

## Florida 2016

The 2016 trip to Florida began bright and early on the morning of 1/29/16. We left in cold but decent driving weather about 3:45AM. By the time daylight arrived we had traversed much of Hy57, sparing us the monotonous countryside of the northern Illinois farmland. After we broke the fast in Mount Vernon we found the landscape getting regularly more interesting as we began to see more relief and some of the more southern species including sycamore and even a few cypress trees in the wetlands along the way. We encountered major traffic delays in Nashville and again in Chattanooga but still managed to get to Dalton, GA by afternoon.

There was the usual race between the car's thermometer and speedometer on day two with the thermometer finally pulling ahead in northern Florida just north of the welcoming center where the grapefruit juice was most welcome. In the hopes of an exciting first Florida bird I limited my view as much as possible and directed it to a small pond which had been productive in previous years. No luck — Turkey vulture and English sparrow! By the time we were approaching Kaczmarek's, on Hy52 by late afternoon, the areas' recent heavy rains became apparent. Many areas along the road were still flooded and long-legged wading birds were abundant. In fact, by the time we left Kaczmarek's, two days later, most of the more common wading birds had been added to the year's trip list.

We spent two nights with Jerry and Mary Ann. On the morning of 1/31/16, I birded Green Key. Several common loons were seen as was a reddish egret among few other birds. After I left Green Key I tried to find another gulf park Jerry had told me about but his directions failed to get me there. Later in the day we did find the Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park but we did not spend any time there — it could be a stop on another visit. The next morning I went to Starkey Park for a while. The birding wasn't great but, of course, that's why they invented plants and other organisms. I spent quite a bit of time looking at some of the lichens and collected a few for further study. After breakfast that day Ann and I left the Kaczmarek's and headed for the Port of the Islands.

By the time we got to the Naples area the heavy recent rains of that area had also become apparent as flooded areas along the roadsides; especially along HY41. As I was unloading the car, one of the neighbors reported that there had been 21 inches of rain-



fall in the last month. That became very obvious the next morning (2/2/16) when I renewed my relationship with the Fakahatchee Strand along the Big Cypress Bend boardwalk. I don't recall that I had ever seen as much water in the area; the entire boardwalk was over water and I could not see dry ground anywhere. Even the alligator pond at the end was continuous with the surrounding area. There was so much water that it was seemingly too deep for wading birds and not even the alligators could be found. Most of the plants, or at least their feet, were under water. The only herbaceous plant seen in bloom within the swamp was the string lily (*Crinum americanum*).

Beggar-ticks (*Bidens alba*), one of the day flowers (*Commeilna sp.*) and a species of false buttonweed (*Spermacoce sp.*) were seen in bloom along the entry walk to the boardwalk. Among the vines and woody plants, climbing aster (*Aster carolineanus*) was in bloom as was an abundance of myrsine (*Myrsine floridana*). Marlberry (*Ardisia escalloniodes*) was seen in fruit.

Shortly before this year's trip I happened across the web site for the Conservancy of Southwest Florida. The web site has an online nature guide with sections on mosses, ferns, lichens and other groups. I especially looked at mosses this morning and even collected one specimen from the trunk of a cabbage palm for later id. Unfortunately the moss section of this guide is very weak and it did not feature the collected specimen. The lichen section, though, appears pretty helpful and will be used to attempt to id the specimens collected at Starkey's. Using this section, it appears that one of the lichens that I saw this morning at Fakahatchee was

*Dyplolobia afzilee*. Unfortunately, I neither collected or photographed this species. I also looked at a few spiders this morning. These were not featured on the web site and remain unidentified but one of them was particularly interesting because it seemed to nest in colonies; multiple webs being found in a cluster at various levels.

A ride to Everglades city later in the morning revealed again how much flooding there is in the area. I've never before seen as much of the roadside fields flooded.

2/4/16

Ann and I resumed our Wednesday routine on 2/3/16 with a trip to Marco Island for breakfast followed by the market. While at the market I purchased a photo of roseate spoonbill taken by Andrea Kines Cooper. I also bought an at orchid to take back to the condo. Then I dropped Ann off at Marco's South Beach and went on to Tigertail. It has been a couple of years since I recall seeing as many shorebirds on the near side of the lagoon. All of the more common shorebirds (except the piping and snowy plovers) were marked as was a reddish egret. I also noticed that since we left last year an observation platform with a telescope has been built fairly close to the osprey nest. The nest was occupied at this time but I didn't see any young.

On the morning of 2/4/16 I went birding for the first time this year at TenK's Marsh trail. The effects of the recent heavy rains was really apparent there; the entire area was flooded and the water level was as high as I recall ever seeing them. Even most of the prop roots of the red mangrove were under water. Probably as a consequence, there was not much of a concentration of wading birds. Among the plants in bloom was sleepy morning, (*Waltheria indica*), arrow-head (*Sagittaria lancifolia*), beggar-ticks (*Bidens alba*) and false buttonweed (possibly the same species of *Spermacoce* seen along the walk at Fakahatchee earlier). I also saw a plant in bloom emerging from the flooded edge of the trail that reminded me of the Christmas berry (*Lycium carolinianum*) but it's flower description in Taylor (1992) did not match the flower I was seeing. The description and photos in Taylor (2013) and Bell & Taylor (1982), however, seem to confirm the id. Although this plant was on the list of identified Florida plants, I had not listed it for any locations in Collier County. The Florida Wildlife database was updated accordingly. The first alligators for the year were also seen at TenK this morning.



2/7/16

I reviewed the photos taken at the J.B. Starkey Wilderness Park that when we were staying with Kaczmarek's. One of the plants that I had seen and photographed there was id'd with Taylor (1992) as the tropical sage (*Salvia coccinea*). Reviewing my Florida Wildlife database I found that that species had never been added — now it has been.

On Friday (2/5/16) Ann and I drove to Ft. Meyers to the Fleamasters market. The old adage must be true since an eagle flew over the car and was added as a trip mark. I also saw the first fish crow for the trip at the parking area of the flea market in spite of the fact that I have already been to Marco Island. On the way back from the flea market I saw a snail kite flying low over the marshy area along Hy41. The usual dispute about snail kite vs. northern harrier was won by the kite. When we got back to the condo, the first glossy ibis of the year was seen in one of the retention ponds; not only a trip mark but also a new condo mark. Common ground doves were also seen near the condo pool.

When you want to see birds you go to Eagle Lakes Park. It's what you do! So I did on the morning of 2/6/15. Going into the park the trip count was at 64 species. Coming out it was 75 and a starling sighted on the way back to the condo got it to 76. Like everywhere else so far this year, the water level at Eagle Lakes Park was higher than I had ever seen. Forty species of birds were seen and quite a few of them were, obviously, trip marks. Included in the count were two ducks which were seen from quite a distance but were id'd as the lesser scaup and the gadwall. At first I was somewhat hesitant to mark the birds because of their distance from me. In the case of the scaup, I took several pictures from a distance and later enlarged them on the camera's screen. There was no sign of the white "spur" shown in the iPad application of Sibley Birds for the ring-necked duck. Also, the bill appeared distinctly like that of the scaup. When I checked the BirdsEye app, I found that both of these species had been reported for this sight in recent days. The gadwall was not only a trip mark but a Florida mark as well. The roseate spoonbill and the purple gallinule were among the trip marks seen at the park on this morning.



Later, back at the condo I added an eastern phoebe to the list of condo birds. I also set up the Celestron digital scope and examined the moss sample collected from a cabbage palm Tuesday morning at the Fakahatchee boardwalk. The web site, [Mosses of Tortoise Preserve.htm](http://MossesofTortoisePreserve.htm), shows only two of the Florida mosses and one of the two is unidentified. Could it be possible that the other one featured would be the one I collected — it appears a distinct possibility. Examination of the moss suggests *Bryum argenteum*, commonly known as the silver moss because of its somewhat silver-gray color. A web search for that species, though, leaves a lot of room for confusion.



It rained again yesterday morning and last night (2/6/16) and when I took Cooch out I slipped on something along the walk. My flashlight revealed a large slug and another was seen climbing the side of the building. I did an internet search for “Florida slugs” and found one that looked exactly like the one I was seeing on the building. Without serious taxonomic efforts I id’d the critter as possibly *Leidyula floridana*, the Florida leatherleaf slug. An interesting web site regarding the terrestrial slugs of Florida can be found at [entomology.ifas.ufl.edu](http://entomology.ifas.ufl.edu).

2/9/16

On 2/7/16 Ann and I headed out to the market in Naples. On the way, we saw the first limpkin for the year along Hy951. This, along with a Killdeer and spotted sandpiper seen at the POI marina, puts me two birds over the pace of the record 130 birds seen in 2013. Not to get too excited, though. Last year, at this time, I was 7 over the pace but fell well behind later, finishing six birds shy by the end of the trip.

I met a couple from Hayward, WI while I was walking at the marina. They reported that Janes Scenic Drive was under water beyond tram 7. I decided to check it out on the morning of 2/8/16 and it was, indeed, under water. By the time I was approaching the east main tram (7), I was driving through water. Water was gushing through the culverts under the roads and creating whitecaps on the other side. When I stopped to take a few photos I could hear the small whirlpools sucking the water into the culverts. At one location the different tones produced by the water running through the pipes sounded like distant music.



The birding along the way was great. At the beginning of Janes Scenic Drive, well before I got to the park, I found an immature yellow-crowned night heron. I have never before been as confident about the id of an immature YCNH; the totally dark bill and very slight speckling left no doubt. The photos in Sibley’s iPad app matched perfectly. Before I left the park I saw two more of these but the only adult night herons seen were black-crowned. I do recall seeing an adult yellow-crowned night heron in the park one year as I walked one of the trams. I also saw another limpkin near the first night heron. The region of the prairie near the beginning of the park was also pretty productive. I found a pair of painted buntings on the way in and found another male (or that male again) on the way out. I got some pretty good photos of this guy. Several eastern meadowlarks provided the third trip mark for the morning bringing the total to 82.



The two new condo marks (glossy ibis and eastern phoebe) have both been active in recent days. Two of the glossy ibises are being seen regularly along the shore of the south retention pond and the phoebe appears to feed regularly from the oaks outside our lanai. The oaks were trimmed and I was afraid I'd lose them but they were seen again; perching a bit higher, of course.

The story of high water continued at Kirby Storter on the morning of 2/9/15. The flooded area went all of the way back to the parking area and the path I often hiked south of the parking area was totally flooded. Not many ferns are un-resurrected this year. The birding that morning was pretty good, though. It was certainly a good morning for warblers. Among those seen were the yellow-rumped, palm, pine, yellow-throated, black and white, Louisiana waterthrush and the redstart. All four of the "Tiny Entertainers" (black and white warbler, yellow-throated warbler, great crested flycatcher and blue-grey gnatcatcher) featured in the sign on the gator hole platform at the end of the boardwalk were seen. That was certainly a good sign for that morning. The birds at that site brought the trip list to 88. Besides taking a few bird and scenic photos, I examined and photographed a few of the lichens along the boardwalk.

On the way back to the condo I stopped at the visitors center for the Big Cypress Swamp and saw a couple of manatees along the short boardwalk in the back of the building. I also saw the first white pelicans for the trip in a flooded field along hy41.

2/13/16

On 2/9/16 I met with the Townsends and compared early birding notes. Fred indicated that he and Alyce had seen a sora near the base of the observation deck at TenK. I went there on the morning of 2/10/16 and did see the bird. In fact, I might have seen two of them; one with much less yellow in the bill. I also added a house wren, robin and common yellowthroat to the trip list bringing it to 93. Another birder that I met confirmed the house wren, indicating that he had heard one in the parking area as well.

I visited the Fakahatchee boardwalk on the morning of 2/11/16. The early birding continued to be good as two new species were again added to the trip list. I photographed and collected a couple of lichens for possible later id. In the early afternoon Ann and I walked the Briggs boardwalk. — no towhees could be found although, according to the postings on the observation deck, they have been seen regularly on several consecutive previous days. We then drove to the end of Shell Island Road and saw a couple of gopher turtles along the way. I'll need to return again for this year's towhee mark.

I birded Fritchey Road on the morning of 2/12/16. All of the ditches were full of water around the bend. There were lots of white wading birds arguing over the small fish coming through one of the culverts. It was the snowy egrets doing most of the arguing and I tried to get decent photos of them fluffed out and showing aggressive postures. The Habitat for Humanities property was cleared of most of the brush so that the flowering bush that used to be the place for my hummingbird mark was totally gone. Limpkins were seen and photographed near the end of the road.

