

1/18/22

We left home at 6:45AM on 2/13/22 for the 2022 Florida trip. Five tolls along the Illinois I294 tollway and a boring drive through Northern Illinois got us to Mt. Vernon at noon. After we broke the fast there, we drove on to Matt and Nicole, house.

We had planned to stay there for three nights and then drive on to the Kaczmarek's. Unfortunately, though, Murfreesboro was expecting 4-7" of snow, so we decided to move on after just two nights. We cancelled plans to stay with Kaczmarek's because of Kovid concerns and drove on, in light rain, to Tifton, GA., where we stayed a single night. The next morning (1/16/22) we headed south for Florida. As we passed the Florida visitor's center, Ann spotted a great egret. My first Florida bird for 2022 was a turkey vulture seen over the highway a bit later. I also saw many cattle egrets along the way. From there we were sandwiched between storms; Tennessee and parts of Georgia were hit with unusual snow storms while tornados hit Fort Myers and were seen over Alligator Alley in Collier County. Unaffected by any of it, we ended up in Sarasota for a two night stay.

While there, we visited the Myakka River State Park on 1/17/22. As we drove through the park along the paved road

from the southwest entrance, the park looked like a nursery for Spanish moss and resurrection fern. Huge live oaks were draped with the plants. Shoe-string fern was also common as was southern needleleaf. I recorded 23 birds during the visit, including almost all of the long-legged waders. Many of these were seen at the weir by the Myakka outpost. A large number of roseate spoonbills was seen by the weir. Surprisingly, I also saw three black-necked stilts there; that's a bird I don't generally see until March or April (Other early dates were 2/28/13 at Eagle Lakes Park and 3/3/20 at 10K). Both yellowlegs had been seen earlier. Very little



was seen along the Birdwalk; the area was seasonally dry. A raft of possible gulls and Terns was seen far out in the open water area, but it was too far for positive identification. I did see a laughing gull later when we were back in Sarasota.

1/21/22

We arrived at the condo on the eighteenth of January without reaching tackatherm. . Not surprisingly, I spent my first morning (1/19/22) fixing my faka-habit at the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk, where I recorded 16 bird species. I was pleased to be able to walk all the way to the alligator hole at the end without using a walker or a cane. It was a bit slow and painful, but pleasing nonetheless. Water levels appeared high, the deer trails being flooded. Nothing was seen in bloom along the boardwalk, but it appeared that a lot of string lilies had gotten established along the way. It was very quiet at the alligator pond at the end, again possibly due to the high water.

Back at the condo, I saw about 14 white pelicans as well as a brown pelican fly over the lanai. Later, when Ann and I went in to Marco Island for breakfast, we saw our first burrowing owls of the year.

The next couple of mornings were spent visiting some of my favorite Florida haunts; the TenK Marsh Trail on 1/20/22 and Eagle Lakes park on the next morning. Water levels were very high in both places. I figured it was possibly seasonal; the “dry down” not having really begun, but a fellow that I met along the marsh trail said that it was because of the recent tornados that went through the area. I had never seen the area to the east of the paved walk at 10K flooded over the bank of the channel there, nor had I ever seen as much water in the Eagle Lakes. It appeared that the levels were too high for most of the long-legged waders. No tri-colored herons, green herons or night herons were seen at TenK although only the night herons were not seen at Eagle Lakes the next morning. Red-winged blackbirds were also marked for the first time at Eagle Lakes.

Not much was in bloom at either place, although I did see a goldenrod in bloom at TenK. I also took several photos of a woody vine that I saw there [photos 2022_01_20_001-5]. It had small, opposite leaves. They had shallow, blunt teeth. The plant was not in bloom at this time but terminal clusters of flower buds were present. What was most notable was the branching. The branches left the stem at almost perfect right angles. I have seen this vine before but have never been able to identify it. The closest I have come was one of the *Smilax* species. According to Nelson (1996), possibly *S. lauricifolia*, the bamboo-vine. The leaves did have raised veins on the underside as described in that reference, but they appeared slightly toothed, at least rough.

I met the Townsends at TenK on 1/20/22. They had also arrived in the last few days so we didn't have many sightings to discuss. They talked about an area near Six L's Farm Road where they had been told was a good place to find limpkins, but they were not sure exactly where it was. A woman, also birding there, overheard our conversation and directed us to it the exact location. She indicated that she had seen limpkins as well as a snail kite there. Ann and I located the area exactly south of the intersection of hy41 and Six L's Farm Road at the end of a short paved drive. Apparently Fred and Alyce also found it. I thought I saw their car there as Ann and I were returning to the condo.



I stopped at the area as I was returning from Eagle Lakes on the morning of 1/21/22. It was very foggy that morning and the poor visibility made it difficult to see much, but I did see several white ibises and a snowy egret there. I need to return on a better day.

1/22/22

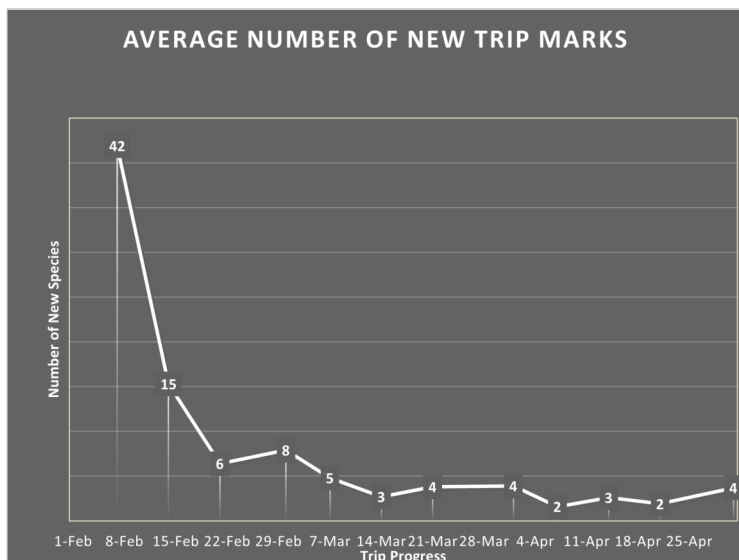
It's a fun time at this point of each year's trip to Florida. Early in the trip, each bird you see is a new trip mark which Petey gleefully announces when you enter the birds in Birder's Diary. This morning (1/22/22), Ann and I went to Everglades City for breakfast and then toured around the area, including Chokoloskee. We were between tides, so no shorebirds were found at the boat launch area of Chokoloskee. But, there was a yellow-crowned night heron there. I can't remember ever seeing a yellow-crowned night heron before seeing a black-crowned night heron. Usually, the YCNH is pretty hard to find and some years missed all together.

What accounted for my good luck was a clear case of human intervention; the YCNH was being fed small fish by a person on the dock. So maybe its not good luck after all. The mystique of the illusive yellow-crowned night heron is gone forever. Gone with that of the purple gallinule scavenging food bits at the Mikasuki restaurant across from Shark Valley and the snowy egret perusing the fishermen for fish at Tigertail Beach.

After leaving the Everglades City area we took a brief detour to the north side of the Port-of-the-Islands where I added a kestrel and a loggerhead shrike to the trip list. Go Petey!



As the entry dates to these FloNotes indicate, this year's stay in Florida began two weeks earlier than the other years which means that the bird count is well ahead of the normal count. As of this date, the trip count is 56. It would normally be in the mid-fifty's around the 1st or 2nd week of February. The count, though, always grows quickly in the beginning. As shown in the graph, new trip marks become fewer and fewer as the trip progresses.



1/26/22

On our first Sunday at our new Florida location (1/23/22) Ann and I decided to follow the usual Sunday routine (breakfast, Beall's outlet and Total Wine). On our way back to the condo we stopped at the location of the hy41 and Six L's Farm Road intersection (from now on simply referred to as Six L's). In the very brief period of about 10 minutes I was able to identify nine birds at the location. Among them was a snail kite and an American bittern, two new and very exciting trip marks.

It was 39°F. when I began the 25 mile journey to Kirby-Storter Roadside Park on 1/24/22. Water levels were high as expected. A few wading birds were seen, but only a tufted titmouse among the songbirds. The only plants seen in bloom were floating hearts (*Nymphoides aquatica*) and the lanceleaf arrowhead (*Sagittaria lancifolia*). I could not spot the butterworts seen there last year, although plenty of wet ground was exposed. On the way back I made a brief stop at the H. P. Williams Wayside to see if I could find a black-crowned night heron. I am amazed that that bird has escaped the trip list so far this year. None were present. I then stopped at the Big Cypress welcome center to see if any manatees were in the channel. Negative!

I finally did find the black-crowned night heron at the Turner River-Birdon Loop on 1/25/22. In fact, I found almost all of the long-legged waders there (except the reddish egret and the yellow-crowned night heron, of course). Water levels were high as expected, and it appears that the ponds created by the Everglades restoration project are becoming excellent areas to observe birds, especially at this time of the year.

At a stop along the road ,, I found a small white flowering plant in bloom. The plant was about 6" tall with a reddish stem and the small white flowers clustered at the top. The leaves whorled around the stem. They were linear with bases wrapped around the stem and one prominent vein. The leaves measured about 2" long x 1/4" wide. The flowers were immediately recognized as orchids. They were pointed downward and were clearly zygomorphic. The bottom petal was expanded and was a bronzy-yellow color. Hammer (2014) showed the plant as the soldier orchid (*Zeuxine strateumatica*). Otherwise known as the grass orchid, I had seen it once before along the Loop Road.

Later in the day I stopped at Six L's . No snail kite this time but there were a few limpkins there. I walked a short distance beyond the east gate, along a trail that roughly paralleled the bike trail. I picked up an apple snail along the way which appears to be one of the natives. Fourteen bird species were recorded in BD. Especially surprising was a caracara seen at the top of a tree along the road. This is, of course, where I have seen the caracaras in the past, but not last year (although Ann did report them).

I revisited the site the next day (1/26/22). I saw fewer birds but didn't stay long. The white pelicans seen previously were now circling overhead and settling at an apparent depression far out in the field.

1/28/22

Ann and I drove out to the Loop Road on 1/27/22. WOW, were there alligators, more than I've seen for quite a while. A few photos of green herons and great blue herons were acceptable, but not great. We found the Lucky Cole property, but it was closed at the time. I did find one of the goldenrods in bloom along the roadside [photos 2022_01_27_016-19]. No basal whorl of leaves was present at the time. The cauline leaves were short, thin and linear, and they were



attached in a whorl-like fashion along the stem. The IRC lists six species of goldenrod in the Big Cypress Preserve. According to photos of these species on the AFP, this plant most resembled *Solidago stricta* and *S. sempervirens*. It was recorded as the latter. It also appeared that the southeastern sneezeweed (*Helenium pinnatifidum*) was in bloom in the flooded areas [photos 2022_01_27_020-21]. At Gator Hook, a few wild petunias (*Ruellia caroliniensis*) were in bloom as well as, possibly Small's flax (*Linaria carteri*) [photos 2022_01_27_024-25]. Interestingly, the only *Linaria* species shown for the Big Cypress Preserve by the IRC is the blue toadflax (*Linaria canadensis*).

I drove into the Picayune Strand on 1/28/22. I watched carefully, as I drove along Sabal Palm Drive, for a short-tailed hawk where I had seen one last year. No such luck. The area was dryer than I expected. A few egrets and such were fishing in the drying ditches along the road where the fish had been concentrated. Only seven bird species were seen. On the bright side, the Triple G Loop road had been nicely graded. I drove 4.6 miles along that road until it intersected with Miller Boulevard (at that point Triple G Loop is labelled as 78th Avenue). Few plants were in bloom. Coreopsis (*Coreopsis laevenworthii*) and Spanish needles (*Bidens alba*) were, of course, as was the water pimpernel (*Samolus ebracteatus*). I also saw the apparent love vine (*Cassytha filiformis*) in fruit.

