper, temporal and distributional patterns will need to develop before the species can be considered a valid addition to the Florida list. Furthermore, considering the identification difficulties and taxonomic confusion with this group, observers in Florida should properly document all *Lonchura* species seen in the state.

Wales Ridge S.F. 4 Mar (BPr). A Le Conte's Sparrow was banded at Kissimmee Prairie Preserve 19 Apr (*vide* PSm). Seven reports were received of Lincoln's Sparrows (vo.), with the latest at Ft. De Soto 26 Apr (LS, RoS et al.). Dark-eyed Juncos were seen at Jacksonville 1–13 Mar (PP), St. Marks 12 Apr (JD, JMu), and Alligator Pt., *Franklin* 15 Apr (JMu).

Sixteen Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were found at Green Key Road 26 Apr (KT, JMc), and 13 were at Ft. De Soto the same day (PF et al.). Bobolinks were reported in good numbers, with thousands at Everglades N.P. 24 Apr (MGa), 1570 at Lake Apopka R.A. 27 Apr (HR), 928 at Gainesville 4 May (MM), and 75+ over Lake Wales Ridge S.F. 3 May (BPr, DP, JHu). Furnishing the largest count in Florida outside the context of a C.B.C., 13,475 Red-winged Blackbirds were carefully counted at Lake Apopka R.A. 16 Apr (HR). One Rusty Blackbird was near Soppchopy, *Wakulla* 5 Mar (B&LC), and 2 were at Paynes Prairie 8 Mar (AK), while a Brewer's Blackbird was nearby at Hague 17 Apr (MM). Reports of Shiny Cowbird were widely scattered, as usual, with singles at Bald Pt. 18 May (JD), Gainesville 15 Mar (AK), Ft. De Soto 28 Apr (JG et al.), and Dry Tortugas 28 Apr (MGa et al.), 2 at Cedar Key 26 Apr (RR, DH et al.), and 3 at Flamingo 20 Apr (JP et al.). One Bronzed Cowbird was found at Miami 13 May (RU), while up to 18 wintered at Eagle Lakes Park, Naples until 30 Mar (MGo et al.). Rare in the Region, a Purple Finch was at Gainesville 2–10 Mar (RR, LD et al.). House Finches continue to expand their range s. into the cen. peninsula, with first breeding reports established for *Citrus* at Inverness 25 Mar and Beverly Hills 17 May (KS). One at Brooker 13 Apr (RR) furnished a first for *Bradford*, and there were 3 at Cross City, *Dixie* 2 May (RR), 4 at Eustis, *Lake* (JP), 2 at Orlando (NP), "numerous" young produced at Cedar Key (DH), and 3

at Tampa 14 Apr+ (BA). Three Pine Siskins visited a Valrico, *Hillsborough* feeder 2 Mar (SBc), while another was found among American Goldfinches at Lake Apopka R.A. 30 Apr (HR). Up to 3 goldfinches remained at Ocala through 24 May (PO). A Java Sparrow visited a Land O' Lakes, *Pasco* feeder 19 May (SBu), and an Orange Bishop was seen at Lake Apopka R.A. 6 Apr (HR).

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SA Not one but 2 male Red-legged Honeycreepers (*Cyanerpes cyaneus*) were photographed in Florida this season, the first reports of the species in the United States. The first, found at Boca Chita Key, Biscayne N.P. 25 Mar (TO) and photographed 27 Mar (LMA et al., ph.), was never relocated. The second appeared inside Ft. Jefferson, Dry Tortugas 29 Apr and remained to 3 May (MGa et al., JP, ph.). Red-legged Honeycreepers are found from Mexico (where migratory) south through South America—and on Cuba, where locally common in some mountains and where recently found on Cayo Coco. The Tortugas bird seems likely to have come from Mexico, but Cuban provenance cannot be ruled out, nor can escape from avicultural collections within Florida. Although both records were on islands in national parks, the F.O.S.R.C. did not accept the records due to concerns about the sources of the birds. If legitimate vagrants are arriving in Florida, then some pattern of occurrence should develop in the future, and the issue undoubtedly will be revisited.