Later in the day I spent quite a bit of time looking at the web to identify some of the lichens I've collected or seen on this and earlier trips. The primary reference use at this time was the [lichens of Tortoise Preserve](#) mentioned earlier. I also found a site of Seavey Lichen Images (<http://www.seaveyfieldguides.com/Lichens/default.htm>) and a lichen page from the University of Florida natural area teaching laboratory (<file:///C:/Users/Jim/Documents/Florida/Wildlife/Plants/Lichens%20-%20University%20of%20Florida%20Natural%20Areas.htm>). At this time the red Baton Rouge lichen (*Cryptothecia rubricincta*) along with possible species of *Usnea*, *Cladonia*, *Parmotrema*, *Ramalina* and *Dyplolabia* (possibly *D. afzelii*) have been distinguished.

While I was into lichens Ann went to the beach. She returned with a report that the tide was very low and that the beach was full of critters. As proof, she brought back several seemingly freshly dead specimens of the short-spined sea urchin (*Lytechinus variegates*), id'd with Witherington & Witherington (2009), that she collected from the beach.

Ann and I were heading to the Everglades Seafood Festival on 3/13/16 so I suspended birding for the morning. While I was sitting in the lanai, though, I saw a spotted sandpiper walking the edge of the south retention pond and added it to the list of condo birds.. Then I saw a yellow-throated warbler in the oak outside the lanai. I was glad to be able to confirm this bird for the condo list. Soon thereafter, a yellow-rumped warbler was seen. I found it hard to believe that this species was not on the condo list and so I added it also. Then a yellow-bellied sapsucker flew into the tree and became both a new condo mark as well as a trip mark for the year. Perhaps I should spend more time in the lanai!

2/15/16

So I spent more time in the lanai. On the morning of 2/14/16 I again had a good count from the lanai including a trip mark, the brown thrasher. Combined with the birds seen later in the day, the lanai count for the day was 24. That almost matched the count later in the day at Tigertail beach but the birding at Tigertail was really great. I was able to mark all of the shorebirds that I commonly see there including all five of the likely plovers and I had nice views of the red knot (of course, it was not red). I also saw why



the willet got its name. I saw one at quite a distance and almost willed it into a hudsonian godwit. Close examination of photos later, though, convinced me that it was a willet after all.

By the end of the day, counting burrowing owls seen on Marco Island and the trip marks seen at the condo and at Tigertail, the trip mark for the year had reached 113, nine birds more than had been seen by this date in 2013 (the record year). Having seen so many birds early this year will, of course, will make it more difficult to get trip marks later on.

I went back to the Fritchee Road area again on the morning of 2/15/16 to see if I could get better photos of the egrets arguing at the culvert. Much of the water had drained through, though, and many areas along the roadside were drying up; quite a contrast to the last time I was there. There was not an egret to be seen, not even peaceful ones. A few limpets were seen but none close enough for good photos. On the way back to the condo I drove down Lake Park Blvd and saw a green heron and several black-crowned night herons close up.

A brief stop at TenK's marsh trail suggested that the area was possible beginning to dry up a bit. I took a young branch from an oak shrub along the trail to id back at the condo. Using Nelson (2011), the plant keyed out to the dwarf live oak [p.103: 1, 2, 3 — *Q. minima*]. Drawings in Nelson (1996) seem to confirm the id. This species was added to the plant database.

2/18/16

Went to Shark Valley on 2/16/16. Lots of water — all of the terrestrial paths (otter cave hammock trail) were under water. There were very few long-legged waders but I did manage to get 203 photos of the purple gallinules; none of which I particularly liked. We also saw an alligator with several young basking on its back.

I finally met up with the Berninger group on 2/17/16. We met for a hike along tram 7 (west main Gate) of the Fakahatchee Strand. I got there almost two hours before the group was to meet so I did some birding along the way. I saw another painted bunting in the area that I had seen them before and a nice adult yellow-crowned night heron further in. There seemed to be an abundance of overbirds which was a trip mark.



Throughout the day I had a total of 22 bird species.

Although this was not meant to be a fern walk, we did see quite a few of the Fakahatchee's ferns including several marsh ferns (*Thelypteris*) and sword ferns (*Nephrolepis*). We also saw swamp, shoestring, strap and golden polypody ferns. I saw more hard ferns on this walk than I ever remember seeing in the past, in spite of the fact that I walked the area before.

Jack pointed out several of the orchids although they were not in bloom. One was the African spotted orchid (*Oeceoclades maculata*) which, according to Brown (2006)



is “one of five non-native orchids that have become thoroughly naturalized in Florida”. Jack also pointed out a leafy vanilla orchid and identified it as *Vanilla phaeantha* with Hammer (2002). Later, I recognized another specimen on a tree near where we were having lunch. It is unlikely that the two will be confused in the future and they were added to the plant database. A butterfly orchid was also pointed out but not to species. I will not add this to the species list at this time. Little attention was paid to other plants at this time and none other were noted. I continued to look at the variety of lichens and took a few photos of some of them. I also collected one downed branch with lichens for later identification.

Water was again the story for the day. Although the path was walk able, it was very muddy in spots and we were unable to get to the prairie at the end. I continue to be amazed that we are not seeing snakes on the paths, they being driven to the higher ground by all of the rain. We did see a turtle on the path which Jan Tomlinson identified as a possible striped mud turtle (probably *Kinosternon baurii*). On the way out we did encounter several alligators partially blocking the path.

I noticed that the water along the Big Cypress Bend boardwalk might be going down a bit. I went there on 2/18/16 and found the birding pretty quiet although I did get another good look at a blue-headed vireo. I photographed a few of the lichens and brought one home for further study. One of these days I’ll have to get to that further study I keep planning.

2/22/16

Ann and I went to Clam pass park on 2/19/16. As we walked the boardwalk to the beach I noticed that black mangroves were interspersed with the red mangroves. Few plants were noticed other than giant leather ferns. When we got to the beach I again met up with the Bernenger group. Ann looked for shells when I joined the group to scrutinize a group of sea birds. Among them were royal and sandwich terns and four different gulls (Ring-billed, herring, laughing and lesser black-backed). Jack also mentioned that they had seen two gannets before I joined them. I saw a couple of them after I left the group. Four trip marks were recorded on this visit. Ann’s search image for sand dollars still worked; she found one along with a few other shells on the beach.

I drove the Turner River / Birdon Road loop on 2/20/16. Again, the area showed the effects of the recent rains with water in many of the roadside ditches. 33 species of birds were seen including a trip mark (Eastern Bluebird) and a purple gallinule. On Birdon Road I came across what I at first thought was a northern mockingbird picking at a dead bird. The dead bird shortly became very active and it became obvious that it was, rather than dead, a mate; it appears there’ll be more mockingbirds.





I found a goldenrod in bloom near the intersection of Turner River and Wagon Wheel roads. The plants were about a foot to 18" tall with reddish stems. The stems were smooth and round with faint red or purple spots in those areas which were green. The leaves were linear and about 2-3" long. They had teeth along the distal edges and, perhaps, a slight (almost negligible) hairiness on the underside. The flowers were arranged in a terminal panicle and were distinctly secund. Using Wunderlin & Hansen (2003) the plant keyed out to *Solidago laevenworthii* [p.335: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11 — *S. laevenworthii*]. Checking my database for this species, I find that it had been identified at that location before.

At several locations along the route I heard very loud pig-like grunts. Susanne Hermes reported recently that she has heard pigs fighting near her condo. I suggested that she might be hearing pig frogs but she insisted that that was not the case. Quite sure that what I heard were pig frogs, I could certainly understand how these could be confused with actual pigs. I also found a snapping turtle crossing the road as I was heading back to Hy41.

With posts on [WISBRDN](#) reporting signs of an early spring back home (redwings showing up in the state), some on [BRDBRAIN](#) are reporting unusual sightings here. There have been recent reports of a broad-billed hummingbird and a Bell's vireo at Freedom Park and yellow-breasted chat at Sugden park. Ann and I visited both of these parks on 2/21/16 and were unable to find any of these birds. At Freedom Park we located the area where Dick Johnson had told me the hummingbirds were being seen (coral beans near the west rest-rooms). People there indicated that the birds were last seen two days ago. We actually went to a craft show in Sugden Park and I had no idea where to look for the chat.

So where have all the cowbirds gone? With the 21st of the month being a checkpoint for bird marks, I was unable to reach 110 — not even a cowbird. It's funny how things change from year to year. In some years cowbirds are seen regularly around the condo — for the last couple of years, they have been hard to find. I remember last year having to drive into Goodland to find them. Perhaps I'll try that again soon.

While reading an article about the lichens in the Fakahatchee Strand I came across a really neat web site; that for The Institute for Regional Conservation. The site consists of a database of plant lists for many of the areas I regularly hike including the Fakahatchee Strand, Big Cypress Swamp, C.R.E.W. and others. This will be useful for checking some of my identifications. Initial examination of some of the data suggests that a review of my *Carex* id's is in order.

I drove down Sabel Palms Dr. past the fruit stand on the morning of 2/22/16. Both sides of the road were flooded and I was met with an abundance of great blue herons and great egrets. I went to where the road bends (just before Irgang Rd.) where I saw the bobwhites last year but that area was flooded and there was no place for the bobwhites to land. I can only imagine what the people caught up in the famous land scams found when they came to the property they had bought. On the way back I went into the Sabel Palms hiking trail but the parking area was roped off due to the water. I did walk for a while but was met with water over the trail before I got to end of the scrub pine area; I never did get to the more forested part of the trail. I was hoping to see a possible red-cockaded woodpecker but had no such luck. I did see a couple of plants (that I had identified in earlier years) in bloom behind the kiosk at the beginning of the trail which gave me an opportunity to try out the Regional Conservation web site mentioned earlier. Yup, both the pineland daisy (*Chaptalia tomentosa*) and bog white violet (*Viola lanceolata*) were listed for the site.



Several deer and a raccoon were seen along the road and a list of 24 birds was recorded for the morning but there were no trip marks (unless you count the peacock at one of the residences — I didn't). I did see quite a few eastern phoebes. One was busy catching dragonflies and seemed unbothered by my presence.

3/3/16

In spite of heavy rain showers on the morning of 2/23/16, Ann and I headed out for a morning of birding. The plan was a drive to Alva, in Hendry County, to the White residence. It wasn't too bad there because the rain had paused and we could do most (all, for Ann) of our birding from the car. The feeders in the yard produced goldfinch, indigo buntings and white-winged doves for trip marks. I thought I was also seeing female painted buntings but a confusion with female indigo buntings is possible. The second stop was more of a problem, though. I got pretty wet when I moved away from the car as rain showers continued. The water was pretty high at the marsh and very few birds were seen. There were several limpkins in the area though. One birder said he had seen a snail kite but that was before I came.

Heavy rain was a possibility for the next day as well but it was nice when we got up in the morning. It was a Wednesday (2/24/16) and we were about our usual Wednesday routine. I got to Tigertail Beach close to low tide and, again, the shorebirds were active on the near side of the lagoon. A white pelican was mixed with a couple of brown ones for a somewhat unusual picture, at least in my experiences. Seeing nothing new at Tigertail I decided to go to Mackle park to check for purple martins. There were quite a few of them there. BD records show that I have seen this as early as February 11 in Florida. I scrutinized a lot of blackbirds and starlings while at the park and finally, among a group of starlings, a single brown-headed cowbird was seen.

I still haven't seen a mottled duck this year. According to Pranty (2005) they should be common throughout the year in this area. BD records show that they have been present pretty much throughout our previous trips but I still could not find one at TenK on the morning of 2/25/16. I listened carefully that morning for a mangrove cuckoo but no luck with that either. Pranty (2005) suggests that that species would be rare (not to be expected on any given day, but may be found with extended effort over the course of the appropriate season) at this location at this time but becomes merely uncommon (present in small numbers, and sometimes — but not always — found with some effort in appropriate habitat at the right time of year) in April. It was April 8th when I heard the birds last year. Cool evenings have kept me from sitting in the lanai listening for the chuck-wills-widows but they weren't heard until late March and April in previous years.

Condo birding continues to be pretty productive this year. Besides all of the more common species, we still get occasional visits by the spotted sandpiper, sapsucker and the yellow-throated warbler.

