

Florida – 2007

1/20/07

The trip to Florida was relatively uneventful. I didn't pay as much attention to the changing vegetation as I did in previous years so many of my notes from those years (never recorded) will remain unrecorded. We stayed in Jonesboro (just south of Atlanta) on the 19th and reached Jerry & Mary Ann's today (20th). It was the English sparrow, among birds, that welcomed me to Florida. These were the first birds seen as we stopped at a wayside. Black medic was the first flowering plant that I saw close up -- I thought I was seeing redbuds in bloom along the highway (75). Sandhill cranes were seen along Hy52 on the way to New Port Richey. Birds seen while at Jerry & Mary Ann's included Eurasian collared doves, American crows, white ibis, common grackles, great blue herons, northern cardinal, northern mockingbird, English sparrow, mourning dove and red-shouldered hawk. Boat-tailed grackles were also noticed as we arrived in southern Florida. I disappointed Jerry by pointing out that the "ducks" he was seeing in his pond were actually double-crested cormorants.

1/21/07

We arrived at the condo on this date. Most of our time was simply used to get established. Eurasian collared doves and fish crows were recognized around the condo immediately. The fish crows gathered in huge numbers in the evening. The Cape Coral area is much more developed and congested than I thought. It is difficult for me to see, at this point, where a self-respecting burrowing owl would sit down.

1/23/07

There was quite a gathering of white ibis near our condo this afternoon. Included in the mix were at least four cattle egrets. Gulls have been flying past the area but I have not as yet id'd any of them.

1/24/07

Ann and I went this morning to the eco preserve (Four Mile Cove) near the Veteran's Parkway in northern Cape Coral. There was a boardwalk that covered about 1½ miles with two juts out to the Caloosahatchee River. The plant community was a bit monotonous, but interesting nevertheless. It consisted mostly of red mangroves with undergrowth seemingly dominated by leatherleaf fern (aka: giant leather fern; *Acrostichum danaeifolium*). This was the location for the clapper rail sighting recorded for this day as well as the white-eyed vireos, blue-grey gnatcatcher and the yellow-crowned night herons. We also saw an otter (presumably, a northern river otter) as we were leaving the area.



We also visited the Rotary Park, not too far south of our condo. This turned out to be a real find with a neat concentration of birds in a relatively small area. Most of the marks for this day are from the Rotary Park. We talked to one of the persons of the Audubon group there and she was pretty excited, as were we, to see white pelicans. I will undoubtedly return to this park many times during our stay. There also seemed to be quite a variety of butterflies there. Among those seen on this trip was the zebra longwing. Many anoles were also present. We have been seeing them around our condo also.

Rock doves were seen around the city areas but the high ornithological point of the day was a pair of burrowing owls. These were seen at a small park (Veteran's park) not far from our condo. The web site for the Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife indicated that the owls would be there and a couple of women with their kids playing in the park pointed out the location.

1/25/07

This has been a drizzly day in Cape Coral so, cowardly, I did not really attempt any nature walks or such. I did see, though, some Muscovy ducks on the north side of Cape Coral. They were walking along the roadside in a residential area. These were probably of the feral variety but were marked on the trip list.

1/26/07

I hiked through the Rotary Park this morning. There were again many egrets as well as wood storks, ibis and other water birds. I also saw three raccoons along the emergent vegetation around one of the ponds. Later, Ann and I took a ride to the Pine Island area. We didn't see much there although the kestrel and the loggerhead shrike as well as the mottled duck, recorded for this day, were seen there. I'm a bit disappointed that I am not seeing more shore-birds in the area. While on Pine Island, we stopped at the Randell Research Archeological Center and walked along their trails which were marked with much information about the Calusa Indians. An interesting plant identified as a "life plant" (*Kalanchoe pinnata*) with Bell & Taylor (1982) was seen in bloom along the trails. Gumbo limbo trees (*Bursera simaruba*) were abundant in the park.