On the way back to the condo, I stopped at Six L's. There were eight cars, other than mine, parked along the road. I ran into three birders at the gate and others were seen along the trail to the east. I saw the usual bunch of wading birds including white pelicans and a single roseate spoonbill. I also saw another snail kite. The birders at the gate indicated that they had seen two, along with a northern harrier. I did not find the harrier.

Later, while I was sitting on the lanai collecting these notes, I saw a spout of water erupt in the channel. Then I saw something emerge partially from the water — possibly a manatee.

1/29/22

I drove Janes Scenic Drive on the morning of 1/29/22, stopping briefly at Tram 7 and Tram 12. It was cold and windy! Southwest Florida was experiencing an unusual period of unseasonably cold weather, with frost warnings in the forecast. The birds seemed to notice. They were noticeably reluctant to move when disturbed. One great blue heron allowed me to approach much closer than normal for the included photograph. It was standing in water, soaking up the heat which radiated from it, with its feathers fluffed for insulation. It didn't appear very comfortable.

While there, I chatted briefly with one of the Fakahatchee volunteers. He indicated that he had seen some ground orchids along Tram 2. I have long wondered what it would be like to hike that tram. I stopped there briefly on the way out of the park and wandered in a short distance. Almost immediately, I came across a cabbage palm with a luxurious



growth of hand fern (*Cheiroglossa palmata*) [photos 2022_01_29_031-34] on it. A bit further another palm was rich with shoestring fern (*Vittaria lineata*) [photo 2022_01_29_030]. Needless to say, I decided that Tram 2 should be a destination for a future hike when the weather improves.

While on the tram I also examined some of the wild coffee shrubs [photos 2022_01_29_022-29]. The leaves did not appear to be very “glossy” and the plants had nice clusters of red berries. The AFP lists two species of *Psychotria* for Collier County: *P. nervosa* and *P. tenuifolia*, which is synonymous with *P. sulzneri*. According to Wunderlin and Hansen (2011) these species can be distinguished by the lobes of the calyx; those of *P. nervosa* being truncate (appearing as if cut off with 5 minute teeth on the rim) while those of *P. sulzneri* being deltoid (with 5 conspicuous triangular lobes). These plants were not in bloom but there was no glossiness to the leaves to suggest the glossy wild coffee (*P. nervosa*). In fact, as the photos show, the leaves had a bluish-green hue. I therefor listed it as the shortleaf wild coffee (*P. sulzneri*).

2/1/22

Well the frost warnings were well advised. On the morning of 1/31/22 I actually had to scrape the frost off the car windows before heading to Serenity Walk Park and there was a heavy frost on the ground. The car actually told me that the roads might be slippery. I could see the frost on the tall bracken ferns lining the paths as I walked. My targets for the morning, of course, were the red-headed woodpecker and the brown-headed nuthatch. I saw several of the woodpeckers, even an immature one with a brown head. I don't remember ever seeing one like that before. It was the red-bellied woodpecker, though, that was the more photo-cooperative [photos 2022_01_31_003-4] I never did see the nuthatches in spite of my efforts to call them in with the Sibley app on my iPhone. I did see an eastern bluebird, though, which was a trip mark. Another trip mark for the morning was the yellow-rumped warbler.

While at the park I examined a small tree with deep red berries and gray bark [photos 2022_01_31_005-6]. The leaves were, for the most part, on the outer branches. They were leathery but brittle; breaking when bent. Breaking the leaves, though did not release any distinct odor. The leaves were almost opposite and were a glossy dark green on the top but lighter and dull beneath. The main vein was somewhat raised from the bottom surface, the lateral veins were more or less flush with the surface and arranged pinnately. The bright red berries were clustered near the end of the branches with the more mature fruit proximal to the immature fruit and the apparent flowers.

The tree closely resembled the photo of Dahoon (*Ilex cassine*) in Nelson (1994). The leaves lacked any small teeth along the margins, though, and didn't seem to have the small bristle at the apex as that reference suggests. However, these are not obvious in my photos or those in the reference. This could be the same small tree or shrub seen at Kirby-Stirter on 1/24/22 [photos 2022_01_24_029-31].

Since finding Six L's, I've gone back several times. By 1/30/22 it was obvious that the area was beginning to dry up. As of that date, the water in the near areas had receded considerably. As BD records show, snail kites have been recorded a number of times along with the normal long-legged wading birds. An abundance of apple snail shells can be seen just beyond the gate. Some of these appear to be too large to be the native variety. On 1/31/22, five limpkins as well as two snail kites were seen and a northern parula was the twenty-second bird added to the trip list. Unfortunately, the caracara has not returned.



February 1st is the Date that we usually take residence at our Florida condo. By that time, as a result of some birding in New Port Richey as well as en-route to the Port of the Islands, I usually have recorded, on the average, 25 bird species. This year, with the two week head start, I have already seen 67 species as of 2/1/22. New trip marks are already becoming less frequent. A trip to the Chokoloskee boat launch at low tide on this date (2/1/22) failed to produce any shorebirds, nor did it produce a reddish egret. Only a ring-billed gull was added to the trip list; a real disappointment.

2/6/22

I did find a few shorebirds at Tigertail Beach on 2/2/22. There were only a few birds on the nearside of the lagoon, but among them were least sandpipers, a dunlin and a few plovers including the black-bellied, semipalmated and Wilson's. I recorded a few other birds but I pretty much concentrated on the shorebirds. They brought the trip list to 72 as of this date. I ran into Fred and Alyce Townsend while I was there and was somewhat reassured when I checked Fred's ebird list later and found that he had not seen any other shorebirds. Fred generally sees more than I do.

Thursday, 2/3/22, was full of disappointments. First, Ann and I drove out to Alva to see if the feeders were still being put out at the White residence. This has always been a good place to find white-wing doves and both of the buntings. When we got there we found the feeders gone; in fact, we found the White residence gong. It was being replaced by new construction. I can remove that location from my database. Next, we headed out too Harns Marsh. I thought I could find it by putting it into my gps and just following that. Not so! We made several attempts to find the marsh from memory but, no luck. Then, on the way to the fruit stand in Fort Meyers, we got a flat tire. The tire couldn't be repaired. The trip, full of its disappointments ended up costing \$229 + gas.

On the bright side, we did see wild turkeys strolling down Newport Dr. as we left, and we did see sandhill cranes and Muscovy ducks as we wandered the roads of Lehigh Acres looking for the marsh. That brought the trip list to 75 species.

I stopped at TenK on the way to meet the Sunshiners (Jack Berninger's group) on 2/4/22. I entered 20 species into BD while I was there. These were mostly the usual wading birds and the others you would expect there. However, it did also include a female ring-necked duck. This was the first ring-necked duck that I've seen at TenK, although I have seen them at Harns Maqrsh.

I met up with Jack's group at the Sabal Palm trailhead at 9AM. I hiked with them for a while and then turned back. Jan Tomlinson gave a nice tutorial on the identification of the potbelly air plant (*Tillandsia pauciflora*) [photos 2022_02_04]13-16] and the distinction between it and the northern needle-leaf (*Tillandsia balbisiana*) [photos 2022_02_04_017-18]. The only plants seen in bloom were an aster which Jack id'd as the rice button aster (*Symphyotrichum dumosum*), the water toothleaf (*Stillingia aquatica*) and the wild pennyroyal (*Piloblephis rigida*). Although I didn't go very far with the group, it appears that it is too early to expect much in bloom.



Few birds were seen while I was with the group; only a couple species of woodpeckers (no red cockaded) and a turkey vulture were seen. On the way out I drove the length of Brandy Lane. Only a kestrel was added to the morning's list which totaled 24. Doug Drysdale stopped over in the afternoon and we compared notes. He and Gisela have not visited many places yet.

2/9/22

With low tide expected at 10:04AM on 2/5/22, Ann and I went to Tigertail Beach; her for shelling, me for birding. Needless to say, Ann crossed the lagoon while I birded the near side. There was nothing new to add to this year's list, but I had a great time watching a Wilson's plover / fiddler crab encounter. Of course, the bird won, but only after a brave resistance by the crab. I took quite a few photos of their struggle but, unfortunately, I couldn't get a good position between it and the sun and my photos weren't too good.

Then I watched a snowy egret feeding along the shore. It used its yellow feet to shake up the plants that had accumulated along the shore, apparently causing eatable small critters to scurry. It obviously caught things to its liking, but I couldn't see what they were, perhaps small fish.



While I was watching the birds, Ann was having a valuable day collecting sand dollars. She found \$47 in all. A few were broken and discarded, but even at that, she had her best shelling day in years. Unfortunately, she ignores everything other than sand dollars and really big shells.

I visited the Fakahatchee Strand on 2/7/22. As I drove along Janes Scenic Drive I noticed that the prairie areas leading to the strand showed the effects of a recent burn. The ditches and fields close to the road had a lot of water and great blue herons and great egrets were scattered along the way, apparently finding fish or other prey. My destination was gate 2. I was hoping to find the ground orchids I had been told about by one of the volunteers (see notes of 1/29/22). I walked along the trail until it got too muddy. This was at a point with coordinates: 25°58'28"N 81°23'4"W.

Hand ferns [photos 2022_02_07_013-17] were found on two cabbage palms along the way. The one closest to the drive had the most developed growth of ferns: 28°58'47"N 81°23'1"W. Other ferns seen along the way included the swamp fern (*Blechnum serrulatum*), the hottentot (*Thelypteris interrupta*) and at least one of the other marsh ferns, the shoestring fern (*Vittaria lineata*), resurrection fern (*Pleopeltis polypodioides*), The giant sword fern (*Nephrolepis biserrata*) and other smaller sword ferns.



Not many of the flowering plants along the tram were in bloom. A small yellow-flowering plant seen at several areas was immediately recognized as one of the St. John's-worts. At first I thought it might be the four petal St. John's-wort because it had four petals. The leaves were wrong, though, and I later identified it as the St. Andrew's-cross (*Hypericum hypericoides*) with Taylor (2013). This plant was added to the database. One of the probable false buttonweeds (*Spermacoce verticillata*) was also seen at several locations. The plants that were recognized were added to the locations field of the database. Some of the bromeliads were included.

I did find the targeted orchid (25°58'36"N x 81°23'5"W) on the way back to the car. Seek identified it as *Haabenaria floribunda*, the toothpetal false reinorchid. This is synonymous with the toothed rein orchid (*Habenaria odontopetala*) according to Brown (2005). At least 4 plants were found along the trail. The plant was added to the Florida plant database.

I also found a bracket fungus on a small fallen branch. It was clearly one of the polypores, but wasn't identified beyond that.

I tried the Cornell Lab's app, Merlin's sound ID option at 8 places during my walk. At one point it identified a Carolina wren and at another a great crested flycatcher. Although I was not hearing or seeing them at the time of Merlin's identifications, I did confirm both of them later along the way. Merlin also identified the sound of a great horned owl. I didn't see or hear any owls, even barred owls that morning. Twelve bird species were recorded in BD for the morning. Birds identified by Merlin, which I could not later confirm were not recorded or added to the trip list.