Matt and Nicole joined us in the afternoon of 2/25/16 and Shelly and Dan joined us on the following Sunday (2/28/16). Morning hikes for the most part continued; Matt accompanying me to Eagle Lakes on the morning of 2/28/16 and Dan joining us at TenK the following morning. Mottled ducks were finally seen at both sites. I tentatively id'd a solitary sandpiper at Eagle Lakes on the morning of 2/28/16 at Eagle Lakes but I wasn't sure and did not mark it for the morning. Later I found that the bird was reported at that location on BirdsEye. I need to be a bit more confident with my id's.

We took Shelly and Dan to the Corkscrew Swamp on 3/1/16. As has been the story everywhere, the water levels were high; higher than we had ever seen there. Consequently, the wading birds were few and the bird count low. I did see a northern parula, though, and that, along with turkeys seen upon exiting the park, brought the trip list to 118, six over the pace of 2013. We saw several raccoons, necessarily wading in water as well as the green anole, a large cottonmouth and several huge alligators. One of the smaller gators had a young one on its back.

While we were at Corkscrew, a fellow pointed out a relatively large orchid in bloom on Roosevelt, one of the large named bald cypress trees in the sanctuary. He said he was from Canada and has been travelling about photographing orchids. He id'd the plant as the dingy-flowered star orchid which, according to Brown (2005) would be *Epidendrum amphistomum*. The AFP suggests that this is synonymous with *E. anceps*. This species is not listed for the Corkscrew Swamp by the newly found IRC web site but the photos that I took clearly show the long-stemmed inflorescence described in Brown (2005) as distinctive for this species and this reference suggests that it is one





of the most common orchids encountered in southern Florida. On that basis I decided to add the plant to my database of Florida plants as *E. anceps*.

Much of the beauty of Corkscrew is the result of its diverse fern understory. Among the many species that we saw were several varieties of the Thelypteris ferns. Although several of them were sighted it seemed likely that we were seeing a species or two that I had not seen in the past. My Florida plant database to date lists 30 species of ferns, five of them from the genus Thelypteris. According to the IRC, there are six species of Thelypteris at Corkscrew. *T. hispida*, on my list, is not shown for the sanctuary and *T. ovata* and *T. serrata* are shown for the sanctuary but are not on my list. Unfortunately, there is little opportunity for close examination of the ferns from the boardwalk.

Matt and Nicole left for Key West on Tuesday (3/1/16) and Shelly and Dan left for Largo today (3/3/16). Before they left this morning we went to the Big Bend Boardwalk for a short hike. The water level, although still fairly high, has certainly gone down since the last visit. In the high water near the end of the boardwalk there was a lot of bladderwort in bloom. This was clearly the floating bladderwort (*Utricularia inflata*) of Taylor (1992) with its characteristic whorl of elongated floats. An entry for *Utricularia* sp. in my plant database was changed to this species. There were also many floating clumps of what I believe to be a species of Riccia liverwort. Jack Bernenger told me later (at the shell club seminar) that he has seen Riccia in the area. He also told me that there is a species of Peperomia on the same fallen log that has the bird nest fern growing on it. I plan to go back and check for this plant.

Several alligators were seen on that morning. One was about a three footer that clearly would not have been much of a lumberjack. It climbed up on a floating log which quickly rolled and dumped it into the water. Then it tried again with similar results. Showing somewhat of a lack of intelligence or perhaps a strong determination it tried a few more times until it finally contented itself with draping its tail across the log and floating the rest of its body. Another alligator in the roadside ditch in front of the Indian store had a baby on its back. That was the third time I've seen alligators with young on their backs this year. Dan approached too close, though, and we all got to hear its roar. Dan then decided to give it more distance.

As we were returning to the car, we encountered a fellow looking at a great-horned owl in a tree near the entry of the boardwalk. This was another trip mark and I wondered if this was the same bird that nested along the boardwalk last year. Dan suggested a possible nest but we couldn't be sure. I'll watch this area in future visits. I wasn't planning to record birds for the morning but the owl made it a necessity. The BD entry will also show another northern parula for the trip as well as a few other birds. Later in the day, when we were returning from lunch with Shelly and Dan, Ann and I saw our first swallow-tailed kite for the year. Posts on BRDBRAIN have been recording this bird for a while now. In the past (2012), I have seen this bird as early as 2/21.

This evening I attended one of the seminars sponsored by the Marco Island Shell Club. The speaker was Tonya Clayton who spoke on [How to Read a Southwest Florida Beach](#). It was a fairly interesting talk about interpreting the things one sees at the various beaches. I purchased a copy of her book, [How to Read a Florida Gulf Coast Beach](#).

3/4/16

I went back to the boardwalk the next morning (3/4/16) with three things in mind. First I wanted (and did) collect a sample of the supposed Riccia for further study; perhaps with the digital microscope. It seemed to me that the Riccia was deeper in the water than when I saw it the previous day. Possibly the accumulation of oxygen bubbles from photosynthesis later in the morning buoys the plant.

Secondly I wanted to see the possible peperomia that Jack Bernenger had described on the previous evening. I did find this plant. It was not in bloom at the time but, based on the entries in Hammer (2002), I decided that it was most probably the Florida peperomia (*Peperomia obtusifolia*). The IRC lists 6 species of peperomia for the Fakahatchee Strand. Links to its photos seem to confirm the id but it must be considered tentative at this time. The plant was added to the plant database. Other species seen in bloom this morning were the buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), grass-leaved arrowhead (*Sagittaria graminifolia*), string lily (*Crinum americanum*) and, again, the floating bladderwort (*Utricularia inflata*).





Mostly, I was hoping to see the great-horned owl again and, possibly, locate its nest. I could find no signs of the owl but a couple of birders that I met said that a nest of great-horned owls could be found in Everglades City in a power station between City Seafood and the Camelia Street Café. Ann and I drove there later in the day and located the nest with no problem. One owl was in the nest at the time we were and we didn't see any young.

I also checked out some of the lichens along the boardwalk. One that I photographed is believed to be a species of *Graphis*, one of the many crustose lichens growing in this area. It appears to be growing with a species of *Usnea* and/or, possibly, *Ramalina*. According to Lucking et al (2011), "lichen species richness clearly increases towards lower latitudes—This is particularly true for crustose epiphytic microlichens which, for many groups,



have their highest diversity in the tropics". Although I've seen quite a few species already (mostly unidentified) I'd like to find more of them in areas where I can cut samples of them from the trees; This would not be a good idea along the boardwalk.



Pig frogs seem to be much more widespread this year than I recall from the past. I've noticed their calls on recent trips to the boardwalk as well as to other places. I suppose it could be related to all of the recent rains.



been drying out a bit. The white pelicans and spoonbills continued to be elsewhere. I found out that the green heron does not like it if you get too close — it ruffles their feathers. I finally did hear a couple of red-winged blackbirds while I was photographing a flowering marlberry bush (*Ardisia escallonioides*).

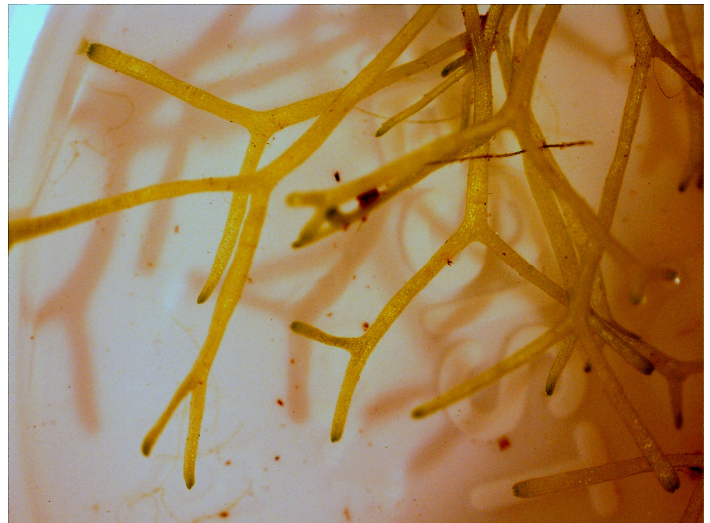
3/7/16

I went to TenK on the morning of 2/5/16 and was not greeted by the chorus of red-winged blackbirds as usual. I've been following the reports on WISBRDN and supposed that they had all flown back to Wisconsin. Although the water levels were still pretty high, I could tell that the area had



Based on various web searches I've decided that the liverwort collected on 3/4/16 is most probably *Riccia fluitans*. I photographed it with the digital scope.

On 3/7/16 I was to meet up with the Bernenger group at the Alva Scrub Preserve on Goggin Road. I left early, as usual, and had about an hour and a half to kill so I went to the nearby White residence to check out the finches. Goldfinches and both the indigo and painted buntings were there as well as a couple of white-winged doves. I then went to the Alva boat launch and saw a couple of limpkins. I finally met up with the Bernenger group about 9:30 at the Goggin Road site. We were met by a couple of the Lee County 20/20 volunteers (Janet Bunch and Robin) who led us on a tour of the area. We saw what we considered clear panther tracks and also wild pig tracks. Robin, one of the guides, said he had seen a female pig with several young earlier. Possible millipede tracks were also seen and, in fact, a large (3 inch) one was seen walking on the service road that we followed. In several areas along the way we found active ant lions. Evidence of gopher tortoises was abundant but none of the tortoises were seen.



Of real interest to me was the fact that the Alva Scrub Preserve is known to have Florida scrub jays and our guides indicated that they have seen them recently. Unfortunately, I never saw them — in fact, I saw very few birds during our walk. Dick Johnson saw a few warblers but I was pretty tuned into the plants. Three sand hill cranes did put on a bit of a show near the end of our walk, though.

I noted 45 species of plants that we identified along the way. I put the Alva Scrub Preserve site in my plant database and indicated the previously identified plants that were seen for that location. There were a number of plants that were not identified to species, though, and were not placed in the database. I received the benefit of some plant identifications from others in the group. Those that I feel could be identified with confidence again were added to the database (Butterflyweed, Rosary Pea, Pokeweed and Blue toadflax). Others that I felt I had less confidence with were added as excluded species until they can be verified in the future.



**Plants Identified at the Alva Scrub on 5/7/16 -- Bernenger Grp.**

| <b><u>Common Name</u></b> | <b><u>Scientific Name</u></b>    | <b><u>Family</u></b> |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Sumac, winged             | <i>Rhus copallina</i>            | Anacardiaceae        |
| PawPaw                    | <i>Asimina sp.</i>               | Annonaceae           |
| Gallberry                 | <i>Ilex sp.</i>                  | Aquifoliaceae        |
| Palm, Cabbage             | <i>Sabel palmeta</i>             | Arecaceae            |
| Palm, Saw palmeta         | <i>Serenoa repens</i>            | Arecaceae            |
| Milkweed, Savannah        | <i>Asclepias pedicellata</i>     | Asclepiadaceae       |
| Butterflyweed             | <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>        | Asclepiadaceae       |
| Burnweed                  | <i>Erechtites hieracifolia</i>   | Asteraceae           |
| Hawkweed, Coastalplain    | <i>Hieracium megacephalon</i>    | Asteraceae           |
| Rose-rush                 | <i>Lygodesmia aphylla</i>        | Asteraceae           |
| Silk-Grass                | <i>Pityopsis graminifolia</i>    | Asteraceae           |
| Marsh fleabane            | <i>Pluchia sp.</i>               | Asteraceae           |
| Blackroot                 | <i>Pterocaulon pycnostachyum</i> | Asteraceae           |
| Beggarticks               | <i>Bidens alba</i>               | Asteraceae           |
| Tasselflower, Florida     | <i>Emilia fosbergii</i>          | Asteraceae           |
| Tasselflower, Lilac       | <i>Emilia sonchifolia</i>        | Asteraceae           |
| Spanish Moss              | <i>Tillandsia utriculata</i>     | Bromeliaceae         |
| Prickly Pear              | <i>Opuntia</i>                   | Cactaceae            |
| Wireweed                  | <i>Sida acuta</i>                | Malvaceae            |
| Rockrose, Hardy           | <i>Helianthemum nashii</i>       | Cistaceae            |
| Rusty Lyonia              | <i>Lyonia ferruginea</i>         | Ericaceae            |
| Hat Pins                  | <i>Eriocaulon?</i>               | Eriocaulaceae        |
| Tread-Softly              | <i>Cnidoscolus stimulosus</i>    | Euphorbiaceae        |
| Rosary pea                | <i>Abrus precatorius</i>         | Fabaceae             |
| Rattlebox, Showy          | <i>Crotalaria spectabilis</i>    | Fabaceae             |
| Wild Bushbean             | <i>Macroptilium lathyroides</i>  | Fabaceae             |
| Oak, Laurel               | <i>Quercus hemisphaerica</i>     | Fagaceae             |
| Oak Scrub                 | <i>Quercus inopina</i>           | Fagaceae             |
| Oak, live                 | <i>Quercus virginiana</i>        | Fagaceae             |
| St. Johnswort             | <i>Hypericum sp.</i>             | Hypericaceae         |
| St. Johnswort, Four-petal | <i>Hypericum tetrapetalum</i>    | Hypericaceae         |
| Yellow Stargrass          | <i>Hypoxis juncea</i>            | Hypoxidaceae         |
| Pennyroyal, Wild          | <i>Piloblephis rigida</i>        | Lamiaceae            |
| Bladderwort               | <i>Utricularia subulata</i>      | Lentibulariaceae     |
| Wax myrtle                | <i>Myrica cirefera</i>           | Myricaceae           |
| Pokeweed                  | <i>Phytolacca americana</i>      | Phytolaccaceae       |
| Pine, Slash               | <i>Pinus elliottii</i>           | Pinaceae             |
| Milkwort, Showy           | <i>Polygala gandiflora</i>       | Polygalaceae         |
| Dewberries                | <i>Rubus sp.</i>                 | Rosaceae             |
| Willow, Coastalplain      | <i>Salix caroliniana</i>         | Salicaceae           |
| Bluehearts                | <i>Buchnera americana</i>        | Scrophulariaceae     |
| Toadflax, Blue            | <i>Linaria canadensis</i>        | Scrophulariaceae     |
| Tropical soda apple       | <i>Solanum viarum</i>            | Solanaceae           |
| Grape, Muscadine          | <i>Vitis rotundifolia</i>        | Vitaceae             |
| Yellow-eyed grass         | <i>Xyris sp.</i>                 | Xyridaceae           |



(Savannah milkweed, silkgrass, wireplant, tread softly and the bladderwort).