1/27/07

I went to Rotary Park again this morning. I saw a couple of common ground doves and added them to the trip list. I also began to look at a couple of the plants more closely. Many of the plants in bloom at this time are woody plants and, as of right now, I don't have any good references for them. Among the plants that I believe I am seeing is the sea grape (*Coccoloba uvifera*). This plant is not in bloom at this time. Another woody plant may be the Christmas berry (*Lycium carolineanum*). The plant I saw this morning at the park had a single flower blossom. Pictures in Bell & Taylor (1982) and Alden, et. al. (1998) suggest this id but both references show the blooming time to be much later (summer). Perhaps the unusually warm winter has coaxed this plant to produce this single bloom (or perhaps my taxonomy is wrong). I've been wondering if one of the woody plants that I have been seeing in bloom is the sea daisy (*Borrchia frutescens*). This plant has very hairy grayish-green leaves and branches and is very common in the park.

The giant leather fern seems to be the most prominent fern in the park. I was sorry to find that neither Peterson & McKenny (1968) nor Newcomb (1977) actually cover this area so they will be of limited use while I am here except for the most wide ranging plants. Among the herbaceous flowering plants at the park seems to be a species of the white-bracted sedge (*Dichromena* sp.) shown in Bell & Taylor (1982). According to this reference, several species of this insect-pollinated sedge grow in the area. A possible species of painted leaf (*Poinsettia* sp.) was also seen. Because of its narrow, linear leaves, this may be *Poinsettia pinetorum* as described in Bell & Taylor (1982).

The plants seemed to have a three-part fruit which developed from an incomplete flower. I have been seeing a white-flowered plant in bloom that reminds me of a *Bidens* species. It could be the Spanish needles (*Bidens pilosa*) as shown in Bell & Taylor (1982). Some of the plants seem to have more ray flowers and could be the Common beggar ticks (*Bidens alba*) shown in Alden et.al. (1998). I will need to examine these plants further in future visits.

After driving some distance the other day to see burrowing owls, we discovered this morning that there are at least one (and possibly more) just a few blocks from our condo. As we were driving to the Beatnik Café, we saw two areas marked off with the, now familiar, PVC pipes with a perch on a vacant lot along SE 4th Pl. We did see one owl standing near the burrow at the area closest to 47th Terrace.



1/28/07

This wasn't a very good day. It was rainy in the morning and very windy all day. I did take a couple of pictures of the burrowing owls near our condo but, otherwise, spent most of the day in the condo. I viewed the DVD on shorebirds and reviewed their id's in my available references. Mike Orchin of the Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife called and gave me a couple of phone numbers of folks to contact about birds in the area. Vince McGrath (482-3226) is with a local Audubon group and Anita Marshall (267-7872) is with a group called Bird Patrol.

1/29/07

This morning Ann and I drove over to the Six Mile Cypress Slough where we went on a guided tour with a couple of the park volunteers. The tour lasted about 1&1/2 hours. Several bird species were seen and a black-crowned night heron was added to the trip list. Several different fern species were seen. The most abundant fern was referred to as a swamp fern by the tour guides. This could have been the marsh fern (*Thelypteris palustris*) of Alden et. al (1998) but no attempt was made to id it further. Strap ferns, resurrection ferns and shoestring ferns were among the others seen. They also pointed out the "golden boots" of another fern that was in a pretty dry state with no fronds at this time. A tree that was almost totally surrounded by probable red blanket lichen was photographed. Bald cypress and red maple were both leafing out; which is unusually early according to our guides although one of them did intimate that they were in their spring of the year.

Few blooming plants were seen. I did see one species of cattail in bloom. Its flower structure reminded me of our *Typha angustifolia*, with its male and female flowers separated by a gap but its leaves were broad like our *T. latifolia*. It could have been the *T. domingensis* (southern cattail) shown in Alden et. al (1998). A bladderwort (*Utricularia* sp.) was also seen in bloom. I did notice an inflated leafstalk as described for *Utricularia inflata* [Alden et. al (1998)] but my references don't show other species. One of the guides referred to a *Bidens alba* and her comments seemed to bear on my id of 2/27/07. She indicated that the plant was good at attracting butterflies. Several *Sagittaria* species were noted. One of the guides pointed out the leaves of a duck potato (*S. falcate*) but this plant was not in bloom. I did see a small species that was possibly the *S. graminea* as described in Bell & Taylor (1982). This plant with narrow grass-like leaves was growing completely under water but sent out a flowering stalk above the water level. I photographed the plant but it was too far away for the photo to be of much use for clarifying the id.