Later in the day my next door neighbor, Jason, invited me to go

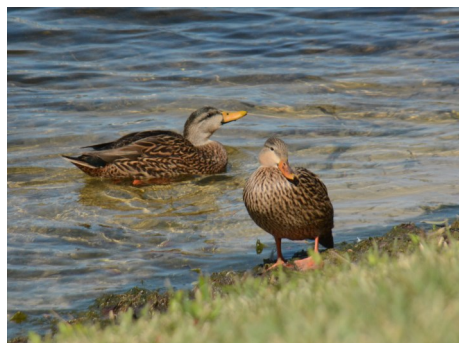
along on a leisurely boat tour of the Faka-Union Canal. We went all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. Along the way I sighted royal terns and a spotted sandpiper which were added to the trip list, bringing it to total to date of 79 species. We also saw manatees and dolphins during our ride.



The morning of 2/8/22 was spent at the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk. Although I was the first one there, the boardwalk was soon crowded with a busload of photographers. Shark Valley or the Loop Road would have been a better place for them. I recorded only 14 birds for the morning. I was outdone by Merlin, though. It recorded an American cardinal, a tufted titmouse, a downy woodpecker and an ovenbird, none of which I either heard or saw. The downy and the ovenbird would have been trip marks. I got very close to a pileated woodpecker while I was there. Unfortunately, though, it was early and the lighting was bad, resulting in slow shutter speeds; my excuse for the lousy photos.



We've had several rains lately, including one during the overnight hours of 2/8/22. On 2/9/22 I decided to stop at Six L's to see if the rains had caused some pooling of water and the possible return of some wading birds and/or shorebirds. There was only a little water standing in the near area and no shorebirds were seen. Off in the distance I did see another possible snail kite. As it flew closer, though, I could clearly see the barring of the tail (Sibley, 2000) as the bird morphed into a northern harrier (a trip mark). I also scared up an eastern phoebe, another trip mark, near the gate.



2/18/22

As Ann was sunning at South Beach on 2/10/22, I went to Mackle Park hoping that some frigate birds would fly over. I didn't see any frigate birds, but I saw more ducks than I have ever seen there. There were numerous mottled ducks and blue-winged teal and I also saw redheads. This was trip mark number 81 for the year. Few other birds were seen; I only recorded 10 species in BD.

The sighting of the redheads made me reflect on the sighting of the ring-necked female duck at TenK on 2/4/22. I reviewed my photos taken that date and compared them with the photos of the female redheads on this date. I decided to stick with my identifications on both dates. Reference to ebird for both dates indicated that other birders reported corroborating sightings.

I met Doug Drysdale on Janes Scenic Drive on 2/11/22. We connected at Gate 7 shortly after 11:00AM. Doug reported that he had seen a male painted bunting just before we met, but the bird didn't appear while I was there. We walked a short distance along the tram. We didn't see too many birds but I did identify a blue-headed vireo. Doug tried Seek on several of the ferns but I wasn't very confident in its id's. One of the ferns was identified as *Thelopterus kunthii*, which I considered a possibility. Doug biked on to Gate 12 and I turned around and went back to Gate 2. I hiked a short distance there and tried Seek on several other ferns. It correctly identified the shoestring fern (*Vittaria lineata*) but misidentified the hand fern (*Cheiroglossa palmata*) as a staghorn or elkhorn fern (*Platyserium bifurcatum*).

Saturday (2/12/22) was another beach day for Ann so I was back at Mackle Park. All of the ducks were gone and no frigate birds showed up while I was there. I did see a house sparrow at the parking lot of the Red Rooster. For some reason I had never marked the bird for the trip. I have also yet to mark the rock dove, but I will wait until I can associate it with a particular place.

Matt and Nicole arrived on Superbowl Sunday 2/13/22. We birded TenK on 2/25/22. Matt sighted a reddish egret while we were there and I added it and tree swallows to the trip list. We saw a total of 22 bird species along the marsh trail; only going as far as the second bench where we saw the large resident alligator that hangs out there.

We went to Clam Pass Park on 2/17/22. The beach was pretty crowded but, unfortunately, not with shore birds. I only saw royal terns and a few laughing gulls while we were there. I don't remember ever seeing so few birds at Clam Pass. Surly, the crowded beach was the reason. After several nice days, Matt and Nicole left on 2/18/22.

Both gators were home when I visited the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk the day after Matt and Nicole left.



I left the condo at dawn the with the temperature already 68°F and the humidity at 98%. Water levels were still pretty high but the gators were now sharing their hole with several of the wading birds. I got pretty close to a great blue heron that was fishing. It seemed not to be bothered by my presence as I stood close by, waiting for it to catch a large fish; it was not too accommodating. One of the green herons was also photo-cooperative. I recorded 22 bird species for the morning but I was outdone once again by Merlin. It registered the sound of a northern parula and downy woodpeckers that I never saw. Actually, I did hear the Downy's pecking but I can't distinguish woodpeckers by their pecking sounds. I must admit, with all of my apprehensions about Merlin, it did distinguish between the downy woodpecker, the red-bellied woodpecker and the northern flicker by their tapping sounds. I was able to confirm the flicker and the red-bellied woodpecker by sightings. Merlin also reported the sound of a red-tailed hawk near the entrance to the boardwalk. It did show a warning that it would be rare. I didn't believe the report. I did see my first swallow-tailed kite for the year as I was walking the boardwalk. The only earlier sighting of the kite was in 2000, when I saw one on 2/18.



As of this date (2/19/22) I have seen little in bloom along the boardwalk except a few dogwoods and what I believe to be one of the briars. There are many likely string lilies but none yet in bloom.

3/1/22

On 2/22/22 Merlin id'd robins and purple martins by sound from the lanai. I didn't have my ears in so, needless to say, I didn't hear them. I was pretty sure, though, that I had seen two robins fly over the condo on an earlier date so I decided to count them. I haven't yet seen or heard purple martins so they remain absent from the trip list thus far.



Dan and Shelly had arrived the previous day (2/21/22). Dan and I went to TenK the next morning and recorded 23 species of birds. I was wearing my new ears and heard my first white-eyed vireo, the 87th trip mark. As loud as they are, I was disappointed that I hadn't heard them before, even without my hearing amps (referred to as my ears). I remember that Doug was hearing a common yellowthroat when we were on Tram 7 a while ago and I was not hearing it. Apparently my hearing is getting worse; not good for the trip list.

We visited Shark valley on 2/23/22 and took the tram tour. Our guide professed a real interest in the plants and then misidentified a water dropwort (*Oxypolis filiformis*) as a queen Ann's lace and what I thought was a cow pea (*Vigna luteola*) as a sensitive pea. I also saw southeastern sneezeweed (*Helenium pinnatifidum*), the horrible thistle (*Cirsium horridilus*), one of the goldenrods (*Solidago sp.*), yellow water lily (*Nuphar adveena*), pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*), string lily (*Crinum americanum*) and the Everglades false buttonweed (*Spermacoce verticillata*) in bloom among the plants in bloom. These sightings were used to update the "locations" field in the plant database.

We didn't see a lot of bird species although we did see all of the common herons and egrets. We got extremely close to great blue herons and a couple of wood storks on the tram and, most, importantly, I finally saw my purple gallinule. One appeared to be biting off the flowers of the spatterdock and eating them.

That evening we went to TenK to see the sunset and the huge flocks of birds that come in to roost for the night. There were hundreds of great egrets, mostly standing in the water and many more hundreds of white ibis flying into the man-

groves for the night. Birder's Diary has records of the birds seen at Shark Valley and those seen at TenK for the day.



Trevor and Stephanie joined us on 2/24/22 and we all went to Dan's favorite bird haunt, The Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, on 2/25/22. Unfortunately, we were scheduled to enter the Audubon center at 11AM, not the best time for birding. Even more unfortunate was that the staff still does not fill the feeders so we missed our almost certain indigo and painted buntings even though they were being seen that day according to the entrees on the chalkboard at the beginning of the trail. The chalkboard also listed several warblers including the black-throated blue and black-throated green warblers. That I forgot my ears didn't

help with the warblers; we didn't see or hear any. I did see a red-bellied woodpecker, though. It may have been a direct descendent of the bird seen by whoever named it the red-bellied woodpecker. It was the first time that I can ever remember seeing one with such a distinct red belly. The bird was too far off for decent photos but cropping to the point of indecency does show the red belly. Merlin, on Dan's phone picked up the sound of a sora but showed it as unlikely; I didn't count it. We also saw a small turtle on a log. I'm still trying to decide if it was a mud turtle or a musk turtle. The descriptions and photos in Alden (1998) don't seem to help much. Currently, I'm leaning toward the musk turtle because of the white eye stripe.



Shelly & Dan left on 2/26/22; Trevor and Stephanie stayed on. We took them to the Clyde Butcher Big Cypress Gallery on Sunday, 2/27/22 and to Marco's South Beach on Monday. While they were at the beach, Ann and I went to Mackle Park. After an hour or so three magnificent frigatebirds began to fly around the pond, sometimes dipping into it. They were too distant for good photos but not for some good enough to confirm the id. I also saw several (4-5) purple martins flying over the pond. A total of 9 bird species were identified. Curly-tailed lizards were seen at Mackle Park. They seemed to hide under the concrete slab with the bench to the right of the picnic table.

Doug and Gisela reported that they saw a green-winged teal at TenK on 2/28/22. According to a text from Doug, it was in the area to the right of the trail, before the observation tower. After dropping Trevor and Stephanie off at the airport on 3/1/22 I went to TenK in search of the bird. My last sighting of this species at TenK was back in 2011. I was unable to find the bird although I confused the area Doug had indicated and that was possibly the reason. A search of recent eBird reports for the marsh trail did indicate that an anonymous birder did report sightings of the bird. I saw a few of the usual wading birds but didn't record this trip in BD,\.

As of this date (3/1/22) I have seen 91 species of birds. Although that is 5 birds below the average normally seen, it is 13 more than seen on this date in 2021 and 18 above the 2020 count. I only need 8 more birds to beat the worst year on record. The problem is can I get into the areas where they are likely to be seen.

3/8/22

With the Nolte's coming on 3/3/22, I did the Turner River / Birdon Loop with the Lower Wagonwheel Road escape. I gave Merlin a workout at one spot and it heard 9 birds that I didn't hear or see. Needless to say, I forgot my ears again. Because Merlin couldn't connect with the internet and therefore couldn't determine my location, it included several birds not in this area. Most notable was its identification of an American three-toed woodpecker. Although I never heard or saw the tufted titmouse I could clearly hear it in Merlin's recording and therefore counted it. Merlin heard several warblers that I didn't detect but I did see a pine warbler which I added to the trip list.

I took a brief hike along Windmill Tram and did a crude census of the plants seen. One was an unidentified member of the Fabaceae family [photos 2022_03_02_017-19]. The bladderwort seen [photos 2022_03_02_020-22] was assumed to be the leafy bladderwort but my taxonomy of the bladderworts needs work. Similarly, another plant seen was one of the whitetops [photos 2022_03_03_023-24] and assumed to be starrush whitetop (see table).