Someone on the walk indicated that there were two species of tasselflowers with different color flowers. I thought that it was said that one was native and one alien. The AFP does show two species; one (*Emilia fosbergii*) called the Florida tasselflower with red flowers and the other (*Emilia sonchifolia*) called the lilac tasselflower. Both, though, are said to be non native plants and both are shown for Lee and Collier counties. The Alva plant list on the 20/20 web site also lists both species. I thought that the photos from this trip possibly showed plants of different stages but, apparently, they show both species. On this basis, *Emilia sonchifolia* was added to the database.

3/8/16

Ann and I took Cooch for a ride down the Loop Road on 3/8/16. It was a very disappointing ride; one great blue heron being the only wading bird seen. Water again! When we got down to Gator Hook I took a short walk to see the condition of the trail. Jack Bernenger had cancelled his swamp walk there during the Marjorie Stoneman Douglass festival because of the wet conditions. The trail became pretty muddy quickly and I didn't venture very far. Later we stopped at Kirby-Storter and I noticed that the trail behind the parking lot was still pretty muddy also.



I did stop at a few places along the Loop Road to examine some plants. Showy rattlebox (*Crotalaria spectabilis*) was in bloom as was another smaller pea-like plant which was identified later with Hammer (2002) as cheesytoes (*Stylosanthes hamata*). My photos of this plant show a white coloration on the leaves but that is due to the road dust. This species was added to the plant database. This plant was also seen in bloom at the Kirby-Storter stop. Another plant seen in bloom at Gator Hook was later id'd (again with Hammer (2002)) as the wireweed (*Sida acuta*). Reflecting upon yesterday's (3/7/16) walk with the Bernenger group, I suspect that it was this species and not wire-plant (*Stipulicida setacea*) that was seen at the Alva Scrub Preserve. The entries in the plant database as well as the records for that trip were changed accordingly. Sleepy morning (*Waltheria indica*) was also in bloom at Kirby-Storter.

3/11/16

The morning of 3/9/16 was cloudy (pretty much overcast, in fact), it was very windy and the low tide for the Big Marco River was scheduled for 7:19AM. So! Ann decided it would be a good day for crossing the lagoon at Tigertail and shelling along Sand Dollar Spit. Needless to say, our return across the lagoon was just about at high tide. But, it was a five plover day; just like the five woodpecker days back at the Kickapoo — but who's counting. All five of the common plovers were seen. In fact, the only one of the more common shorebirds that I'd expect to see but didn't was the red knot. My target bird for the day

was the magnificent frigate bird but it was not seen either. Ann found one sand dollar but we didn't pick up too many other shells. I did collect a few sponges, though, and will check them out after they've been cleaned.

I also took a sample of the heavier beach sand with a high shell content to look, later, for beach meiofauna. The sample was taken from an area of wave action so the chance of organisms not being washed away by the waves was not good. I checked it out with the digital scope later and did not find any critters but it was interesting to see the various shell fragments, most of which were unrecognizable.

The Marco Island Shell Club's annual shell show started on 3/10/16. Ann and I were among the early birds and I was, as in previous years, rummaging through the baskets of shells filling one of the \$3 bags. Later, at home with Witherington & Witherington (2009) I found possibly seven specimens new to our Florida collection, one of these being a terrestrial snail. The new species, subject to further study were:

| <u>Family</u> | <u>Species</u>                   | <u>Common Name</u>    |
|---------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Archidae      | <i>Area imbricate</i>            | Mossy Arc             |
| Cerionidae    | <i>Cerion incanum</i>            | Gray Peanut Snail     |
| Conidae       | <i>Conus anabanthrum</i>         | Florida Cone          |
| Cerithiidae   | <i>Cerithium luosum</i>          | Dwarf Atlantic Cerith |
| Melongenidae  | <i>Busycotypus canaliculatus</i> | Channeled Welk        |
| Nertiidae     | <i>Nerita versicolor</i>         | Four-tooth Nerith     |
| Turbinidae    | <i>Turbo castanea</i>            | Chestnut Turban       |

I entered the Picayune Strand from Sabal Palm drive again on 3/11/16 to see if the conditions had improved since the last visit. There was no longer water across the road but there was plenty on both sides of it. No bob whites were seen or heard. In fact, a fellow that I met, who was there with a crew from a Florida Water Management group indicated that they have not been in this particular area for a while. I walked the road for about 1/2 mile recording the plants in bloom. At one point I came across a plant that I recognized as the horned bladderwort (*Utricularia cornuta*). Growing between the plants was the purple bladderwort (*Utricularia purpurea*) and growing nearby was another bladderwort (*Utricularia subulata*). The later species had just been added as a result of the Alva Scrub Preserve trip last week and, having id'd it again, I removed the "excluded" status for that species in the plant database.

I then stopped at the Sabal Palm trail head and found that the path was still covered with water. I saw *U. subulata* there again as well as one of the butterworts, probably *Pinguicula pumila*. The database on Florida plants was checked to see that a number of other plants seen in bloom were listed for that location. I spent some time with plants of the family Eriocaulaceae. One of these was a plant in bloom with flower stalks extending upward to about 1 ft. The leaves were in a basal whorl and were about 1 inch long by 1/16 inch wide. There was a distinct white vein in each leaf. They were very grass-like. The flower heads were white, firm and measured about 5/16 inches in diameter with a distinct concavity in the center. The roots were fairly thick. I found my index card key hard to use in the field but it led to yellow hatpins (*Synognathus flavidulus*) but with low confidence. Later review of the AFP made this id seem likely and the species was added to the plant database. A second species had wider leaves and much shorter flower stalks only about 1/16 inches tall. This plant has already been id'd at this location as bogbuttons (*Lachnocaulon anceps*).

I haven't seen too many butterflies so far this year but a queen butterfly and common buckeye were seen along the path as well as a halloween pennant dragonfly. Also, I saw a couple piles of fibrous material with mushrooms growing on them. I wondered if the piles may have been feral pig scat but I couldn't find any confirmation on the internet.



3/15/16

On 3/12/16, Ann and I did a more sensible crossing of the lagoon at Tigertail as low tide was approaching. Surprisingly, there were fewer birds than on the last visit but several greater yellowlegs were in the lagoon. As Ann walked ahead of me along the spit I lagged behind methodically going through shell piles looking mostly for gastropods or other shells not collected so far. I collected quite a few but I will have to go through them later to see if I was successful.



I went to the Bird Rookery Swamp on 3/14/16 and found it still showing the effects of the January rains; water levels were high and the water was still flowing through the channels and culverts.

Those plants that I had identified earlier but not listed for this location were updated in the database. Some other species' entries were

amended by the observations at this site and a few new species were added to the database.

Although the IRC does not show *Emilia sonchifolia* for C.R.E.W., two distinct color varieties of tasselflowers were clearly seen at the site. Also, although I have listed *Sonchus asper* (spiny sow-thistle) at this location, the IRC shows only *S. oleraceus*. False buttonweeds seen at the site were not id'd to species but the IRC list suggests *Spermacoce remota*. Another plant of the confusing Rubiaceae group was also seen and not definitively id'd. Finally, one of the yellow-eyed grasses seen in bloom was likely the *Xyris deformis*, according to the IRC. This is not a species that I've listed in my plant database but my confidence level with this genus is not high.

One of the first things that I had noticed as I approached the boardwalk was an abundance of another one of the bladderworts in bloom. This one was later identified as possibly the Cone-spur or humped bladderwort (*Utricularia gibba*) of Taylor (1992). This species is listed by the IRC for this location. Several photos were taken and the species was added to the plant database. I also saw quite a few green arrow arums (*Peltandra virginica*), some of which were in bloom. I'm sure that I've seen this plant in the past but, surprisingly, it was not put into the database. I added it at this time.

I noticed an epiphyte along the trail that I had not seen before. I collected a sample of the plant and later decided that it was an epiphytic cactus, probably of the genus *Rhipsalis*. Two species of *Rhipsalis* are shown in the AFP for Florida but only one of them anywhere close this site. Although not shown for Collier County, the mistletoe cactus (*Rhipsalis baccifera*) is shown in its southern



contiguous counties (Miami-Dade, Monroe). The AFP lists this species as endangered for the state and Wunderlin & Hansen (2003) describe it as rare. I added the species to the plant database. Although some of the web photos the other species of *Rhipsalis* (*R. cereuscula*) look more like what I saw, this species is only known in more northern Florida and suggested as possibly escaped.

Another plant seen in bloom was id'd with Taylor (1992) as the cudweed (*Gnaphalium falcatum*). I remember seeing this plant in previous years but I never added it to the plant database. According to the AFP, this name is misapplied to *Gamochaeta antilliana* and this species is shown by the IRC for this location. I added the species to the plant database by the later name.

A variety of graminoids were also seen along the trail but my id skills were wanting. Several of them were clearly sedges of the genus *Cyperus* and others were probably rushes. Also in bloom was the sedge that I have identified earlier as *Carex comosa*. Grasses, possibly of the genera *Echinochloa* and *Panicum* were also seen.



Not many birds were seen and only a few other animals. There were several small alligators along the trail and a small snake, submerged in the water, was also seen. Unfortunately, I left my Florida snake reference at home but internet searches suggested the Florida corn snake (*Pantherophis guttatus*) and Alden (1998) seems to agree. Green anoles and Florida red-bellied turtles were also seen. Peacocks and eastern yellow swallowtail butterflies were flying about and a wooly bear was seen as I left the area.

This morning's trip to TenK suggests that the water levels are going down but they are still way above normal. I've still only seen one roseate spoonbill this year and the bird concentrations remain low. My record pace for birding seems to have leveled off; still at 121 species. When I took Cooch out this evening a tree frog was on the condo wall — It appears to be a Cuban Tree Frog (*Osteopilus septentrionalis*).



3/20/16

The grass that I saw at C.R.E.W. on 3/14/15 and thought to be a species of *Panicum* could possibly be the Variable Witchgrass (*Dichanthelium commutatum*) of Taylor (2013). The photos in this reference are close to those I took while I was there and Taylor indicates that the species is synonymous with *Panicum ashei*. The IRC does show the species for the C.R.E.W. location as well. On this basis I added it to the plant database. I may possibly have seen this species previously along Janes Scenic Drive and also along the trams at the Fakahatchee Strand and the IRC shows its presence there as well.

Another grass, Bushy Bluestem (*Andropogon glomeratus*), has been seen in several locations and seems to be readily identified. This plant was also added to the database. This grass is shown in Taylor (2013).



When I was examining the shells collected on the last trip to Tigertail, I found a Spotted slipper snail (*Crepidula maculata*) of the family Calyptraeidea among them. I also found an apparent Gulf Staghorn Bryozoan (*Schizoporella pungens*) among the collected shells. Witherington & Witherington (2009) was used for the identifications. These were added to the floccritters database as new collected specimens.