After we left the slough, we drove to a small park south of the intersection of I75 and Hy80. Appropriately, this park was called Manatee Park because the warm water exhausted from a power company on the Caloosahatchee River attracts manatees. There were quite a few manatees there. We also saw a butterfly exhibit there which showed pictures of the white peacock. Ann and I recognized that this was a butterfly that we had seen on 1/24/07 at the Four Mile Cove.



1/31/07

I visited the Rotary Park again this morning. It was not a particularly good birding morning but I did add robins to the trip list. Actually, I thought I saw them the other day when Ann and I were walking there but I did not make a positive id at that time. I photographed some of the plants in the park. One of them was probably a species of maypop. The flower of this plant was particularly interesting because the stamens seemed to be derived from the pistil. The leaves of the plants seen seemed to be broader than those shown for *Passiflora lutea* in Bell & Taylor (1982). What I was seeing could be another species of *Passiflora* mentioned in the reference. I'll need to examine the plant again for further distinguishing characteristics. I also took a few pictures of the painted leaf seen on earlier walks.

The photos showed that beside the red markings on the leaves, there are red bracts under the flower heads. The *Bidens* plants examined this morning all had 5 ray flowers suggesting *B. pilosa*.

After I left the park, I drove along Pelican Blvd. to the baseball diamonds where I was told (by Mike Orchin) the monk parakeets could be found. They were seen as soon as I got out of the car. They had nests all over the baseball field lights in the park. These were added to the trip list.

Later, Ann and I went to the Lakes Park. This park was a bit of a disappointment as a nature park but seemed like a great day camp for families. I was able to add a redwing blackbird and a red-bellied woodpecker to the trip list and to see the usual collection of water birds for the area. I photographed what I believed, based on what I had learned on earlier Florida trips, to be a royal fern. Later I purchased The Ferns of Florida (Nelson, 2000) and the plant didn't at all look like the royal fern shown in this reference. It actually looked like a type of bracken fern (*Peridium aquil-*



inum). Clearly, the fern identifications in my notes are not reliable. The marsh fern discussed in the notes of 1/29/07 was also shown in this reference and could be correct. Zebra longwing butter-

flies were also seen in the park.

2/1/07

I went to Beatnik's this morning and, while I was there, I checked the online Atlas of Florida Plants <http://www.plantatlas.usf.edu/maps.asp?plantID=1988>. According to this source, *Bidens pilosa* is only found in the panhandle area and the photos of *B. alba* show only five ray flowers. Apparently, then, it is *B. alba* that I have been seeing. I also checked out the genus, *Passiflora*. It still seems to me that the leaves of the plants I have been seeing are too narrow for the *Passiflora lutea* but none of the other species seem to fit. The range of *P. lutea*, according to this website is further north than this location. Perhaps, it is just local variation for the species. The website showed only two species of *Typha* (*T. latifolia* and *T. domingensis*); both with ranges extending into this area. The leaves of *T. domingensis*, according to the pictures of this site, seem narrower than what I have been seeing but the separated male and female flower is consistent with this species.

I also saw the burrowing owls on my way to Beatnik's café. After breakfast, Ann and I took a brief trip to see the Jaycee Park. While we were there, I saw several spotted sandpipers which were added to the trip list. I was also able to add the European starling which was seen on electrical wires in the city area. I also showed Ann the monk parakeets by the baseball fields. I've noticed several of the feral Muscovy ducks flying along the channel near our condo several times in the last few days. I still haven't been able to check out the gulls which pass through the area. There are, at least, laughing gulls but I'm sure others are there too.