Plants Found along Windmill Tram	
<i>Tillandsia fasciculata</i>	Airplant, cardinal
<i>Tillandsia balbisiana</i>	Airplant, northern needleleaf
<i>Thalia geniculata</i>	Alligator Flag
<i>Utricularia foliosa</i>	Bladderwort leafy
<i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i>	Brazilian pepper
<i>Chrysobalanus icaco</i>	Coco plum
<i>Taxodium sp.</i>	Cypress, pond
<i>Spermacoce verticillata</i>	False-buttonweed, Everglades
<i>Blechnum serrulatum</i>	Fern, swamp
<i>Erigeron quercifolius</i>	Fleabane, oakleaf
<i>Spiranthes sp.</i>	Lady's-tresses
<i>Polygala grandiflora</i>	Milkwort, showy
<i>Samolus ebracteatus</i>	Pimpernel, water
<i>Sabatia stellaris</i>	Marsh pink
<i>Bidens alba</i>	Spanish needles
<i>Cirsium horridulum</i>	Thistle, horrible
<i>Coreopsis laevenworthii</i>	Tickseed, Laevenworth's
<i>Vicia acutifolia</i>	Vetch, fourleaf
<i>Rhynchospora colorata</i>	Whitetop, starrush
<i>Salix caroliniana</i>	Willow, coastalplain

I found a yellow-flowering plant along the side of Birdon Road which I have not seen before. It was a weedy plant, obviously in the mustard family [photos 2022_03_013-15]. It appeared to be the tansy mustard (*Descurainia pinnata*) based on the photo in Taylor (1992). Photos from the AFP seemed to confirm the id but the rango map for the species goes only through Lee County. The IRC does not list the species for the Big Cypress National Preserve. The species was added to the plant database as an excluded species pending further taxonomy.

With a low tide predicted just before 10AM on 3/3/22, I went to Chokoloskee to see possible shorebirds, especial the oyster catchers seen last year from the bridge over the Chokoloskee causeway. No luck with the oyster catchers and the only shorebirds seen at the Chokoloskee boat launch were 2 semipalmated plovers. On the way there, though, I stopped at the Gulf Coast Visitors Center of Everglades National Park. As I entered the park I was greeted by a couple of common ground doves. Then I saw barn swallows fly over the water; One even landed for a rest on one of the posts supporting the dock. On to the boat launch where there were two adult yellow-crowned night herons; one on each side of the road and a reddish egret. Purple martins were also seen there. I then drove to the Smallwood Museum and turned around. Immediately I encountered a flock of 50 to 100 (or more) brown-headed cowbirds. Although I tried, I could not find a glossy or bronzed cowbird within the group. As I was leaving Chokoloskee I stopped at the bridge and walked under it to see if there were any interesting birds — not so. What I did find, though, were several trees with distinctly heart-shaped leathery leaves [photos 2022_03_03_008-11]. Back at the condo I tentatively identified the trees as seaside mahoe (*Thespesia populnea*) using Nelson (1994). All together, it was a good morning; I returned to the condo with three new bird trip marks and a new entry in the plant database.

Ken and Carolyn Nolte joined us later that day (3/3/22) and stayed until 3/8/22. Needless to say, serious B&B was put on hold during their stay. I was so out of the birding mode that I couldn't even find a single rock dove when we visited Tin City on 3/5/22 and took a bus tour of the entire Naples area. I'm sure I missed a few.

On 3/4/22 one of the neighbors told me that a large group of spoonbills was hanging out in an area of Hy41 west of Hy29. When Ann and the Nolte's were out at the pool, I drove out to the area and found them. There were about 35-40 spoonbills along with other birds including several white pelican, egrets and great blue herons. I took several photos [photos 2022_03_04_001-6], but the birds were so far off that the photos were more like landscape photos (not very good ones, at that) than close-up's of birds.

When we went to break the fast with Nolte's and see them off, I saw the northern caracara in the area of SixL's again, only the second sighting of the bird this year. Also, the limpkins that were so common in that area have not been there this year, in spite of the fact that the grass has been cut. In previous years, cutting the grass along the roadside brought them in to feed. Things around the condo have also been quiet. A small alligator walks back and forth to the channel between our condo and the next. Apparently it uses the storm drain tunnels for protection at night. One of our neighbors (Jim) says that it is actually a caiman, so we named it Carmen. It appears to me though, to be just a small alligator (about 5ft). Merlin hears a few birds outside the lanai now and then, but nothing out of the ordinary.



3/18/22

The flooded areas are finally beginning to dry up a bit, concentrating the fish. As she was going shopping on 3/9/22, Ann noticed such a drying pond along Hy41 just east of the parking area for TenK's marsh trail. She came back and got me, and in two visits to the area, I shot a mere 258 photos of the wading birds that had collected there to feed on the fish (thank goodness for digital photography). White pelicans were scooping up the fish in the deeper areas while the wading birds, mostly great egrets, snowy egrets and white ibises, were busy fishing the more shallow edges. A couple glossy ibises were also present along with a few roseate spoonbills and a single wood stork.



A dead alligator being devoured by black vultures was found at another area along Hy41, just east of Cory Billie's air boats. I had been seeing this for several days but finally decided to photograph the birds. About a dozen black vultures were there



at the time of my visit and the carrion was nearly down to bone, at least in the head region. I was apparently upwind; the stench wasn't too bad.



Still looking for warblers and other song birds I went to the Big Cypress Boardwalk on 3/10.22. I finally remembered to wear my ears. What a difference; It was wonderful to be surrounded by the bird songs I had been missing. Water levels along the boardwalk had receded some-

what but there was still plenty of moisture. Surprisingly, there was little activity at the alligator hole. I couldn't stay long because we were going to the annual shell show in Marco Island, but I did see 22 bird species while I was there. That included a downy woodpecker (FINALLY!). Merlin and I had some differences of opinion while I was there. He was hearing things that I didn't hear, but I was also hearing things that it didn't pick up. In fairness to Merlin, though, I had the

benefit of my ears which probably amplified some of the bird songs above its sensitivity. Besides the 22 birds reported to BD, Merlin heard a northern parula at several locations, a barred owl and a blue-headed vireo. These were not counted.

As I was exiting the boardwalk I took a few photos of strangler fig and some apparent lichens. Near the parking area I found a small yellow-flowering plant [photos 2022_03_10_008-9] which I later decided was the low rattlebox (*Crotalaria pumila*). I've identified the plant earlier along the Loop Road. This plant is shown for Collier County by the AFP but not shown for Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park by the IRC and not included in any of the plant lists that I have for the park. The IRC does show it for the Big Cypress National Preserve. I added the plant to the locations field for the BCBB.

The collection of wading birds seen just east of TenK (or another collection) seem to have moved further inland from the road. When I visited TenK on 3/11/22, they could be seen from the marsh trail before one gets to the observation deck. I saw the egrets, wood storks, ibises and roseate spoonbills but could not locate any white pelicans. Fred Townsend, who I met there, did see them and pointed them out to no avail (I couldn't find them). Fred is an excellent birder; he always sees more than I do. I recorded 29 species in BD for the morning. According to his report to eBird, Fred saw 39. In my defense, he was there longer, covered more ground and had functioning ears, real ones.



Most of my sightings were of the common long-legged wading birds but I did see a northern parula and palm warbler as well as a common ground dove. I caught a nice great blue heron in flight [photo 2022_03_11_003]. Especially nice was the sighting of 2 reddish egrets, one of which was doing its familiar prancing to scare up fish. I could not find the green-winged teal that Gisela reported earlier but Fred said he had also seen one on an earlier date.

Goldenrods were in bloom along the trail. I have visited their taxonomy often enough. I believe it to be the seaside goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*) [photos 2022_03_11_004-7].

On 3/12/22, Ann and I went to Loudermilk Park to check out the beach. Renee, who replaced us at our last condo, indicated that that was the beach she went to and that it was very nice. I was hoping that it would provide a good place for me to look for shorebirds without having to cross the lagoon of Tigertail. It turned out to be a very nice beach but not a likely place for birding. I saw only 6 species of birds; none of them shorebirds. I did get nice closeups of a white ibis and pretty nice photos of a loggerhead shrike while I was there [photos 2022_03_12_005-12]. It was a very windy day; perhaps a calmer day would provide better birding opportunities.

As we left for our normal Sunday routine on 3/13/22 I saw a northern caracara at the top of a bare tree well east of SixL's. On the way back I stopped at SixL's to see if a recent rain had filled in any of the low areas. There was no open water except way in the back and much of the area was covered with fresh green growth. I did see a few of the waders as well as a single limpkin, but no kites (swallowtail or snail). BD has the sightings.

I drove to the Belle Meade Tract equestrian trail in Picayune State Park on 3/14/22. I was looking for the trees marked for the nesting of the red-cockaded woodpeckers. It was very difficult walking in the deep sand but I carried a chair for occasional rests. Unfortunately, the only woodpeckers that I saw were a pileated and a red-bellied. I couldn't even locate the marked trees that I'm sure I saw the found on my last visit in spite of the fact that I'm sure I hiked further than then. I did finally locate one marked tree with an apparent nest hole but no woodpeckers. I used Merlin at several spots and even tried to call in the birds, but no luck. I did see a short-tailed hawk (light phase) & brown-headed nuthatch which added to the trip list. There were a few plants in bloom, including the bay lobelia (*Lobelia feayana*), tickseed (*Coreopsis laevenwarthii*) and cudweed (*Gnaphalium falcatum*).

Later that afternoon I photographed what was left of the dead alligator that the vultures were eating along Hy4 [photos 2022_03_14_001-2]. Little was left excepting the tough skin and bones. Not a bad two weeks work.

I drove Turner River road directly to Windmill Tram on 3/15/22. I walked to about the same location as last time, the trail being covered by water. I was hoping to find the fruit of the pea-like plant that I found last time. I thought that it could be one of the Desmodium species and I was hoping to find some of the characteristic fruit (loment) of the plants which would confirm this id. Unfortunately, the plant was pretty dried out and I didn't locate the fruit. In fact, I had a hard time even finding any parts of the plant at all. Nothing that was left clarified the identification. I decided that it was most likely a wild bushbean (*Macroptilium lathyroides*). The id as this species is with very low confidence.

Finding nothing particularly new, I drove on to the Concho Billie Trail. This is becoming one of my favorite hiking trails. It was dry for quite a way. I was beginning to find plants in bloom. One point was especially rich with tall flowering pine pink (*Bletia purpurea*) on both sides of the trail. At another point I found short yellow-flowering plant with very small leaves reminiscent of pine needles. Each of the five petals had a gap that looked like it was gulped by an insect or other small creature (not so, I expect). Five stamens and a single pistil were seen in each flower. As of yet, I have been unable to identify the plant with any of my references. A few plants were added to the locations field for the Concho Billie trail in the plant database.



It was not a particularly good birding morning. I recorded 7 species along the Windmill Tram and added another 10 species at Concho Billie. I used Merlin at several locations and, given my increasingly poor hearing, developed a new birding policy. If Merlin hears a bird that I neither hear or see, and I can confidently identify the sound of the bird from the Merlin recording, I count it. For example, Merlin identified a common yellowthroat on this morning and I could easily hear and confidently identify the bird from its recording. The BD records for 3/15/22 includes the common yellowthroat. On the other hand, Merlin also reported an elegant trogon (poor Merlin didn't know where we were). The recording sounded like a white ibis to me — I didn't count it. Matt would not approve but it works for me.

I began my celebration of Ann's birthday with a short trip to Janes Scenic Drive and, eventually to Tram 2. I walked a bit further along the tram, things drying up a bit. I couldn't find any trace of the toothed rein orchids that I located on 2/9/22; perhaps they wither up after they bloom. Along Janes Scenic Drive (right by Tram 2) Seek identified one of the marsh ferns as stately maiden fern (*Thelypteris kunthii*), one I have id'd before.