I almost got 50 bird species at Eagle Lakes on the morning of 3/17/16. I had to settle on 49 species and several really common birds (vultures, kingfishers etc.) were not seen. The morning did produce two new Florida marks (Solitary Sandpiper and American Widgeon) which, along with the Black-necked Stilt, resulted in three trip marks. I thought I had seen the solitary sandpiper when Matt and I were at Eagle Lakes earlier (2/28/16) but Matt put a guilt trip on



me when I hesitated on the id and I didn't count it. This time the id was certain! The black-necked stilts were the first seen this year and a color blind guy that I met on the trail thought they were absolutely beautiful. In spite of the great start this year, I've fallen 3 species behind the 2013 count at this point. The total to date is 124.



Although Eagle Lakes is generally about birds rather than plants, I did see several interesting plants at the site and updated the plant database accordingly. The most interesting of these plants was id'd as the Scarlet Milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) with Hammer (2002). I was surprised to find that this species was not in the plant database and I added it at this time. One of plant seen in bloom was one of the Primrose-willows that was not identified to species.

Based on a conversation with Bob Leick, who visited with us on 2/16/16, I decided to set my camera to shoot both jpeg and raw formats and save them on separate cards. Thus, all of the photos taken at Eagle Lakes on 2/17/16 were available in both formats. When I compared the photos I was surprised at the difference. I saved only a few of the jpegs for later comparison and will now set the camera to shoot only in the raw format. Unfortunately, MicroSoft Publisher only works with jpegs so I'll have to convert photos to that format if I want to place them in this document.

Magnificent Frigate birds and the prairie warbler were the targets of a trip to Tigetail Beach on 3/18/16. I batted 500; several frigate birds were flying over the lagoon as I entered the park. I was not able to find any of the warblers, though. I did spend some time photographing the nesting ospreys and got fairly decent pix. I also saw an eastern box turtle.



Having had two consecutive mornings with trip marks I decided to try for the Eastern Towhee on the morning of 3/19/16. I went to the Briggs boardwalk on Shell Island Road where I generally see them each year. It took a lot of perseverance, though. I waited for over an hour, some of that in light rain, until I heard what I thought was the call note of the towhee. When I followed the call I eventually saw two of the birds fly across the boardwalk. Few other birds were seen on this morning which included a drive to the end of Shell Island Road.

I did notice many lichens, though. One of them appeared to be the *Diplolabia efzelii*, or possibly a related species, identified a while ago along the Big Cypress Bend boardwalk. The lichen was id'd with the help of the [Lichen Species in the Christopher B. Smith Preserve](#) web article saved earlier. Many of the other lichens belonged to several of the other groups id'd earlier (Parmotrema, Usnea, Ramalina etc.).

3/27/16

On the morning of 2/21/16 I went to the Serenity Walk Park. As I began walking the trail I scared up a Cottontail rabbit, the first I recall seeing in Florida. Although I recorded only 12 species of birds for the morning, one of them was a Brown-headed nuthatch which brought the year's trip list to 127. This put me tie with the pace of the 2013 record year.

I Collected several lichens which seemed to me to be of the genus Cladonia. Some of them had trumpet-like reproductive structures whereas others had ones that were horn-like. They could both have been the same species. All of them were growing on downed, well rotted wood.

As usual I updated the location entrees for the plants in the plant database. The plants of the Eriocaulaceae family were recorded consistently with the entrees for the Sabal Palm hiking trail. The taxonomy of this group is still questionable. I also left unrecorded one of the small yellow-eyed grasses and false buttonweed which are also unclear to me at this time. Another possible species of



whitchgrass was also seen.

An aster was also found in bloom. It had a very bare stem with few, opposite linear leaves varying from 3-5 inches long by approximately 1/4 inch wide. The flower head had about 15 or so white ray flowers and a yellow disc about 1/4 inches in diameter. I could not find this plant in any of my references. My in-expertise suggested that it probably would now be placed in the genus *Eurybia*. A search of the AFP for the genus *Eurybia* showed four species of that genus but all of them are restricted to far northern counties. The IRC shows no plants of that genus in Collier County.

A number of sedges were seen at the park. One of them was possible the Southern Umbrellasedge or Rush fuirena (*Fuirena scirpoidea*) of Dressler et al. (undated). The plant had round stems with no leaves but short leaf sheaths were present. The stem was jointed and terminated in a cluster of a few flower heads. According to the AFP, this species is pretty widespread throughout Florida and there are two species of this genus, including this one, listed for Collier County. Several photos that I took apparently show the stamens at the base of the flower head with the pistils more terminal. The species was added to the plant database.



The Townsends reported that they have been hearing a common poor-will as well as a Chuck-will's widow in recent days. The Common Poor-will has been heard both in the mornings and evenings. When Fred played the sound of the Common Poor-will, Ann said that she was certain that it was the sound she had heard from our lanai several nights ago. I sat out in the lanai and listened through dusk and I had my morning coffee on the lanai the next morning, waiting pretty much through the dawn, but heard nothing. It had cooled off quite a bit on these days and, perhaps, that affected the bird's behavior. I repeated the stakeout on the next night (3/22/16) and morning with the same results. One more try on the evening of 3/23/16 also failed.



I dropped Ann off at the Seminole casino in Immokalee on the morning of 3/22/16 and continued on for some B&B. I decided to follow some of the suggestions in Pranty (2005) for birding around the Immokalee area. I started with a drive down Lake Trafford Drive to the park at the end. There I had pretty good photo op's with a limpkin and not such good ones with a glossy ibis. Then I intended to follow more of Pranty's suggestions but missed a turn and found myself entering Hendry County. At that point I turned around and took Hy82 toward the C.R.E.W. Marsh trail. On Hy82, just west of Hy.29 I saw my first Caracara of the trip.

I hiked the flatwoods trail at the C.R.E.W. site. I noted 29 plants, most in bloom, along the trail and later used the list to update the location field in the plant database. In

doing so I found that several of the plants required new additions to the file. New to the list was the common blue violet (*Viola soraria*), wild batchelor's button (*Polygala nana*) Blue butterwort (*Pinguicula caerulea*) and a goldenrod (*Solidago fistulosum*) that I had not identified before. Although I had identified Pawpaw plants in the past I had never assigned them to a species. Since the IRC list for C.R.E.W. shows only *Asimia reticulata* I decided to assign that species name to the database entry for the pawpaws seen in the past. This may lead to some errors in the database until I learn to id the plants of this group. I had a similar problem with the miterwort seen and photographed. The IRC list showed both *Mitreola petiolata* and *M. sessilifolia* for the C.R.E.W. region. I had id'd *M. petiolata* in the past but not *M. sessilifolia*. Since my photos appeared to be more like *M. sessilifolia*, this species was added to the database. It should be noted, though, that the photos are not conclusive. Star rushes and a small yellow pea-like plant were not identified to species.

Numerous lubber grasshoppers were seen along the trail for the first time this year. But it was the dragonflies that attracted most attention. Among those seen was one of the pondhawks (probably *Erythemis vesiculosa*), the Carolina saddlebags (*Tamea carolina*), likely a blue dasher (*Pachydiplax longipennis*) and a darner so large that it would make Fuccillo say "HUGE"; possibly a regal darner (*Coryphaeschna ingens*). A search for this species on the web seemed to confirm the id.

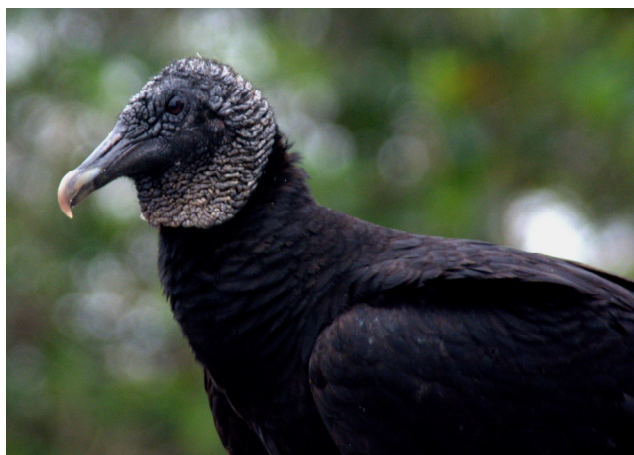
A couple of swallow-tailed kites showed peculiar behavior as I approached their area of activity. They continuously flew around a

certain pine tree and often actually seemed to smash into the top needles of the tree. At first I thought that I had been approaching their nest but no nest was seen. Then I thought that they were possibly mobbing a predator but try as I did, I couldn't see anything in the tree. I never did figure out what they were up to.

I went back to Harns Marsh again on 3/24/16. The water level had dropped a bit but it was still pretty high. Snail shells were found (and a few collected) in several locations and plenty of snail eggs could be seen on the emergent vegetation. I had hoped to add ring-necked ducks to the trip list but they were not seen. I did manage to list 25 birds for the morning and one of them was a trip mark, a Florida mark and a lifer. I ran into a local photographer who told me exactly where to find a purple (now a gray headed) swampphen. He indicated that as many as eight of the birds could be in the area and had staked out the location of two possible nest sites. He also expressed concern that these birds might drive the purple gallinules from the area. I would have liked a better look at the bird, especially for a lifer, but he and other birders present (with scopes) left little doubt that I was seeing the marks of the swampphen, two of them. Sandhill cranes with several young were also seen as were several limpkins but, unfortunately, no snail kites.

I keep looking for signs that the water levels at TenK are receding and hoping that more of the wading birds will return. It did seem to me that on the morning of 3/25/16 there were more snowy egrets wading in the shallower areas — perhaps, a good sign. No pelicans! No spoon-bills! Just cooperative vultures.

In the late afternoon of 3/24/16, we were visited by Pierre and Francine Dequire, renters a few condos from us. Ann had been doing water aerobics with Francine and their conversations revealed that her husband, Pierre, was into birds and photography. We were also joined by Heide and Susan from neighboring condos. Susan is also a birder and we all compared birding notes. Ann was thrilled! Pierre's set up is pretty comparable to mine and he has some really nice photos. After we shared a bit of show and tell we made plans to go across the lagoon at Tigertail to shoot shorebirds on 3/26/16. Unfortunately, Ann was ill that morning and we had to postpone the plans.



While I was sitting in the lanai on the evening of 3/24/16 I saw a huge flock of birds land in two trees on the other side of the retention pond. I looked with the binoculars and believed they were cedar waxwings; to the extent that I saw the crest of the head. That bird being pretty unlikely here, I doubted my id (again) and hiked down the road to see if I could get a closer look. Unfortunately the birds were not relocated. Back in Wisconsin I would have marked the birds with certainty; here I left them unmarked.

Fred Townsend told me that on 3/26/16, he was driving along Shell Island Rd. and stopped a warden to inquire about a trap that he saw. The warden indicated that the trap was for pythons. Fred then inquired about the Florida scrub jays that used to be in the area and he was told that they were still there. Shortly after that, Fred reported, he saw a scrub jay between the entrance of the park and the Briggs boardwalk; much closer, he said, to the boardwalk. Ann and I took a pass through the area after breakfast (about 10:30AM) on Easter Sunday (3/27/16) but the only jays we saw were blue jays. I did hear a towhee, though.

4/3/16

This time it was Francine, having hurt her back, who was not up to a trip to Tigertail. So Ann and I went shelling there on 3/28/16. I collected quite a few shells and will have to examine them for new species later. The birding was not great. I thought I saw a least tern when I was crossing the lagoon but I didn't see any of them later; I didn't bother recording bird sightings for the trip. The young osprey have developed somewhat but nothing eventful happened when I climbed the observation tower to photograph them.

I went back to Shell Island Road again on the morning of 3/29/16 to see if I could find the Florida scrub jay reported by Fred Townsend. I drove slowly through the area and then walked the road very slowly. Then I walked the Briggs boardwalk and didn't see any signs of jays, again except blue jays. I asked several people from the Conservancy of





Southwest Florida as well as a seemingly knowledgeable fellow who was helping with the traps set for the pythons. They all indicated that the scrub jays were no longer present in the area. I'll need to get more information from Fred to pinpoint his sighting.