2/2/07

Yesterday I downloaded a plant list for Lee County from the online atlas. As I checked the list against my tentative id's this morning and reviewed the photos on the atlas, a few things became evident. The *Passiflora* species that I have been seeing is most likely *Passiflora suberosa* according to the Lee county list. Only two species of *Passiflora* are listed and *P. incarnate* has larger, purple flowers than the plants I have been seeing. The *Poinsettia* species is

most likely *Poinsettia cyanophora*. Photos of *P. pinetorum* show that it is clearly not the species. *Sagittaria* species, according to the list, are several and also the species *S. graminea* has several subspecies. Further, the various plant species seem to have a variety of growth habits depending on the amount of water. Without further references and a lot more study, the species of these plants remain very tentative.

2/3/07

I met a local birder from North Fort Meyers this morning as I was birding Rotary Park. His name was Bob Hargrave. As we talked, he mentioned that he had seen reddish egrets in the park. That reminded me that on my last trip to the park I spent quite a bit of time trying to determine if a particular bird I was seeing was a reddish egret or an immature little blue heron. I finally decided to mark it as a little blue. After I left Bob I saw the bird or one remarkably like it, again. It was in the pond closest to the parking area. The bird was slate-blue in color with a distinctly purplish head. Its legs were greenish to light yellow. The bill was also somewhat slate colored with a distinct black tip (which is what made me think reddish egret in the first place). After some time, I again decided that I was seeing a little blue heron. Pictures in Sibley seem to confirm the id.



As I was driving into the park this morning I saw an armadillo working the grass area near the entrance. Later in the day I added a ring-billed gull to the trip list. It was in the parking lot of the Edison shopping center in Fort Meyers. I'm sure I had seen them before (flying along the canal by our condo) but I waited until I saw the ring of the bill before marking them.

I have been seeing at least one species of *Erigeron* in the Cape Coral area. Two species (*E. quercifolius* & *E. vernus*) are listed in the AFP and another (*E. strigosus*) is described in Ball & Taylor (1982). This plant seems very much like what I have been id'ing as *E. strigosus* back in Milwaukee. I will need to examine this plant more closely in future walks. I have also been seeing an apparent species of fog fruit in bloom in several disturbed areas around the Cape Coral area. The only species listed in the Lee County list from the [Atlas of Florida plants](#) (AFP) is *Phyla nodiflora*. I began to compile a list of citations from the AFP as an appendix I (Plants Identified in Southwest Florida – 2007).

2/4/07

I noticed several interesting plants while walking at Rotary Park this morning. For one thing, I noticed that the spore bearing structures on the underside of the leaflets of what I have been calling a leather fern completely covered the underside with a brownish, velvet like surface. I also noticed that the terminal leaflet of each frond was divided. The plant, in Nelson (2000) most resembling this is the giant leather fern (*Acrostichum danaeifolium*) which seems to confirm the id of 1/24/07. Its terminal leaflets appear too dense for *A. aureum*, according to this reference. I also noticed that the plant I have been calling *Lycium carolineanum* has sharp terminal thorns on some of its branches. This characteristic seemed to be somewhat variable but, according to Nelson (1996) supports my earlier id. Having been surprised that the sea grape was in the family, Polygonaceae, I noted the sheaths at the leaf junctions typical of the family.

A plant about one foot high with yellow, somewhat pea-like flowers was found growing along the path in very sandy soil. Its lower leaves were long and narrow and tapered toward the distal end. Two small, pea-like flowers were somewhat pendent at the end of a stalk which seemed to derive from a winged portion of the stem. The wings were triangular in shape with long pointed "ears". Distinctly triangular sepals were present. At first glance, nothing in Bell & Taylor (1982) suggested this plant. Looking through Peterson & McKenny (1968) and Newcomb (1977) suggested a plant called rattlebox. The particular species shown in these references (*Crotalaria sagittalis*) is not shown by the AFP for Lee County but five other species of *Crotalaria* are. The two species shown in Bell & Taylor (1982), *C. pallida* & *C. rotundifolia*, do not seem to fit but *C. purshii* is mentioned and worthy of follow-up, although it is not shown by the AFP for Lee County. If this id holds up, what I have been describing as a winged stem is described as arrow-shaped stipules in the 1968 and 1977 references.