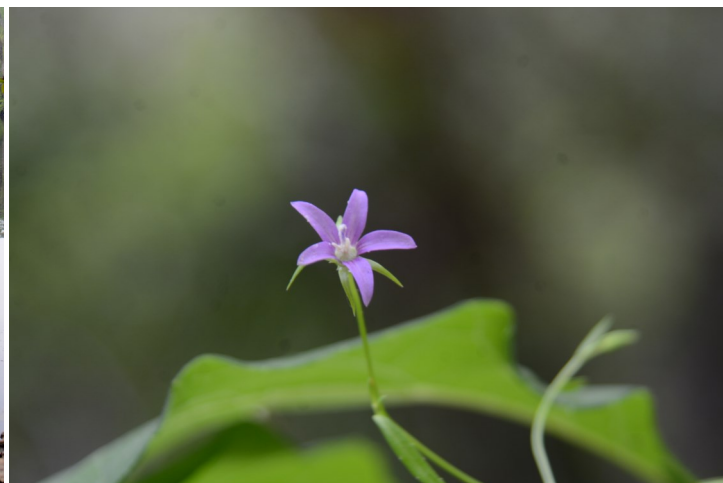
I found Deep Lake; Finally! I don't know why it took me this long since the publications from the Big Cypress Preserve clearly show the tram on Hy29, just 8 miles north of Hy41. For some reason I thought it was accessible from Wagonwheel Road: not so. I drove through dense fog on 3/17/22 to get to the area shortly after dawn and hiked the 1 mile round trip to Deep Lake and back. Clearly, this will become one of my favorite hiking areas.

Not so much for birding. I only recorded 10 species while I was there. Again, I forget my ears but it really didn't matter. Merlin only heard one species (northern parula) that I didn't hear or see. Only a few wading birds were at the lake itself. But: were there alligators. I counted at least seven at one time. Several of them seemed to approach me as I sat along the shore. Perhaps they have been fed by others or were just curious.

The plant life was spectacular. As I walked alternately between hardwood hammock and cypress swamp, I began to compile a list of plant species for the area. I could spend a lot of time refreshing my knowledge of Florida ferns there. There were probably more than one species of marsh fern and the same can be said for the sword ferns.

Plants Identified at Deep Lake Tram (3/17/22)	
Ferns	
Marsh ferns	<i>Thelypteris</i> sp.
Bracken fern	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>
Resurrection fern	<i>Pleopeltis polypodioides</i>
Shoestring fern	<i>Vittaria lineata</i>
Strap fern, Long	<i>Campyloneurum phyllitidis</i>
Swamp fern	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>
Sword fern	<i>Nephrolepis</i> sp.
Sword fern, Giant	<i>Nephrolepis biserrata</i>
Flowering Plants	
Bay lobelia	<i>Lobelia feayana</i>
Bellflower, Florida	<i>Campanula floridana</i>
Blueheart	<i>Buchnera americana</i>
Greenbrier	<i>Smilax</i> sp.
Carsarweed	<i>Urena lobata</i>
Dayflower, common	<i>Commelina diffusa</i>
False buttonweed, Everglades	<i>Spermacoce verticillata</i>
False buttonweed, woodland	<i>Spermacoce remota</i>
Hop Sedge, False	<i>Carex lupuliformis</i>
Poison ivy	<i>Toxicodendron radicans</i>
Primrosewillow, Mexican	<i>Ludwigia octovalvis</i>
Rattlebox, smooth	<i>Crotalaria pallida</i>
Spanish needles	<i>Bidens alba</i>

I had hoped to see the blue skyflower which was mentioned in the Deep Lake Interpretive Guide published by National Park Service. That was not to be but I did see quite a few plants, several of them in bloom. I have never gotten serious about the greenbriers but several of them were evident along the trail. The dayflower [photos 2022_03_17_017-18] was listed as *Commelina diffusa*. The three petals were all blue. Each was stalked and spade-like. The leaves were alternate and sessile to short stalked. They measured about 1&1/2" x 1/2". The entire plant appeared to lack hairs. Because of the blue lower petal, this was different from dayflowers identified earlier and was added to the database. The false buttonweeds have confused me for some time. The species listed here are tentative. Another new plant for the database was the Florida bellflower (*Campanula floridana*) [photos 2022_03_17_024-25]. This appeared to be a weak trailing vine-like plant with small blue flowers. The flowers had 5 petals and sepals and widely spaced alternate leaves. These were lanceolate with short petioles. The plant appeared entirely smooth. All of the plants seen were entered into the locations field of the database for Deep Lake.



On both the way to and the return from the market this morning, we saw the caracara sitting at the top of a relatively bare tree near SixL's. This was the third time that I've spotted it in the area, but I have only seen one each time. I'm wondering if it lost its mate.

3/21/22

A low tide was expected for the Barron River at 11:20AM on 3/19/22. Ann and I went to Everglades City for breakfast and then drove to the Chokoloskee boat launch area to look for shorebirds. I was especially interested in finding oyster catchers by the bridge along the causeway but there were fishermen along the exposed areas. We didn't find any shorebirds at all. Even the resident yellow-crowned night herons were not to be found.

Back at the condo I tried to determine the identity of the fresh water snails collected from the cypress swamp along the Deep Lake Tram on 3/17/22. They were found in accumulations at several areas, almost as if they were middens from some bird—perhaps limpkins. Although I found several interesting taxonomic references on line, I wasn't about to learn the special vocabulary related to mollusk taxonomy. Besides, I hadn't collected any of the opercula and couldn't use the keys anyhow. So I did some picture based identification on the web and decided that they could be the giant ramshorn snail (*Murisa cornuartertis*), related to the apple snails.



On 3/20/22 Ann and I went to Tigertail. This has in the past been a real frustration for me. There are at least three easy trip marks to be had there (sanderling, willet and ruddy turnstone) as well as several more tentative ones, but I need to go across the lagoon in order to see them. That was not to occur on this date. I didn't cross the lagoon and no (not one

(shorebird was seen on the near side. Ann did find three dollars and a few shells. While I waited for her, I took a few photos of the fiddler crabs and curly-tailed lizards. I got better photos of the lizards with my cell phone when we went to Mackle Park for a jazz concert and were waiting for it to begin.



I hiked the Dan House Prairie with the Berninger group on 3/21/22. As I joined the group (on Union Road right off of Hy41) those already there were looking at a large group of cedar waxwings at the top of a tree. Soon we noticed four other birds, seemingly kingbirds. As we the examined guide books we vacillated between the western kingbird and the tropical kingbird, finally deciding on the former. Not bad! Two trip marks and I haven't even gotten started yet.

I didn't fair as well at the prairie. I was hoping to add an eastern meadowlark to the list but it was so windy that few birds risked flight. We didn't do much better with the plants. We found a single plant of pine hyacinth (*Clematis baldwinii*), some miterworts or swamp hornpods (*Mitreola sessilifolia*) and several of the more weedy plants in bloom. Of particular interest to me was the herb-of-grace (*Bacopa monnieri*) which had been added to the plant database as the water hyssop in 2014. Mats of this plant were found along the path [photos 2022_03_21_05-7]. Jack suspected the identification immediately and soon verified it with Hammer (2014). I updated the locations field for this species in the database. We were all disappointed that no blooming grass pinks (*Calopogon tuberosus*) were found on the prairie. Seeing them was certainly one of the main the goals of the trip.

In spite of the meager findings on this hike, it was great to meet up again with Jack and the group. It was particularly nice to talk with Diane and Dick Johnson, whom I hadn't seen for a couple of years. I'll look forward to hiking with them again next year.

3/25/22

Ann and I decided to visit the south end of the Everglades National Park, so on 3/22/22 we packed a lunch and headed to Homestead and points south. One of the problems of such a trip is that it takes about three hours to get to the park and then it's a 38 mile drive to where it ends at Flamingo. The Anhinga Trail, near the park entrance, was a mandatory stop. We didn't see too many birds there (no purple gallinules) but we did see a great white heron along with quite a few great egrets. One of the park rangers said that two great white herons were there but we only saw the one. Then we drove to Flamingo where we were able to see the resident crocodile, nesting ospreys and a few more birds. In all, I only recorded 13 species for the day. By the time we looked around the Flamingo area and checked out the shoreline, there was little time left to explore other parts of the park (We needed to make a stop at Robert Is Here). As we left the park several people were looking at something at the side of the road. It turned out to be a diamondback rattlesnake. I took several photos of the snake but I think it may have been dead; it never made an attempt to slither away.



When I met Jack Berninger for the Dan House Prairie hike, he mentioned that he had been told of a recently burned area, west of Kirby-Storter, that was loaded with blooming wildflowers. Since I was interested in finding some warblers anyhow, I decided to go Kirby-Storter on 3/23/22 and look for the area on the way back. My frustration with the warblers was not relieved by the trip. I found none. Several other birders were also having a bad morning but they had at least heard several, including Louisiana waterthrush and a worm-eating warbler. My entrée into BD for the morning included none of the wood warblers. I did see a wild turkey in tree from the end of the boardwalk, though. I recall seeing several of them in the same bunch of trees several years ago.

I did find the burned over area about three miles west of K-S. As I wrote in an email to Jack, It was a goldmine of flowering plants. Especially interesting were the alligator lily (*Hymenocallis palmeri*), long-leaved milkweed (*Asclepias longifolia*) and the everglades sneezeweed (*Helenium pinnatifidum*). In all, I identified 17 species of flowering plants, although some of the identifications are quite tentative. A list of the plants identified can be found in the file, [Plants Identified in the Big Cypress Swamp](#). (Jack Berninger wrote that the Fire Prairie was even richer in blooming plants when he visited it on the same day.) Lubber grasshoppers were very active among the fresh plant growth and I finally found my eastern meadowlark. I heard it singing and then saw it sitting at the top of a scorched bush. It was an extremely windy day while I was there and photographing plants was nearly impossible. Another day.

In my quest for shorebirds, Ann and I went to Lover's Key State Park on 3/24/22. The windy weather continued and, although I did record two new shorebirds (ruddy turnstone and sanderling) few other birds were seen; only 10 species were recorded in BD for the trip. So, when the birding gets tough, I turn to the plants. I took a short walk along some of the paths on the beach. I saw several mangrove crabs along one of the boardwalks and found several interesting plants. [Seek](#) correctly identified one of them as the bay cedar (*Suriana maritima*). I had seen and photographed this plant in 2021 [photos 2021_04_07_001-4] . [Seek](#) also identified the groundsel tree (*Baccharis halimifolia*) of the family Asteraceae. I have seen this plant along the TenK marsh trail but hadn't seen it in bloom before.

On our way back to the condo, we stopped for lunch at the Boston Beer Garden on Immokalee Road. After lunch I spotted a Rock Dove in the parking area. I was beginning to think that all of the rock doves in Florida had been replaced by the Eurasian collared dove. I've not seen the rock doves in the areas where I had seen them in the past. The rock dove was trip mark #104 for the year. That places me over the total for 2020, the worst year ever. Whew, I was beginning to worry!! Ann and I saw the northern caracara this morning when we were going out for breakfast. We saw it again when we returned several hours later after a few chores. We've only seen one at a time so far this year. Hopefully, one is sitting on a nest but we don't know. Swallow-tailed kites are being seen pretty much on a daily basis. Four of the were seen while we were in the Everglades National Park the other day. Limpkins appear few and far between. The area along Hy41, where we have normally seen them in the past, has been slim pickings. It's interesting how things change from one year to the next

I took a brief walk along the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk this morning (3/25/22). Both alligators were active at their pond. They seemed to be scooping up the bottom mud and possibly straining it through their teeth. I've long wondered about the significance of that behavior. There were several wood storks in the pond and one of the alligators made a plunge for one of them; quite a raucous event. It wasn't a very interesting birding trip. I only had a count of 18. Not a warbler in sight or sound. Not for Merlin either. I noticed that without my ears, Merlin hears all kinds of sounds that I don't hear. With my ears in, though, I wonder why Merlin isn't hearing the birds I hear around me. My amps apparently allow me to hear sounds above Merlin's sensitivity. I think I know, now, what a cacophony is.