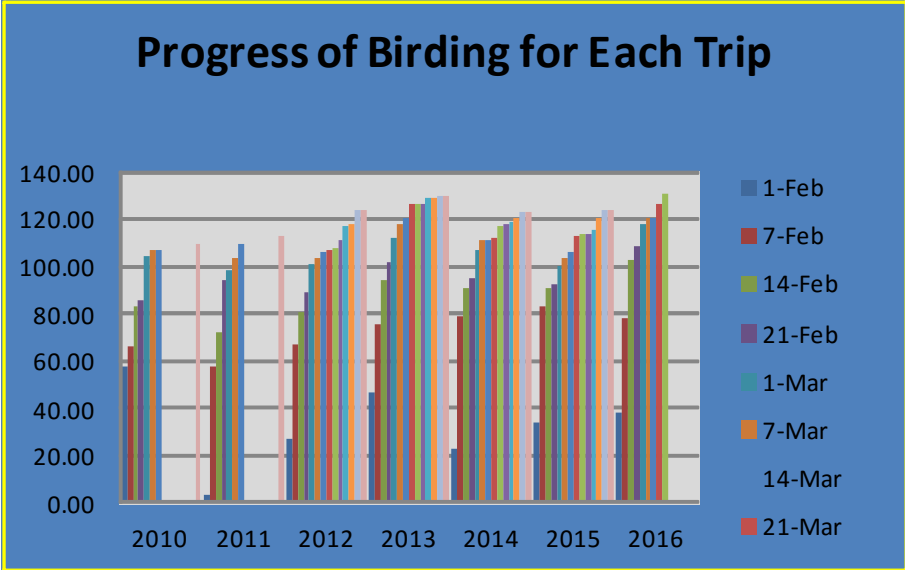
I spent several days examining the shells collected on the last trip to Tigertail. Among them I found several mollusks that are apparently new to the collection. Included was the pointed venus clam (*Anomalocardia auberiana*), Tampa Tellin (*Tellina tampaensis*), Spiny Papercockle (*Papyridea soleniformis*) and the Fragile Atlantic Mactras (*Mactra fragilis*). Also, when I examined the augers and ceriths, it appeared likely that there were at least two varieties of each that had been overlooked in the past. The Fly-speckled Cerith (*Cerithium muscarium*) was found among the ceriths and a possible Shiny Atlantic Auger (*Hastula hastata*) was found among the augers. All of these were added to the FloCritters database but they all need further study when I go back home.

According to Pranty (2005), San Marco blvd, once clear of the development, and the first 0.7 miles along the road to Goodland are good places to look for Mangrove Cuckoos, Black-whiskered Vireos and Florida Prairie Warblers. On the morning of 3/30/16 I settled for one of the three. The road to Goodland produced a good sound and sighting of a Prairie Warbler. This brought the year's trip list to 130, tied with the record 2013 with a whole month left to break it — but who's counting! I also walked down to the public boat launch under the Stan Gober (my look-alike) Bridge at the base of the road to Goodland and had another good view of a spotted sandpiper. This seems to be a good year for them. Only a total of 11 species of birds were listed for the morning, though.



I went back to the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk on the morning of 3/31/16 and was amazed at how much water was still there. The channel leading to the boardwalk was still high and most of the boardwalk was still over water. The alligator hole at the end was still continuous with the surrounding water. A few birds were recorded for the morning. I noticed that several plants were in bloom including the dogwood (*Cornus foemina*), buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), floating bladderwort (*Utricularia inflata*), grass-leaved arrowhead (*Sagittaria graminea*), poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), wild coffee (I believe the short-leaved, *Psychotria sulzneri*) and, of course *Bidens alba*. I collected a few lichen species but none of them were readily identified at this time. The pig frogs were very loud on this trip.

I said goodbye to the Townsends, who are leaving on April Fool's Day on 3/31/16. At that time Fred showed me pictures of the Florida Scrub Jay that he saw on Shell Island Road. The pictures left little doubt that the birds were still in the area in spite of what I had been told by folks at the site. But I've found in the past that following Fred and Alyce's birding routes seems to work pretty well. I went back to the area on 4/2/16 and sat in the car and walked the road for almost two hours. While I was there I met Jim and Cyn Krakowski, birders from northern Wisconsin who spend six months in Florida. They were following up on Fred's ebird report of the scrub jay. We were not successful in finding the bird. Jim reported that he had seen a gray kingbird in the area the other day and a red-headed woodpecker on this morning. Later, when I was reviewing sightings on ebird, I found Jim's reports to be among the prominent ones.



I went to Tigertail on the morning of 4/1/16 and this is no April fools; I got mark #131; a new trip high; Least terns were seen over the lagoon. Most of my time there, though, I spent on the new observation platform taking pictures of the ospreys. I got to the platform at 10:03AM, just after the male osprey delivered a fish to the female with two young. I took over 200 photos (many later deleted) hoping to get nice pictures of the young feeding. I waited for over an hour in



the hope that the male would return with another fish but it never happened. While I was there I met Andy Morffew, a photographer from England, who obviously had studied the osprey and seemed to know a lot about its habits. He gave me one of his cards and we discussed the birds and photographing them for a while. I finally announced that I had to leave to pick up Ann and he warned me that the male would come aboard as soon as I left. Sure enough, as I was walking down the steps, Andy hollered “get your camera ready — he’s coming”. Sure enough, I missed some good shots. Later, back at the condo, I checked out Andy’s web site ([www.andymorffew.com](http://www.andymorffew.com)) and viewed some truly amazing bird photography.

4/6/16

Well it turned out to be an April Fools after all. On 4/3/16, while I was trying to figure out a glitch in the BD program resulting in different reports of the same lists resulting in different numbers, I found that I had mistakenly recorded two birds erroneously. I had apparently recorded a Florida Scrub Jay instead of a Blue Jay at POI and had recorded a Sprague’s Pipit, a bird not on my life list, for TenK. Needless to say, my trip list was reset to 129 — here I go again. To make things worse, I haven’t discovered the BD glitch yet!

A trip to Eagle Lakes on the morning of 4/4/16 produced three trip marks including the shiny cowbird, a life mark as well. I’ve been told by others (Fred Townsend and even Dennis Gustafsen) that they were seen there and Pranty (2005) indicates that all three cowbirds have been seen at Eagle Lakes. A group of approximately 25 shiny cowbirds was gathered on the fences along the path leading to the ponds. I looked carefully for any that might have red eyes (betraying possible bronzed cowbirds, which have been reported there lately, according to the BirdEye app) but only a singular brown-headed cowbird was found among them. This morning put me back over the trip record of 130 once again (132). I was well on my way to a 50 mark morning, which Eagle Lakes can produce, but again, many of the more common birds were not seen and I ended up with a count of just 39 for the morning.

Kirby-Storter produced a red-eyed vireo on 4/5/16. I heard the bird as I was walking the boardwalk and immediately recognized the call. To be sure, I played the song of both the red-eyed and the black-whiskered vireos and it was certainly not the latter. Other than that, the park was pretty quiet; no warblers were seen or heard and none of the long-legged wading birds were seen in spite of the fact that the water levels have dropped a bit. I did get a few decent photos of a close Carolina Wren on the return trip to the car. After I left Kirby-Storter I walked a bit of the trail at the Skillet Strand but it was still a bit muddy and I didn’t have the right shoes on for that. I did notice a few plants in bloom and updated their location field in the plant database.



Among the plants in bloom was one of the miterworts and my photos of it compared best with *Mitreola petiolaria* as described and pictured in Taylor (1992). The IRC doesn't include data for the Skillet Strand. I did notice that the Pineland Heliotrope (*Heliotropium polyphyllum*) seen in the area was distinctly yellow as opposed to white. White-top sedges were abundant and probably represented at least two different species and a species of Pluchia was most likely the *P. rosea* as has been recorded for the area before. While I was there I heard a loud bird sound that I couldn't identify. The sound had the intensity of a crow's call (perhaps even louder) but was distinctly two notes, the second lower in pitch than the first. I never saw the bird in spite of the fact that I waited until the sound was no longer produced.

A small spreading plant of the pea family was found in bloom along the entrance to the strand parking lot. The flower petals were distinctly yellow but had reddish lines or stripes. The bottom petal was the largest of the petals and was about 1 cm. wide. The leaves were three-parted with the center leaflet the largest (abt 0.5m x 1.2mm). Each leaflet was tapered toward the petiole but somewhat rounded distally. The pod was green and about 1.3cm long with a short beak. I suspected the plant to be Cheesytoas (*Stylosanthes hamata*) and recorded that species for the site. The site also had several of the graminoids which require further study.

As I was returning to the condo, I stopped at the Turner River boat launch. Jim Krakowski had told me that he hears black-whiskered vireos there but that others he has talked to claim to hear only the red-eyed vireo. I did hear a vireo singing and I did play the songs of both birds from my iPOD. What I was hearing was definitely the red-eyed vireo, just as I had heard at Kirby-Storter.



When I approached the observation tower at Tigertail at about 10:30AM on 4/6/16 the male osprey was decapitating a fish on top of the same pole he had used on my visit of 4/1/16. On that occasion I failed to get in position on the tower before he flew into the nest and presented the fish to the female who then tore it apart and fed it to the two young. This time I got into position in time to get a decent (though not spectacular) shot of him bringing the fish into the nest. This time, though, he seemed to use several steps to position the fish below the young. The female didn't interact with it at all and the young possibly were now old enough to shred it for themselves although I saw little activity from the young in this regard. As I previously mentioned, the fish had been decapitated. Andy Morffew had told me that some people believe that the male removes the head so that the fish cannot harm the young but

he also showed me one photograph (and referenced others) showing that he may bring whole fish into the nest as well. Andy thought it just depended on how hungry the male was at the time.

I didn't cross the lagoon on the morning of 4/6/16 and there were no shorebirds on the near (east) side. I had noticed in the Bird-Eye app that semipalmated sandpipers were reported at the site and I was hoping to see them — no luck. I did see both a dark morph reddish egret and a tricolored heron in the lagoon and was stricken, as I have been in the past, with how alike their feeding behavior is. I wondered if the similarity in behavior possibly betrayed a close evolutionary relationship. I danced around the internet for a while but could not find any confirmation.

4/7/16

I went to the TenK marsh, trail this morning and listed 23 birds. While I was there I met Ben Nottingham (and a partner, John), a refuge manager from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They were following up on reports that an alligator along the trail was acting bold with visitors, as if it was being fed. They asked me about those I had seen but none that I've seen were acting strangely. They also indicated that someone had reported a swamp hen around the observation deck and asked that, if I were to see either of these things, I should call Ben. On the way back to the condo I passed an area to the north of Hy41 where Ann and I have seen many wading birds in previous years but has been pretty empty this year, probably because of the high water. I counted about 65 birds in the area this morning and among them was a single roseate spoonbill. Ann indicated that there were fewer, but still several, birds there when she passed it later in the afternoon.

Late in the afternoon, when I was taking Cooch for a potty stop, I found a small snail shell below a tree between the mailboxes and the parking lot. Presumably, this was of a terrestrial snail. The snail was 2cm. Long and about 1cm. Wide. The snail was dextral with about 5-6 whorls. Each whorl had closely spaced grooves paralleling the whorls and these grooves although somewhat bleached by the sun, had brown patches that were dash-like. These brown patches were darker in the whorls closest to the apex. Using Tree

Snails of Florida, a key to Florida's tree snails that I previously had downloaded from the internet, I determined that the snail was probably of the Bulimulidae family, possibly the lined tree snail, *Drymaeus multilineatus*. It seems to me that I have possibly seen these snails walking near the garage in the past when I've taken Cooch out at night.



4/9/16

Jan Hanner told me on 4/7/16 that a flamingo was being seen at Wiggins Pass. I followed up by checking the BirdEye app for several locations in that area and found that one had been reported at Lover's Key several days before. Ann and I went to Lover's Key on 4/8/16 and was told by the volunteer at the admission booth that it had, but was no longer, being seen.

I hoped for possible additional terns, gulls and/or shorebirds at the park. I had been impressed by some of the shorebird photos of Andrea Kines Cooper who apparently got low enough to catch the breaking waves in the background of the pictures. I hoped to try that aspect and improve my own shorebird photos. Unfortunately, there were not a lot of birds on the beach when we got there, except for a few willets and ruddy turnstones. I tried a few photos but nothing spectacular resulted. Least terns and black skimmers were in the roped-off nesting areas but they were too far off for good pix. I did collect a few shells from the beach but nothing new to the collection.

I went to Rookery Bay on the morning of 4/9/16 with three things in mind. Jim Krakowsky had mentioned that he had seen red-headed woodpeckers there and I scanned the dead snags for that possibility — strike one. Pranty (2005) suggests that the mangroves at the end of Shell Island Road would be a good place to find Mangrove Cuckoos, Black-whiskered Vireos and Prairie Warblers. I walked through the mangroves but saw or heard none of these — strike two. Once again I parked and walked around the trap area where Fred Townsend had seen the Florida Scrub Jay — Strike three. It's nice to have baseball back! As long as I was there I trespassed a bit and checked the trap and found it empty.