Another flowering plant was found with very small, upward pointing leaves which closely hugged the stem. The flowers were small, yellow and somewhat tubular. There were no showy petals or sepals. Thumbing through Bell

& Taylor (1982), the plant reminded me of *bigelowia* (*Bigelowia nudata*). If this is so, I need to confirm by looking for linear basal leaves of about 1 dm length.

I have noticed quite a few dodder-like plants almost totally covering some of the shrubs in the park. Of two similarly appearing species described in Bell & Taylor (1982), this seems most likely to be the love vine (*Cassytha*



filiformis) rather than dodder (also called love vine, *Cuscuta gronovii*). I am basing this tentative id on the fruit that I found on some of the plants; no leaves or flowers have been found to date. It is possible, of course, that both plants are present in the area. The AFP lists both of these, as well as other species of *Cuscuta* for Lee County.

A species of *Opuntia* was found as I approached the observation tower. The AFP lists three species for Lee County. The white topped sedge that I have been seeing has about 2-7 bracts per flowering stalk. This info may be of use in further identifying the species later. Finally, a very weak-stemmed, aster-like flowered plant was found in bloom. Based on the relative proportions of its disc and ray flowers, this reminded me more of an aster than a fleabane. Most of its flowers had already bloomed out; just one remained in bloom. There were 13 very light lavender rays with a yellow disc measuring about 2mm in diameter. The flower heads were in a rather broad panicle. The stem was virtually leafless.

I was interested in watching a snowy egret feeding in one of the ponds this morning. He seemed to shuffle his feet, as if stirring up the bottom, as he fed. Robins were found in huge numbers this morning. I have yet to id a reddish egret for the trip. Later in the day, as we were going to Jay's home in Palmetto to watch the Superbowl, I saw a red-tailed hawk fly over Hy75. I also think I saw a whooping crane but I guess I won't mark it since it wasn't a very good look.

As I was leaving the park this morning I was hailed by a fellow who turned out to be Mike Orchin. He noticed me putting my camera and binoculars in the car with Wisconsin plates and figured it was probably me. We talked birds for a while and, again, planned to get together for a trip to the everglades.

2/10/07

On 2/7/07, Ann and I went to Fort Meyer's beach with the Kaczmarek's. As Jerry and I walked the beach, I added a willet, ruddy turnstone and a black-bellied plover to the trip list. I also saw a peep and a tern but I was not carrying binoculars and I wasn't able to id them. An eagle was added on 2/8/07 as well as red-breasted merganser. These were seen along the channel from the lanai of our condo. Jerry and Maryanne left us on Thursday and Matt & Nicole joined us on Thursday afternoon. On 2/9/07 Ann & I took Matt & Nicole to the Fakahatchee Strand and Shark Valley. We took the tram tour of the Shark Valley Park. A few plants were seen in bloom but there was no occasion for id. A bladderwort was seen at Fakahatchee. All along the tram ride I was seeing a thistle in bloom. It was very large, very spiny and had flowers that varied from light lavender to purple. The leader of the tour called it a bull thistle. Later I checked the plant list for the Everglades (Avery & Loope, 1983) and the only *Cirsium* species listed was *C. vitatum*. This needs to be checked out. Other plants in bloom included the swamp lily (*Crinum americanum*), pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*), glades morning glory (*Ipomoea sagittata*), a species of white-topped sedge, another possible species of *Crotalaria* (more showy than the one seen earlier), duck potato and southern cat-tail. Spatterdock (*Nuphar luteum*) was in bloom along the channels behind the Miccosukee Restaurant. These id's are all based on Alden et. al. (1998), and Bell & Taylor (1982). There was also an upright yellow flower at Shark Valley that seemed very distinct but none of my references seemed to show it. I photographed a fern while at Fakahatchee but, as yet, have not id'd it. I seem also to finally be able to recognizing the pond apple (*Annono glabra*) as confirmed by the guide.