3/29/22

I visited TenK on 3/26/22 The area finally shows signs of drying up. I saw 27 bird species but nothing new or different from previous visits. I did see a green anole on the rail of the bridge to the parking lot. I don't recall seeing a green one before at TenK.

When I visited the Sabel Palm Hiking Trail with the Berninger group, we found a potbelly airplant (*Tillandsia pauciflora*) growing on a cypress tree (see notes of 2/6/22). At that time it appeared to me that the plant was sending out a flower stalk. I set out to find the plant again on 3/28/22, hoping to photograph the flower. I was also planning to drive along the Sabel Palm road to see if I could add a bobwhite to the bird species list for this trip. As I began my walk along the trail I heard a bobwhite singing loudly (Including the bobwhite, nine birds were recorded along the walk). I did find the bromeliad but it was not in bloom. It appeared to have already bloomed. It may have bloomed already and I may have misinterpreted what I saw before. Several other plants were noted along the way:



I spent some time looking at the St. John's-worts, two of them in particular. One of them was a shrub about 4' tall. It had yellow flowers with 5 petals which were somewhat rusty in the center. This could well have been *H. fasciculatum*. The other one [photos 2022_03_28_004-10] closely resembled the photographs of the sand weed (*Hypericum cistifolium*) or the marsh St. John's-wort (*H. fasciculatum*) in Schmelz & Stacell (2009). This plant was herbaceous with the lower leaves mostly dried up. It was about 3' tall with opposite leaves forming clusters (fascicles). Small yellow flowers appeared in a branched inflorescence at the top of the plant. According to the IRC, *H. cistifolium* is present in the Picayune State Park and *H. fasciculatum* is assumed to be there. My records show both *H. cistifolium* and *H. fasciculatum* for the Sabel Palm hiking trail. Photos on the AFP strongly suggest this to be *H. cistifolium*.

Growing near the St. John's-wort was a mat of white flowering herbs about 6-8" tall. The leaves were opposite and about 3/8" long x 3/16" wide. Near the distal end of the leaves were a couple sharp teeth. The four white petals each had a slight notch. The free ends of the petals merged to form a tube with brown stripes along its length. This was recognized as the branched hedgehyssop (*Gratiola ramosa*).

What seemed to be a likely aster turned out to be the doll's daisy (*Boltonia diffusa*) of Hammer (2014) [photos 2022_03_28_001-3]. The flowers were not light blue as shown in that reference, though. They were all white as shown in Schmelz & Stacell (2009). The later reference refers to the plant as the false daisy, a name I am more familiar with. The plant consisted of a branching stem, each branch terminating with a flower head. The flower head consisted of 18-20 white ray flowers and a yellow disc. The leaves were alternate, sessile and widely separated. The larger ones were about 1&1/4" long x 1/4" wide. This plant was added to the database.

One species of the Eriocaulaceae family was found in bloom. Each plant consisted of several upright stalks, about 8-10" tall, terminating in a flower head. With a hand lens, it was possible to see that these stems were bristly. The floral heads were round, about 1/4" in diameter and white (with a possible yellowish tint). There was a dense whorl of basal leaves, each about 1" long and very narrow. This was suspected to be the flattened pipewort (*Eriocaulon compressum*).

As I was leaving the trail I noticed a small, somewhat creeping plant growing at the edge of the path. The plant had several upright branches with possible fruit and very divided leaves. Most of the leaves had a reddish tint. I believe the plant to be the combleaf mermaidweed (*Proserpinaca prctinata*) of Taylor (2013). The plant was added to the database.

3/30/22

On 3/30/22 I started out toward the burned area near Kirby-Storter, driving through a blinding sunrise and occasional fog. I soon realized that I would be getting to my destination too early, the flowers would probably not be open yet and the field would be too wet for a hike. So, I took a brief walk along the boardwalk at Kirby-Storter. The seasonal drying was evident and a deep alligator trail was seen in the drying swamp. Yellow-top (*Flaveria linearis*) was beginning to bloom as were other plants familiar for the park. I couldn't find any signs of the butterworts seen there last year and, of course, there were no warblers to record.

After the sun had a chance to dry things out a bit I drove to the wildflower area. The area had changed quite a bit since my last visit. Either I ended up in a different area or I was witnessing a succession of blooming plants after a burn. The petunias that dominated the area before were few and far between. In fact, almost none of the plants seen previously were found. As I hiked through the area I added a few new species to the list (see [Plants Identified in the Big Cypress Swamp](#)):



I immediately recognized one of the plants to be a false buttonweed, but it was quite different from those I had seen before. The flower head was bigger with fewer, larger flowers than in those I had seen in the past. It immediately suggested the Everglades false buttonweed (*Spermacoce terminalis*) as pictured in Hammer (2014). Those seen previously, according to that reference, would likely be the shrubby false buttonweed (*S. verticillata*). Not only am I confused about the taxonomy of these false buttonweeds. My various references are also confusing. According to the AFP, the correct name for *S. terminalis* is *S. verticillata*. And yet, the key in Wunderlin & Hansen (2011) still shows each of these to be separate species. The IRC Lists 6 species of *Spermacoce* for the Big Cypress Preserve but the AFP only shows 4 species for Collier County and does not include *S. terminalis*. Its *S. prostrata* being the closest to my photos [photos 2022_03_30_009-11]. The photos on the AFT website, though, show a much more leafy plant than what I saw. For the time being, I will list three species of *Spermacoce* in the database: *S. terminalis*, *S. remota* and *S. verticillata*. I am most unsure of the *S. terminalis*.



Another new plant for the area was the grass pink. I recorded it as *Calopogon tuberosus*, but after I was back at the condo, I looked at my photos [photos_2022_03_30_013-14] and wondered if the plant might have been the pale grass pink (*Calopogon pallidus*). The AFP shows 4 species of *Calopogon* for Collier County, including *C. tuberosus* and *C. pallida*. The top petal appeared to be

more blue than white. The IRC does not include *C. pallidus* in its list for the Big Cypress National Preserve. Unless I have an opportunity to examine the plant again, I will keep the listing as is.



4/1/22

With the rufus-sided towhee the target bird for the morning, Ann and I set out for Shell Island Road and the Briggs Boardwalk on 3/31/22. We met a volunteer (John) there who gave us a nice tour of the boardwalk. He indicated how the change from sawgrass to black rush marks the transition from fresh to brackish water [photo 2022_03_31_001-2] and how that can change from one year to the next. He also described how the slash pines have evolved around fire by not branching out near the tree's lower region. It was an interesting walk but it was very windy: few birds—no towhees.

We found a gopher turtle walking along the roadside not far from the boat launch area [photos 2022_03_31_003-13]. It was munching on some blades of grass until it got tired of our gawking and my camera and then retired along a path in the vegetation, apparently heading back to a more protected area.

I arrived at the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk at the crack of dawn (abt 7:15 AM) on 4/1/22. I adjusted my ears and, as I left the car I heard a chuck-wills widow. No kidding: no April fools! Merlin even confirmed it; the 106th trip mark for the year. The boardwalk was jumping with activity, especially at the alligator hole at the end. The water level had dropped enough to bring in many of the waders (herons, egrets, storks, ibises). Even a barred owl, chased by common grackles, was seen diving for fish. The species count for the morning was 24, including those birds seen or heard along the boardwalk. Both alligators were also busy, seemingly turning the bottom mud to either catch small morsels or to enlarge their pond. A park ranger that I met (William) said that it was mostly to enlarge the pond but I'm not sure that scooping up the mud and then dumping it back in the water would accomplish much of that. I got some really close up photos of a great egret fishing [photos 2022_04_01_001-6] but, unfortunately, the fish are not separated enough from the background. I wonder if the proper use of flash might have helped.

4/5/22

We picked up Mike and Elisha from the airport in the afternoon of 4/1/22. They stayed only for a couple of days, leaving on 4/4/22. The days were packed full of activity; Mike had definite ideas of what he wanted to do and we got most of them done. Not too many of them were nature oriented, though. We did walk the BCBB on 4/2/22, but it was late in the morning and we didn't see a lot except a few wading birds and several alligators. When we visited the Cabana Bar by Tin City we saw another pigeon. Apparently there are at least two of them still in the Naples area. Mike and Elisha seemed happy with their visit; Elisha even a bit excited.

Later in the day (4/4/22) I spent some time examining a plant that I had collected along Hy45 on (date) and identified as *Spermacoce terminalis*. The plant was about 15" tall when pulled from the ground (although it was still growing). The leaves were opposite; the top ones measuring 1&1/4" long by 1/8" wide. There was one prominent vein which was somewhat grooved from the surface. The leaves were sessile and pointed at the tip. Below the top two internodes the leaves occurred in clusters. The stem was very smooth. The plant ended with a terminal inflorescence about 1.5cm in diameter subtended by two small leaves pointed downward. There was another inflorescence at the first internode. I

used the digital microscope to examine the floral structure [photos 2022_04_04_001-8]. There were 4 petals and 2 sepals per flower. Using the key for the genus *Spermacoce* in Wunderlin & Hanse (2011): p.590, 1, 2, 3 —S. terminalis.

I got back into my routine on the morning of 2/5/22 with a visit to the off-road trail behind Burns Lake. As I entered the road leading to the campground I noticed that the area had been burned recently. Talking with the camp manager, I learned that the burn occurred about the middle of March. There were quite a lot of plants in bloom and I recorded a list to use to update the locations field of the plants database for this site; about five new plants were added.

In spite of the fact that I had identified it before, I did not immediately recognize the peninsula axillflower (*Mecardonia acuminata*). It was growing in close groups as if spread by rhizomes [photos 2022_04_05_001-5]. The leaves were opposite with teeth evident, especially on the bottom leaves. The flowers were on long petioles. They were white with 5 petals forming a tube which had reddish lines along its length. The edge of each petal was squared off with a small point projecting from its middle. Five sepals were thin and pointed. This was clearly the plant id' as *M. acuminata* in Hammer (2014). Photos on the AFP appeared to confirm that identification.

When I left Burns Lake I drove about 1 mile east to the burned area along Hy41 that I had visited twice before. The area had succeeded amazingly. I had a hard time finding where I had hiked. The grasses had grown so tall that I decided not to even try to enter the field. When I inquired about the area at the Big Cypress Preserve information center I was told that the area had been burned after the Burns Lake area. Amazing how quickly the vegetation recovers from a burn.

The wardens at the center also told me of a web site that had a 1980 listing of the vascular plants for the Big Cypress Preserve : [FIO5878733.pdf \(fiu.edu\)](https://www.fiu.edu/~fio5878733.pdf) . I downloaded the file.

4/8/22

I took a short drive along Janes Scenic Drive on 4/6/22. The area was certainly showing the effects of the drying going on throughout the area. The ditches along the roadside were moist at best and few of the culverts had much standing water. I noticed several magnolia trees in bloom along the road but saw few birds (15 bird species were recorded).

I made brief stops at Gate 2 and Gate 7. At Gate 2 I checked the progress of the development of the hand ferns but was disappointed that there was not much visible difference in the spore structures since my previous visit.