As I was walking through the mangroves I saw a somewhat drooping shrub that had several flower buds about to open. Each of the four petals appeared light pink and peeling them back revealed a red area near their bases. I dissected one of the nearly opened flowers and found the column of stamens around the pistil suggesting one of the plants of the family Malvaceae. The leaves were alternate and distinctly three-lobed. There were three bracts surrounding the flower in the bud and these were distinctly dotted. Later, using Nelson (1996) I determined that the plant was most likely the Upland or Wild Cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum*) but the reference suggested white to yellow flowers (internet searches for the species did show some with pink or even red flowers). The AFP showed the plant for Collier County and the IRC did indicate its presence at Rookery Bay. This species was added to the plant database. Another plant seen in bloom in the same general area (growing near nickerbean) was id'd as sixangle foldwing (*Dicliptera sexangularis*) which had been identified in Rookery Bay previously.



When I got back from Rookery Bay Ann reported that she had just seen a hummingbird in the oak tree outside the lanai. I sat there for a while but it never returned.

4/10/16

I spent a bit of time this morning trying to identify a dragonfly that I had seen and photographed at TenK on 9/9/16. Using a variety of internet sources (especially Tom Murray's site: [http://www.pbbase.com/tmurray74/florida\\_dragonflies](http://www.pbbase.com/tmurray74/florida_dragonflies)) I determined that it was most likely a female Seaside Dragonlet (*Erythrodiplex berenice*). According to the references, this species is pretty typical of salt marshes and mangrove habitats.

Then, when Ann and I went into Everglades City for breakfast, I saw an article in the Mullet Wrapper about white-crowned pigeons. According to this article, the birds are seen regularly,



if not commonly, in Everglades City. I drove to the Everglades National Park visitor's center and one of the staff there confirmed the facts of the article. I drove around the area to get oriented for future searches for the bird. While doing so we saw that two young great horned owls were in the nest at the power station. They were already turning somewhat brown at this point. Neither of the adults were seen. BTW: Although BD records do not indicate it, swallow-tailed kites are being seen from the condo on an almost daily basis.

4/12/16

On 4/11/16 Ann and I went to Tigertail Beach. THERE WERE NO BIRDS! Shorebirds, at least. There were a few waders including a reddish egrets but no records were entered for the day. So, of course, I concentrated on shelling (which is probably why I saw no



birds). I brought back quite a few shells but none of them were new to the collection. There were two shells, though, (the Jasper Cone and the Bruised Nassa) that I had in the collection but had never actually collected. The Bruised Nassa (*Nassarius vibex*) had been identified among the shells that were part of a \$3.00 grab bag from the 2015 shell show and the Jasper Cone had been from a previous collection.

I've been following reports on the BirdEye app on my iPad and ebird online of birds seen in the various hotspots nearby. These two sources suggest several birds, not on this year's trip list, that could be found in areas that I usually visit. So, this morning I drove the Turner River/Birdon Rd. loop and visited the Big Cypress Swamp visitor's center with the possibility of seeing barn swallows, gray and eastern kingbirds and, of all things, monk para-

keets. I did see a group of about 6 or 7 barn swallows (a trip and Florida mark) at a stop on Birdon Road but struck out on all of the rest. I asked the staff person at the visitor's center but she didn't know of the reports for the center. While on upper Wagonwheel Road, though, I did get good photo opportunities with Eastern Meadowlarks.

Neighbors have reported possible Chuck-Wills-Widows singing at dusk but I have yet to hear them. I sat out in the lanai this evening, as I have on several occasions, but the birds never showed.

4/13/16

While I was walking along the south end of the lagoon on Tigertail beach today I came across a white flowering plant at the edge of the sandy path. I immediately noticed that it had four petals and suspected that it was of the mustard group. Later, at the condo, I checked out the plants of the family Brassicaceae in Hammer (2002) and found the Coastal Searocket (*Cakile lanceolata*) which generally resembled the plant I had seen. Although the plant, which I had photographed, generally resembled that species, the leaves were deeply lobed and reminded me of the Cutleaf Toothworts back home. I checked the IRC for Tigertail but it listed no species of *Cakile*, or for that matter, any plants of the mustard family at that location. Bell and Taylor (1982) indicate that plants of this species "are quite variable in leaf shape and size" and Taylor (2013) describes the leaves of the species as "alternate, lance-shaped, fleshy, toothed or dissected". The AFP lists this species of *Cakile* as the only one in Collier County. Accordingly, the species was added to the Florida plant database.

Tonight it was Ann's turn to sit in the lanai and listed for Chuck-Wills-Widows. No Luck again!

4/14/16

I went to the Big Cypress Bend boardwalk of the Fakahatchee Strand on the morning of 4/14/16. I was hoping to see a Northern Waterthrush and get trip mark 135. The water levels continue to drop but the alligator hole at the end was still pretty much continuous with the surrounding area. I got decent photos of a barred owl on the way to the alligator hole and then I sat on the bench and waited for over 1/2 of an hour. No waterthrush was seen; the water levels in that area probably still pretty high for it. Then, as I was walking back, I finally saw the waterthrush. It was almost as if it came to see me. It flew up to about my height in the shrubs along the boardwalk and waited for me to get a good look. Today was an entry day for the Florida birding stats file so it was nice to see this new record year on the graph. Each mark for the rest of this trip will be a new record — but, who's counting!

As I was exiting along the boardwalk I noticed a couple of plants in bloom. One was the Dahoon Holly and the other was the False



Nettle. Although recognized before, the False Nettle had not been recorded for this location and so I updated the database. Photos of both plants were taken.

4/20/16

JoJo Morgese and Karen visited us from Thursday (3/13/16) through The next Tuesday (4/20/16). Needless to say, I didn't do much



serious B&B during that period but we did take them to places and observe a few things around the condo worthy of noting. We took them for an air boat ride at Wootens on 4/14/20 but didn't go along on the ride. When we got back to the condo we found that a Black Racer had gotten into the condo. I used a broom to move it along the wall, out into the lanai and, finally, out into the lawn. The snake's aggressiveness was really surprising. It continually struck the broom and it shook its tail as if it was a rattlesnake. Even when it was finally out the door, it did not retreat but immediately coiled us for more aggressiveness. Only after we left did it finally slither off.

On 3/15/16, Ann heard a Chuck-Wills-Widow from inside the condo (with the doors closed and the air conditioner on) and called it to my attention. It was clearly pretty close when I went out to hear it. A trip mark I had pretty much given up on.

We all went to Shark Valley on 3/16/16 and took the two hour tram ride. The guide was pretty good (one of the park rangers) and anticipated a Snail Kite at a hardwood hammock shortly into the trip. The kite flew off just as we approached the location he had indicated. Then an American Bittern flew right across the path of the tram and landed a short distance into the saw grass within good camera range. That was another trip mark. At the observation tower the ranger indicated a particular location where he had been seeing a crocodile. We looked for a while but were not able to find it. As the tram was returning from the observation deck we stopped for a close alligator viewing and the gator rocked and roared; apparently we got closer than it liked. The activity was pretty neat for our guests to see though. Generally the park was pretty quiet compared to our visit there earlier in the year.

We went for a mid-morning walk along the Big Cypress

Boardwalk on 3/19/16. At the point where the boardwalk wraps around the cypress trees (near the beginning) there were three barred owls high in the trees but clearly visible. It appeared that it may have been one adult and two young. I was a great sighting for Jo and Karen (me too). At the alligator hole at the end of the boardwalk Karen spotted a frog which I believe was a pig frog (*Rana grylio*). I looked at internet photos of the frog and the markings on the rear underside seemed pretty clear. We heard the frog as well but I don't think it wasn't the one we were observing. Later that day, as Jo and Karen were preparing to leave, I was sitting in the lanai and saw two Blackpole Warblers in the oaks outside the condo. I watched them fly back and forth between the two trees for quite a while before they finally flew off. When they did fly, I thought there may have been a third one. This was not only a trip mark but also a condo mark. The only other time I've seen this species in Florida was on 5/1/12 when I came upon the warbler count led by Ken Tracey (see notes of 5/2/12).

4/22/16

When I took Cooch out on the morning of 4/21/15, approximately 70 white pelicans flew over the condos. That was the seventh condo bird mark for the year. Seeing such a large flock coming from the general direction of TenK suggested that possibly the water levels had dropped enough to attract more of the wading birds to the area so I went to TenK's marsh trail. I did see another ten



white pelicans but, other than that, no other large waders were there in big numbers. I did see a number of shorebirds but they were not too close. I thought I was seeing both yellowlegs because some clearly had their bodies out of the water while others were getting their bellies wet. I also thought that there were possible dowitchers but they were too far away for certain identification. Other than that it was a modest morning with a count of only 26 birds recorded in BD.

I looked at a few of the grasses that were in bloom along the marsh trail. Paging through Tiner (1993) suggests that one of them may be the Marsh Finger Grass (*Eustachys glauca*). The AFP shows two species of *Eustachys* for Collier County but the IRC only shows one of these for the Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge. Ironically, the one shown for the area, *Eustachys petraea*, is the Pinewoods Finger Grass rather than the Marsh Finger Grass. Unfortunately, the key in Wunderlin & Hansen (2003) distinguishes between these two species with floral characteristics not noted. Until further study, this plant will be added to the plant database as *E. petraea*. The other grass consisted of a raceme arrangement of flower stalks. A few photos of this grass were taken of but no positive id's can be made at this time.



Dragonflies were everywhere. Some of them I recognized (Halloween Pennant, possible Regal Darner) but many of them never rested long enough for me to identify or even get a camera on them so I could id them later. Southern Florida seems to be a good place for dragonflies. A small yellow rat snake crossed the path on my return to the observation deck.

When I got back from TenK Al Tanner asked if Ann and I wanted to join him and Jan's friend, Kim, on a boat tour of the POI area. We drove down the Faka Union Canal and I got a chance to see the manatee hotel that Dave Goodlove had been complaining about earlier. This is a large manatee "refugium" being built for the manatees so that they are protected from changes in water flow being engineered for the Picayune state park. Al showed me a video of the project that a neighbor had taken with a camera on a drone. That video was later located as Oxbow10:7-15-.mp4 (<http://www.dropbox.com/s/49j09pinaofejo/OxBow10%3A7%3A15-2.MP4?dl=0>).

We continued along the Faka Union Canal to the Gulf of Mexico where we saw several dolphins. Al tried to get some of them to follow us but they didn't seem to be in a playful mood. One did follow us for a short distance but never jumped out of the water. We stopped at White Horse Key, roamed the beach a bit and picked up a few shells. We also stopped at Camp LuLu where I collected a couple of somewhat intact horseshoe crabs. The larger one was still a bit ripe and will need to be soaked in bleach for a while. It may eventually be discarded; We'll see. Not too many birds were seen on the trip although a couple of small groups of cattle egrets were in the mangroves.

4/24/16

Ann and I decided to cross the Tigertail lagoon for what would probably be our last shelling trip of the year on the morning of 4/23/16. Having read reports on ebird and the BirdEye app on my iPad I was especially aware that semipalmated sandpipers had been recently reported for that hotspot. Even as we were crossing the lagoon I saw the suspected trip mark on the west side. As I approached the birds I especially looked for the field marks of the species and determined that I was, indeed, seeing the first semipalmated sandpiper seen in Florida and trip mark #139. The black legs, relatively clean underside and generally grey overall color were decisive. The next day, though, looking at iBird Pro convinced me that what I actually saw was a sanderling. Back to 138.



Nearby were several dowitchers. I was hopeful of the possible long-billed species which had also been reported recently but nothing that I saw served to distinguish these from the Short-billed Dowitchers I have been seeing all winter. Later I went on the Cornell Lab of Ornithology web site but I still saw no cause to mark the long-billed species.

As I continued along the path to the gulf shore four Magnificent Frigate birds were seen overhead. Three of them were pretty active as I tried to get decent photos of the species. Nothing wonderful happened there but it was nice to see that bird again; they

had been hard to find earlier in the trip. Several Prairie Warblers, also illusive earlier, were also seen. Although these nice target birds were seen, only 17 species were recorded in BD for the trip. That included the Least Terns seemingly beginning to nest in the roped-off area. Incidentally, six Burrowing Owls were seen at the intersection of Kendall Ave and Hernando Dr as we entered the park. Four, or possibly 5, of them were youngsters.