Then went on to Gate 7. I wanted to find the plant identified as Feay's Palafox (*Palafoxia feayi*) last year (see notes of last year). I thought then that it looked like snow squarestem (*Melanthera nivea*) and it did again. Seek agreed, identifying it as such. I finally decided that it was, indeed, the squarestem and I removed the slide of the Palafox from my PowerPoint presentation of Florida plants. That made me question my slide for the squarestem. The leaves shown on that slide are very different from those seen and photographed [photos 2022_04_06_011-18] along the tram. I will need to observe this species in the field to clear this up. I also found a dayflower (*Commelina diffusa*) in bloom along the trail.

I also found and collected part of a sedge growing near the beginning of the Tram. This is very likely the same sedge that I have seen before at this location and identified as *Carex vexans*. The vegetative culms were about 22" tall with 5 leaves (all still green) equally scattered along their length at internodes about 2&1/4" apart. The longest leaf was 10" long x 1/8" wide with one somewhat depressed vein. All parts of the plant were smooth. The terminal Inflorescence had 3 flower heads, the lower one about 1/4" below the others. I photographed several parts of the plant with the digital microscope [photos 2022_04_07_001-8].

The IRC lists 3 *Carex* sedges for the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park (*C. gigantea*, *C. longii* and *C. lupuliformis*) and the AFP for includes 3 more (*C. comosa*, *C. verucosa* and *C. vexans*) for Collier County. I am familiar with and can eliminate several of these, leaving the identification as a choice between *C. longii* and *C. vexans*. Although the IRC includes *C. longii*, the FNA indicates that the vegetative culms of this species have "few leaves clustered at apex". The plants that I observed clearly had its leaves spread out along the culm. On this basis alone, I will stick with my original identification of *C. vexans*. The keys in Wunderlin and Hansen (2011) separates these two species on the basis of the characteristics and measurements of the perigynia. I will have to collect some of these to confirm the id.

As I was leaving the area I stopped at a place along the roadside where water had accumulated. An alligator, along with a few egrets and ibises, apparently found this a fine fishing area. I watched the activity for a while but it wasn't possible to get good photographs through the vegetation. I did take a few photos of a *Desmodium* plant (possibly *D. incanum*) that I found nearby [photos 2022_04_06_001-5].

Thursday, 4/7/22 was a beach day; this time at Loudermilk Park. As I approached the beach I was surprised to see a magnificent frigatebird overhead; later two of them. Few (7) other birds were seen, though, — no shorebirds. I did find some of the plants interesting, however. Railroad vine (*Ipomoea pes-caprae*) was growing along the path to the beach and it had large, unopened flower blossoms on it. Other plants seen along the sandy paths to the beach were the dune sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*), one of the cucumbers (possibly *Monardella charantia*) and painted leaf (*Poinsettia cyathophora*). Before I left, I checked the railroad vine to see if the blossoms had opened — no luck.

Ann and I saw our resident caracara at the top of a bare tree when we went out for breakfast today, 4/8/22. I've yet to see two of them this year; I'm hoping that nothing happened to the other one that I've seen and photographed in previous years. Limpkins continue to be few this year.

4/13/22

We went to Parrish, FL to visit with Jim and Lisa Flanigan on 4/9/22. When we were returning from dinner, Jim took us on a brief tour of the areas near their home. It was nearing dusk and the sandhill cranes were gathering at the lake in a park in their residential complex. A few other



birds were also there, including black-necked stilts, killdeer and wood storks among others. In all, 20 species were recorded in BD for the day.

The next day, 4/10/22, we stopped at the Celery Fields (a wildlife area managed by the Sarasota Audubon Society). Doug and Gisela had suggested that it would be a worthy birding experience. WOW! It was. In a little over an hour or so, I recorded 23 species in BD. Three of these (indigo bunting, least bittern and Nanday parakeet) were trip marks, two of them (least bittern and Nanday parakeet) were Florida marks and one (the Nanday parakeet) was a lifer. Apparently I missed a painted bunting at

their feeders, which would have been another trip mark, but that was where I saw the Nanday parakeet. The least bittern was seen at the Palmer Road boardwalk, but I missed a Virginia rail that had been seen there earlier (another missed trip mark). Purple gallinules were seen at the boardwalk off of Palmer Blvd. When we left the Celery Fields, we drove east on Palmer Blvd and found an area where white pelicans were apparently staging for the trip north. We saw between 100-200 of them scattered in two bodies of water.

On 4/11/22 I visited Fakahatchee's Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk. As I entered I heard a lot of noise, like several red-shouldered hawks. I found the nest with young hawks (probably 2) where the boardwalk encircles the large cypress trees. There was no way to get a clear picture of the nest. The Alligators were active at the end but few wading birds were there, probably due to the receding water levels. I saw only 16 species for the morning; needless to say, no warblers. The reports back from the Wehr Nature Center only list the yellow-rumped warbler being seen so far, but I'd guess others are on their way; they're sure not here!

I visited Eagle Lakes on 4/12/22. I only walked around the middle lake. Not a bad morning, with 29 species including two trip marks (black-bellied whistling duck and bronzed cowbird. The red eye was clearly visible on the cowbird. Its companion appeared a bit smaller but its id was not established. I walked down into the dried up area to get better photos of the whistling ducks. I got close enough for good photos but the lighting was bad. The drying areas around the lakes were beginning to support a variety of plants. I updated the locations field for the area in FloPlants.



Today was a bust. I went to the TenK Marsh Trail to see if I could find the stilt sandpiper that had been reported there four days ago on eBird. I knew that the water would be low and the bird would probably be some distance away, so I mounted the spotting scope on a tripod and trekked to the observation tower. Dry! The whole area was dry; not a shorebirds was to be seen, at least from the observation tower. Only a few common gallinules, redwing blackbirds and the two grackle species were seen. Then I looked at the tide chart for the Barron River. With a low tide expected at 8:26AM, I headed to Everglades City; of course to find the oystercatchers along the Chokoloskee causeway. Nothing. Plenty of exposed river bottom but not a bird in site. Even the resident yellow-crowned night herons were gone. A visit to the Everglades National Park site was also disappointing—nothing!

4/22/21

A review of Birder's Diary for 4/12/22 showed 112 species of birds seen so far for this trip. That's only 3 from the average (115) for this date and already better than the totals seen in 2020 (103) and 2021 (109). This year's numbers are a bit disappointing, but at least this will not be another "worst" birding year. It's the birding doldrums down here, now, and the likelihood of new trip marks is less each day. Quite to the contrary with the plants which seem to be into the spring bloom. With that in mind I drove Turner River Road this morning directly to the Windmill Prairie Tram. More of the tram was accessible than on my last visit and I was able to hike quite a bit further. Again, the birds were few but I added 6 plants to the records for the location. I then drove the rest of the loop rather quickly. As I was heading toward Hy. 41 on Birdon Road, two seemingly young panthers ran onto the road. They seemed to be playing until they saw me; then quickly disappeared. My cameras was in the back seat of the car. Of course, no photos!

There was a heavy rain in the overnight of 4/5-6/22. Ann woke me because she was hearing a strange sound outside the condo; it reminded her of an animal in distress. When I got up to listen, it required my ears for me to hear it. I recorded the sound with Merlin but Merlin didn't recognize it as a bird sound. We finally decided that it was the sound of, possibly, two different frog calls. Unfortunately I couldn't identify the species by playing frog sounds from various herp internet sites. I emailed the sound from Merlin to myself but, when I loaded it into Audacity, the frog sounds were barely audible and couldn't be amplified. The next night we only heard possibly one frog.

I took a short drive on the Triple G Loop of the Picayune on 4/18/22. I was hoping that the recent rain followed by a day of sunshine would bring out some of the wildflowers. I found the combleaf mermaidweed (*Proserpinaca pectinata*) [photos 2022_04_18_014-15] and one of the Ericaulaceae, possibly bog buttons (*Lachnocaulon anceps*) [photos 2022_04_18_007-13]. The leaves of this plant were in a whorl at the base of the plant. They were acutely triangular and about 1&1/2-2' long by 1/4" wide. The flower heads were about 5" tall, each terminating in a single flower head. The Eriocaulaceae remain a confusing group for me to identify.

The trip did little to clarify my understanding of the taxonomy of the yellow-eyed grasses (*Xyris sp.*) or the St. John's-worts (*Hypericum sp.*). The *Xyris* plants photographed [photos 2022_04_18_001-6] had stalks terminating in a singular flower head. The heads measured about 8mm tall on height. The three petals of each flower were about 8mm long. Without further observation, I considered them to be what I have identified as *Xyris elliottii* in the past. The St. John's-wort was possibly *Hypericum Brachyphyllum*. Its leaf was needle-like, about 3/8" and resembled a small pine needle.

One of the ferns growing in the area was the Virginia chain fern (*Woodwardia virginica*). A hand lens clearly showed the chainlike arrangement of the areoles lining the midribs of the pinnules. There was also an orange bracket fungus growing on some fallen branches [photos 2022_04_18_016-17]. This is a fungus that I've seen in the past but never identified.

Eleven bird species of birds were seen or heard for the morning. At first, I saw or heard almost nothing. Then I was reminded of how dependent I am on the amplifiers. Once I put them in, birds were heard and recorded in BD.

Our last day for Tigertail beach was 4/19/22. I had purchased a pair of beach shoes at Walmart with the intention of crossing the lagoon. Wiser behavior prevailed; Ann crossed alone. I walked the lagoon shore for a while and ran into a free lance photographer (Steven Senko) . We talked photography and birds for a while and, finally, a willet and a black-bellied plover flew nearby. The plover was showing development of its spring coloration. Its breast was heavily spotted. The willet was trip mark #113. Ann struck out on shells, bringing an empty basket upon return. But, from her description, probably saw young plovers (possibly snow or piping) along the spit.

Steven gave me his card and, later, I visited his web site (www.WildLifeelements.com) and viewed a number of his photographs. He also told me that he often photographed birds at Caxambas Pass Park. After lunch Ann and I found the park along Collier Road.



With time running out for getting trip marks, I went to Kirby-Storter Roadside Park on 4/20/22. Recent rains seemed to have brought more water into the swampy areas and the muddy alligator trails were once again under water. I saw a couple of young alligators from the end of the boardwalk .They looked small enough to be this year's brood. No wading birds (other than a lone white ibis) were seen. But this wasn't about long-legged waders; it was about song birds, preferably warblers. Bullseye, a brightly colored male American redstart and splendidly colored male black-throated blue warbler brought the trip list to 115. In addition to these, Merlin heard the pine warbler, northern waterthrush, ovenbird, black and white warbler and northern parula among other birds that I did not detect. I'm not sure how trustworthy Merlin is, though; it seems to hear the northern parula almost everywhere I go. I wonder if it has a problem separating ambient sounds, such as road noise, from the bird calls. In any event, Merlin's identifications suggest that the spring warbler migration is still going on in the area and another visit to Kirby-Storter may be in order.

So why wait? I returned to Kirby-Storter Wayside park the next morning (4/21/22) and added another warbler (black and white) to the list (I know, Merlin heard it the day before). While I was there I met a birder who said that he had just seen a songbird that he couldn't identify. He showed me a picture that he had taken: a rose-breasted grosbeak! Never having seen that species in Florida, I took a seat on the bench at the end of the boardwalk and proceeded to wait impatiently for the bird to come back. Of course, it didn't. As I was leaving to go back to my car I told another pair of birders to be in the lookout for the bird. The woman of the pair met me in the parking lot later and said she had seen it. She showed me the pictures she had taken: a cardinal.

When I left the park I drove west along hy.41 and once again found the burned area I had visited previously. Forget the comments that I made about the area on 4/5/22. The area had not succeeded as much as I thought then. I had apparently not driven far enough to the east and was obviously in the wrong place. Now, clearly where I had been before, there was much more of the yellow-top (*Flaveria linearis*) and Everglades false buttonweed (*Spermacoce terminalis*). I added the Florida ironweed (*Vernonia blodgettii*) and the blue mistflower



(*Conoclinium coelestinum*) to the list of plants seen there. It's hard to know if I was in precisely the same spot each of the

times I was there. The changes that I saw each time might have been the result of local geography, not time. I also saw a number of large lubber grasshoppers at the location. These were not the black immatures with yellow streaks down their backs. Instead, they were adult grasshoppers with brilliant adult coloration.



There has clearly been some confusion with my identification of the squarestems. Originally, Jack Berninger identified the squarestem when I was with him as the everglades squarestem. Of the three species of squarestem that the AFP shows for Collier County (*Melanthera angustifolia*, *M. nivea* and *M. parvifolia*), that would be *M. angustifolia*. It appears that I have been recording it as the snow squarestem (*M. nivea*) after seeing the photo in Hammer (2014). Now, a plant that I originally identified as the Feay's Palafox (*Palafoxia feayi*) is, according to Seek, actually the snow squarestem of Hammer (2014). Both of these species are listed by the IRC for the Fakahatchee Strand but *M. nivea* is shown as doubtful. It is along Tram 7 of that park where I first found that species. None of the *Melanthera* species are included in Bell & Taylor (1982). Taylor (1992) only includes *M. nivea*, suggesting that it is distributed throughout the state. None of these references include the small-leaf squarestem (*M. parviflora*), but the photos of this species on the IRC web site are very close to what I am now calling *M. angustifolia*.

According to Wunderlin & Hansen (2011) it's all a matter of synonymy. According to them there is only one species of *Melanthera* (correctly called *Melanthera nivea*) found in Florida. The other names are synonyms used by other authors. Because of the large distinction between these plants, some being clearly herbaceous while others are more shrubby, I will reserve the name snow squarestem for the more woody plants that I found along Tram 7 and the Everglades snowstem for the more herbaceous plants found to be more widespread. The Palafox is still under consideration.

Notes

I've described the birding here lately as in the doldrums. Few of the larger birds have been seen for a while. I imagine that many of them are on nests incubating eggs or feeding their young. But, it should be the height of migrations, especially of the song birds such as the warblers. Unfortunately, I have not been able to place myself in the path of these migrations. I met a guy at the BCBB this morning (4/24/22) and he told me that he had been at Bow Line Park (in Naples) yesterday and the warblers were all over the place. None were among the 17 bird species that I saw along the boardwalk.

I was entertained, though, by a tricolored heron doing its reddish egret imitation. It travelled the entire circumference of the alligator pond several times, stopping occasionally, spreading its wings to shade an area and apparently probed for small fish. Unfortunately, the lighting was poor, forcing slow shutter speeds and poor photography. None of the photos were kept. Neither were those of a great blue heron who seemed to be interested in the larger fish.

Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) was in full bloom and I noticed that false nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*) was also blooming. I also noticed flowers on a few alligator flags (*Thalia geniculata*) at the bend just before the alligator pond.

I said goodbye to the Fakahatchee Strand from Janes Scenic Drive on 4/25/22. I drove a short distance to Gate 3 and then to Gate 7. At Gate 3 I noticed little change in the hand fern spore structures, perhaps a little yellowing. At Tram 7 I found and examined the two *Carex* species that I've seen there before. I photographed the perigynia of each. Those of the proposed *C. vexans* are Photos 2022_04_25_001-7, including several taken with the digital microscope later back at the condo. The Inflorescence of this sedge was 3.5cm tall with up to about 7-8 flower heads per inflorescence. Each head was about 1cm tall; the bottom two each having short hyaline spikes (2.5cm long for the bottom flower head, a bit shorter for the other). Male flowers appeared to be basal. Most of the culms were vegetative. The leaves were 4mm wide with a distinct "V" in section. With a hand lens, I noticed green and white longitudinal stripes along their length. Photos 2022_04_25_008-9 are the apparent *C. lupulinoides*.



Ann and I went to Clam Pass Park on 4/26/22. I was hoping that some of the terns and gulls would still be around but feared that they would be off somewhere in their breeding places or migrated away from the area. Well, apparently, they were. The scarcity of birds was exacerbated by the heavy equipment apparently depositing and moving sand along the beach by the hotel across the pass. One lonely black skimmer did stick around to be included in my trip list and a least gull was seen off in the distance. Those two birds represented almost 50% of the species seen.

While I was waiting for Ann I walked the nature trail along the beach. I used my phone to take a few photos of some of the plants that I saw. Mostly, the photos [photos 2022_04_26_003-10] were of trees and shrubs such as the sea grape (*Coccoloba uvifera*), strangler fig (*Ficus aurea*) and Spanish Dagger (*Yucca aloifolia*). I have only seen the Spanish dagger at a few locations. It was identified here with Taylor (1992) and is shown for Crawford County by the AFP. I added Clam Pass as one of the locations in FloPlants and entered the plants seen for that location.

A low tide on the Barron River for 4/27/22 was expected at 8:12A.M. was probably my last chance at an oyster catcher for the 2022 list. With plenty of river bottom exposed by the Chokoloskee bridge, none appeared. I also searched by the Everglades area : Nothing. I did find a lone spotted sandpiper and two semipalmated plovers at the Chokoloskee boat launch. A drive through the Chokoloskee area added a few song birds for the morning but, nothing to comment further about.

Kirby-Storter has been getting a fair share of my attentions lately. I visited it again on 4/28/22. No birds of special note. Even Merlin was hard put to find any warblers, except of course, for the northern parula which it seems to find every-

where. I've expressed my doubts about that previously. A small alligator (probably this year's crop) and a soft-shelled turtle were seen in the shallows that remain at the end of the boardwalk. When I left the park I drove to Burns Lake, only to find it closed for the season with a gate preventing entrance. Then I drove to the other entrance for the offroad vehicles which was also closed and gated (as it has been each time I went there). I walked around the gate and hiked the trail for a short distance.

Along the trail, and the road leading to, it I added a few plants to the Burns Lake location in FloPlants. For only the second time, I found white sunnybell (*Schoenolirion albiflorum*) and I was amazed at the height of the glades morning glory (*Ipomoea sagittata*) along the road. Seek identified one of the grasses growing along the edge of the road as Dallas grass (*Paspalum dilatatum*). The AFP lists 13 species of the genus *Paspalum* for Collier County but *P. dilatatum* is not among them. The IRC indicates 15 species of the genus for the Big Cypress Preserve. Again, *P. dilatatum* is not one of them. The range map for the Dallas grass shown in the AFP suggests that this species is more northern in its distribution. The photos it provides are very similar to those that I took [photos 2022_04_28_036-38]. I added the species to the database but the identification of the species is uncertain. I looked at a number of other graminoids but I still need more practice to identify most of them.

On 4/29/22, I got my final fix for my Fakahabit. Things were quiet on the boardwalk and at the gator hole. I scared up an immature black-crowned night heron as I approached the viewing platform but a single young great blue heron remained and continued to fish. Both alligators were present and active, occasionally with their mud-digging. Two, seemingly mature, barred owls were sitting together in a tree. I watched them for quite a while as they seemed to be grooming each other. I took almost 100 photos of them as the sun got higher, allowing faster shutter speeds. The resulting photos were OK, but not great. Eventually they flew off, first one—then the other.



I exited the boardwalk very slowly, hoping to see a few song birds. I didn't have much luck but I did hear a yellow-billed cuckoo along the way. That brought me within two birds of the average number of species per trip.

We left for points north on 4/30/22. Our first stop was the Celery Fields in Sarasota. I was hoping to get a couple of trip marks and not bring down the average/trip. Unfortunately, we arrived there as the sun was about as high as it gets, not the best time for birding. I went immediately to the Raymond Road pond and saw a couple of roseate spoonbills and several black-necked stilts. I couldn't find Virginia rails that had been reported there or the least bittern that I saw there before, though. Then I went to the Palmer Road pond. That was the better of the ponds this time; I saw a common gallinule with young there as well as a grey swamp hen, a new mark for the trip and another least bittern. Quite a few purple gallinules were actively feeding in the pond. The bird feeders were pretty dead. Mourning doves, common ground doves and a few blackbirds were there: no nanday parakeets. In spite of the time of the day, though, I did manage to record 22 species in BD.

There wasn't much more opportunity for B&B until 5/2/22 when Jerry Kaczmarek and I took a tour of the Pasco County beaches. Although a few birds were seen at several of them, the Fred Howard Beach was clearly the best for birding. Even though the tide was somewhat high, we saw 14 bird species at that beach, most of them in a narrow strip of exposed shore (the same area where I saw the marbled godwit in 2016). A great blue heron was there as well as a reddish egret. Several shorebirds including willets, sanderlings, short-billed dowitchers, dunlin and ruddy turnstones were crowded in a small area. Nearby were black-bellied and semipalmated plovers. In all, 14 bird species of birds were seen

in just a few minutes. Although I didn't realize it at the time, the short-billed dowitcher was trip mark #121, bringing me to the average number of birds/trip.

As we headed north along I75 in northern Florida to an overnight in Tipton, GA. I noticed masses of pink flowering plants and then yellow ones. I've seen them in previous years and wondered what they were. But, we were never in an area where we could stop to examine and identify them. They remain unidentified.

We left Tifton on 5/3/22 and drove to Matt and Nicole's place in Murfreesboro. Along the way, we saw both vultures and the red-tailed hawk that was so illusive in Florida. While there I saw several of the common birds at their neighbor's feeders and other places as we travelled the local roads. There was a yellow-flowering plant in Matt's yard which Seek identified as the bulbous buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosa*). I thought that it was a native plant but, according to Seek it is an introduced weed. Some plants such as red and white clover were seen as we drove to various places. Tall plants along the roadways looked like possible poison hemlock but it could have been the Japanese hedge parsley.

On 5/4/22, Ann and I visited the Barfield Crescent Park Wilderness Center and hiked the trail to the overlook of the west fork of the Stones River. The spring bloom was in progress; I recognized the possible white avens, mayapple, dandelion, woodbine, poison ivy and a plant identified as a legume by Seek. It reminded me of the black medic (*Medicago lupulina*). My app on Florida Wildflowers agreed but also referred to this plant as the hop clover. I have been designating the hop clover as *Trifolium aureum*. To allow for local differences in the use of common names I have not designated these plants with species names. Seek also identified flowering bluests of unknown species, strawberry bush (*Elaeagnus americanus*), fire pink (*Silene virginica*), wild garlic (*Allium canadense*), common cinquefoil (*Potentilla simplex*), roundleaf ragwort (*Packera obovata*), lyreleaf sage (*Salvia lyrata*), long-leaf summer spurge (*Houstonia longifolia*), narrow-leaved blue eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*) and Philadelphia fleabane (*Erigeron philadelphicus*). Seek was unable to identify some of these in the field but identified them from photos that I took with the Nikon.



We left Murfreesboro on 5/7/22 and arrived home later that day.

Summary

This was one of the best Florida stays in recent years. Our new condo was great as were the new neighbors. Without assistance from a cane or walker, I managed to get into areas (Dan House Prairie & Sabal Palm Trail) that I had not been to in several years and I was able to share those experiences with my favorite group, Jack Berninger's Sun shiners. Although the birding was average, literally, - 121 it was the best year since 2018. Much of this was due to two new areas in the Sarasota area; the stop at the Myakka River Park on the way to the condo, where I got a nice head start in the count, and the Celery Fields, where I got three new Florida counts (one of them a lifer). 13 new species were added to the FloPlants database. Oh! And I saw two panthers.