The waves were very rough on this trip and shelling was not very good as it was hard to wade into the gulf. I actually found more sand dollars than Ann did; 1. One of the shells collected seems to be our first Eastern White Slippersnail (*Crepidula atrasolea*). Also, a couple of Mossy Arcs (*Arca imbricata*) may be among those collected but that is a species I am still uncertain about. I did find a couple of gastropod egg cases along the beach. When I dissected five of these and extracted the young on 4/23/16 I found that four of them had young snails inside and one was empty. The empty one seemed to have an escape hole; the young may have escaped before the case washed up on the shore. The count of the young per chamber is shown in the table to the right. As the data show the chambers averages 28.5 shells/case.

| Case # | Shells counted |
|--------|----------------|
| 1      | 27             |
| 2      | 36             |
| 3      | 26             |
| 4      | 25             |
| 5      | 0              |



4/25/16

Time is getting short for this year’s trip and Ann needed to get to the beach. I dropped her off and went on to Tigertail. When I got there I found a least tern sitting on the east shore of the lagoon. It sat there for quite a while and occasionally another brought a fish for it to eat. I assumed this was a pair and that the feeder was the male but I was surprised that it was feeding the apparent female off of the nesting site. Obviously the female was not taking care of young. Perhaps the male was courting her, showing what a good provider he could be and trying to get her to mate with him. After all, one good tern deserves another! As the photos attest, I got some good pictures on this trip. In fact, for the first time ever, I maxed out two 8 gig SD cards in my camera and added a third; a total of 521 pictures for the morning of which I immediately eliminated all but 75 of them when I got home later.

Those photos also included some of the common shorebird and another round of photos of the young ospreys. The ospreys are getting pretty big now. It was interesting to notice that their red eye color was now somewhat diminished that their fresh feathers had clean white borders in contrast to the adults.

On the way out of the park I stopped to see if I could get some decent photos of the young burrowing owls. Several others were also watching and photographing them and they were a bit shy. One of the adults was watching from the top of An apparent electrical box and it seemed to be vocally warning the youngsters. Only three of the babies were seen and I really didn’t get good shots of them. I did notice some purple-flowered Butterfly Pea (*Centrosema virginianum*) growing in the lawn near the owl burrows. The id was later confirmed with Hammer (2002).

For the last several days I’ve been seeing one or more swallow-tailed kites flying low over the area just west of the condo’s swimming pool, seemingly over the channel as the Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Preserve begins. I drove over there this afternoon in the hopes of possibly seeing them perched — no luck. There was little of interest in the area.

4/28/16

On 4/26/16 I went to Kirby Storter in the hopes of possibly seeing some of the spring warbler migrations — no luck. The only bird, other than I would see most of the winter, was the red-eyed vireo. I

also saw a female brown-headed cowbird. What was most spectacular was the backlit dew on the cypress trees as I walked the



boardwalk. The photo below doesn't begin to show its splendor. The spider webs were also pretty neat; I actually had to duck under several of them. I heard several pig frogs while I was at the end of the boardwalk but I was unable to see any of them. Only 13 bird species were recorded for the morning.



I took Ann for her last beach experience of the trip and then went on to Tigertail on 4/26/16. The tide was rising and there weren't many birds around. I did take a few photos of least sandpipers, though. I've spent quite a bit of time, lately, going through my photos from previous years and selecting some of the better bird shots.

On the morning of 4/27/16 I went to the Picayune Strand State Forest to see if my bobwhites had returned. I walked about 1/2 mile along the road where I had seen them last year but they never appeared, in fact, few birds were seen or heard. While I was walking I noticed some false-foxglove along the road. This had been entered into the plants database last year as *Agalinis fasciculata* as identified with Hammer (2002). The new version of Hammer (2014) no longer describes this species but now refers to *A. linifolia*, the Flaxleaf False Foxglove. Both of these species are shown for Collier County by the AFP. Neither species is shown for the Picayune by the IRC.

When I got to the Sabal Palm trailhead I noticed that the trail was now open so I drove into the parking lot. Immediately, a red-headed woodpecker provided trip mark 139. I hiked along Loop A for a while and noted the plants in bloom. The location entry in the plant database was updated as needed. A few interesting plants were noted.

One of the plants had such unique flowers that I was surprised that I could not find it in any of my references. The plant was weakly upright with opposite, somewhat heart-shaped leaves measuring abt. 6mm long x 4mm wide. These leaves were sessile and slightly clasped the stem. There was a definite directional arrangement of these leaves toward the plant's tip. The stem was brown and seemed almost woody, although very thin. Most of the lower leaves had dropped from the plant. The outer two flower petals (possibly sepals) were somewhat larger versions of the leaves and measured abt. 12mm x 9mm. These petals were somewhat lilac-pink although they seemed to fade with age. The flowers were strongly laterally compressed. Each flower as terminal and lateral growth from the axils of the terminal leaves gave rise to another pair of leaves with another flower. Removal of the outer petals revealed two narrower, more pointed petals, the tips of which actually projected somewhat through the outer ones. Inside was a single ovary surrounded by a ring of hairs. No actual stamens were seen. The style projecting from the ovary divided into three

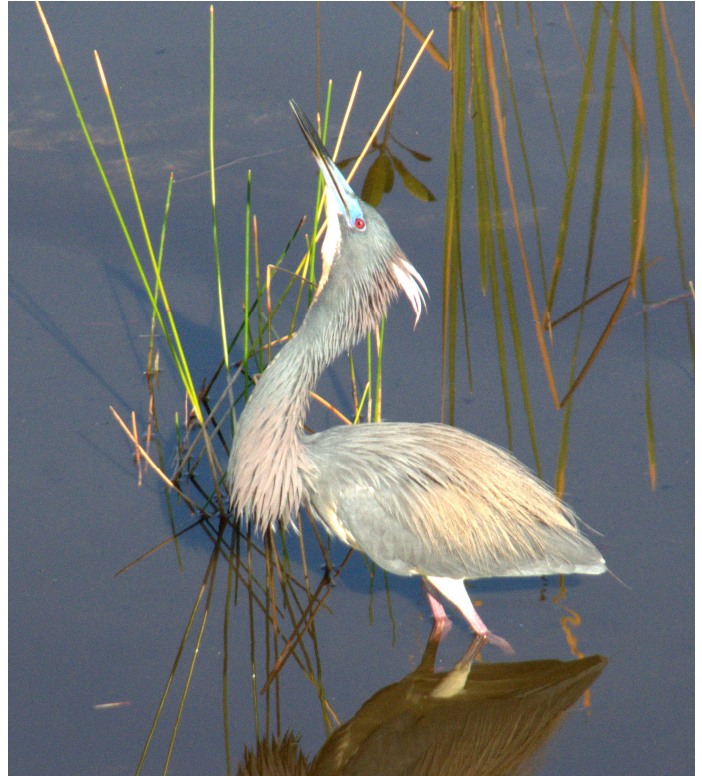


stigmas. The plant remains unidentified at this time.

Another plant appeared to be a possible lobelia and reminded me of the Indian Tobacco seen out at the Kickapoo because of its rounded fruit in the lower regions of the stem. The plant had several linear basal leaves that were thick and fleshy with wavy edges of shallow teeth. These were brown in color. Each leaf had a prominent central vein. The inflorescence was a raceme with the lower flowers blooming first. These flowers were white with a slight pink cast. There were three lower petals (each about equal) and two much reduced upper petals that were strongly reflexed. Five small, pointed sepals were at the base of each flower. The plant was identified with Schmelz & Stacell (2009) as the White lobelia (*Lobelia paludosa*). In Hammer (2014) that species is referred to as the Swamp Lobelia. The photo in this reference shows much more expanded upper petals than what I saw, though. Taylor (1992) also shows this plant. The AFP does show this species for Collier County and the IRC lists it for the Picayune Strand State Forest. The plant was added to the plant database. This plant had also been seen earlier along the road in the Picayune Strand State Forest.

4/29/16

When I got out of my car in the parking lot of TenK's marsh trail, sixty-three American White Pelicans flew over. That was a good sign and a promise well kept. Water levels had come down to the point that the long-legged wading birds were feasting. Great Egrets, Snowy egrets, Great Blue Herons, Little Blue Herons, Tri-Colored Herons, White Ibis, White Pelicans and Roseate Spoonbills were among the possibly more than 200 birds visible near the observation deck. The spoonbills numbered 15-20 and there were 3 or 4 more white pelicans in the water. There was also a large group of shorebirds with 25 yellowlegs, three dowitchers and several peeps. All of the birds were too far for good photos and the shorebirds too far for confident identification. I marked Greater Yellowlegs based on the call but I suspect the lesser were there as well. It's interesting to note that, for those species that the young are readily distinguished from the adults, many of the birds seen were young. That was evident with the white ibises as well as the little blue herons; these were blotched with blue on white. I never attempted id'ing the dowitchers or peeps. Several green herons and a single Black-Crowned Night Heron were also seen along the trail. Conspicuously absent were grebes and coots; an observation that is consistent with my memories of other years at about this time. Perhaps these have gone north as I will tomorrow. Twenty-five species were recorded in BD for the trip.



The Mangrove Rubber Vine, which I've seen there in the past, (*Rhabdadenia biflora*) was seen in bloom. I also saw another white-flowered plant in bloom near the deck. I suspect it to be the Climbing Hempvine (*Mikania scandens*) which is new for this location. Alligators were also pretty active this morning. I'm sure that I saw 10 or 12 of them and a couple were of pretty good size. A single marsh rabbit was seen near the beginning of the trail.

As I was returning to the condo I saw a songbird on the telephone wire near the intersection of Hy41 and Newport Drive. I was pretty sure that it was a Gray Kingbird but, unfortunately, I noticed a slight white edge at the end of the tail and recorded the 140th trip mark as an Eastern Kingbird.

5/4/16

I went to the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk for the final goodbye on 4/30/16. The water level having dropped some more, quite a few wading birds were seen in the alligator hole at the end. Again, most of the white ibises were immature. Two alligators at the hole were turning over the mud as has been seen in the past.

We left that day for the Kascmarek's and spent two over-nighters. On the morning of 5/1/16 I went to Green Key to check out the shore area. There were only a few shorebirds and a reddish egret there but I did see several gray kingbirds along the causeway. This time the id was certain; no white at the end of the tail and the dark eye stripe was evident. I took a few photos but their quality leaves bit to desire. I also saw several red-breasted mergansers along the causeway, bringing the trip list to 142.



Later in the day, Ann and I drove through two of the Gulf beach areas. Anclote beach was very busy and nothing of particular interest was seen. We then went to Fred Howard Park. I remembered having seen oystercatchers there in a previous year and was hoping to add them to this year's list. That didn't happen. I did see a marbled godwit, though, which was not only a trip mark (bringing this year's list to 143) but also a Florida mark.

We left for home about 3:30AM on the morning of 5/2/16. As usual our trip north took us from early spring back to late winter. The trees were fully leafed out as we left Florida but by the time we got to Wisconsin only the shrub layer was so. In Paducah I saw hop clover, black medic, white clover and a few other late spring flowers in bloom. We drove past fields of mustard in bloom in Kentucky and southern Illinois and, in one of the Illinois rest areas, I saw a spring beauty in bloom. It will be interesting to see what Monday's phenology walk will reveal.

#### Summary

According to a variety of internet sources, the average January rainfall in Everglades City is 1.71". This year the city received 8.91" in January (more according to some of the neighbors) before our arrival. That really affected the wildlife experiences of the 2016 Florida trip. Many, if not most, of my usual hiking haunts were inaccessible as the water levels were high everywhere. Large concentrations of wading birds were seldom seen and some species commonly seen in the past were seen rarely until the end of the trip (roseate spoonbill, white pelican) or not at all (great white heron). It will be interesting to see if the events of this year will have permanent effects; Will my Bobwhites return to their usual spot in the Picayune? In spite of this, the diversity of birds was good and it was a record year (143 species) for birding which resulted in the addition of seven new condo birds, 5 Florida marks and 3 life marks (Grey-headed Swamphen, Marbled Godwit & Shiny Cowbird). Thirty-five new plants were identified and added to the plant database. Interestingly, ferns (of such interest in earlier years) were largely ignored this year as were graminoids, in spite of intentions, although a couple of grasses were added to the database. Sixteen species were added to the FloCritters database; fourteen of these were mollusks, one was a bryozoan and the other was an arthropod (horseshoe crab) which had certainly been seen in the past.