We saw (and photographed) an apparent southern water snake (Alden et.al. ,1998) at Fakahatchee and saw numerous turtles and gators along our drive through the Big Cypress area and at Shark Valley. I added seven new trip marks. Purple gallinules were abundant; in fact, too abundant. We saw them along the shoreline behind the Miccosukee restaurant and at several locations within Shark Valley. Gone is the mystique of this small secretive bird lurking almost invisibly among the emergent vegetation. It has been replaced with a picture of this small bird fighting among the grackles and crows for bits of food that foolish tourists throw from their lunch tables. I liked the former vision better.

2/11/07

I walked at Rotary Park this morning. There was the usual bunch of wading birds with a white pelican included for a change. I took lots of pictures of the egrets but none of them are very good. I also photographed a few plants to assist with later id's. One of these was a fern growing epiphytically from the stalk of a palm tree. It was likely *Phlebodium aureum*, (goldfoot fern) according to Nelson (2000). This brings back the trip to the Six Mile Cypress Slough (see notes for 1/29/07) – I wonder if this was the fern with the “golden boots” described by the guides on this walk.

Later, Ann and I took a ride to the Hickey's Creek Mitigation Park and hiked at least 4-5 miles. The targets for the trip were the Florida scrub jay and the gopher tortoise. We weren't able to find either of these but I did find and photograph several of what had to be the burrows of the tortoise. In spite of not finding the scrub jay, we were able to add five trip marks on this trip. This included the great horned owl and several of the woodpeckers marked for this date.

Several interesting plants were seen at Hickey Creek. One of them could have been the hat pins (*Eriocaulon compressum*) shown in Bell & Taylor (1982). The plant consisted of a whorl of small grass-like leaves at the base with numerous flower heads, each resembling (appropriately enough) hat pins. As well as this species, two other species of *Eriocaulon* are listed in the AFP for Lee County. Also, two spe-



cies of *Lachnocaulon* are listed. Bell & Taylor consider this genus very similar to the hat pins. I also saw a plant that reminded me very much of a *Coreopsis* sp, but it was very different from the species shown in Bell & Taylor (1982). Two species of *Coreopsis* (not those shown in Bell & Taylor (1982)) are listed in the Lee County AFP.

I photographed a small white-flowered plant growing in the open areas along the paths. It had a small flower with 5 petals. The leaves had five palmately arranged lobes. The plant was thorny and reminded me of the general gestalt of a horse nettle. A vine with small, hibiscus-like flowers and 3-lobed leaves was also photographed. This most closely resembled the Caesar weed (*Urena lobata*) of Bell & Taylor (1982). I also saw and photographed another vine with pinnately arranged leaflets and fruits with bright red berries burst from it. I have been seeing this vine in other areas as well.

On the way home from Hickey Creek we saw some cattle egrets actually living up to their name. They were out in fields among the cattle.

While checking the various references being used for plant id, I added several of the other plants that I have been seeing at various places.

2/12/07

On the way to Beatnik's this morning I saw the owls sitting on their perch. It is the first time I've seen them on the perch and it may have to do with the fact that it's raining this morning although, when we passed them later in the day while it was raining more heavily, they were not on the perch. There are three burrows in the area and, apparently, all three belong to the same pair of owls. The other day, when Ann and I were showing the owls to Matt & Nicole, one of the owls flew from one of the burrows to another. I'm sure that if another owl owned that hole, it would have reacted. Perhaps the holes are even connected under ground.

I did a little internet research over the last few days concerning the white-bracted sedge that I have been seeing at several locations. Two are listed in Plants of Everglades National Park (Avery and Loope.,1983) but these are listed with the genus name *Rhynchospora* (*Rhynchospora colorata* and *Rhynchospora floridensis*). Another is listed in addition to those two in Bell & Taylor (1982) (*Dichromena latifolia*). *Rhynchospora colorata* and *R. latifolia* are listed on the AFP for Lee County. It looks most like *R. colorata* by the atlas.

I seem to be seeing several species of possible *Crotalaria*. The one seen at the Rotary park appears most like



C. avonensis but the range map on the AFP shows the range of this species to be more northern.

I picked up a brochure about mangroves and decided to add them to the plant list since I have been seeing the three common forms of them.

2/13/07

It was a nice clear morning and one of the owls was on the perch. The other was sitting on the ground at the other hole – so much for my rain theory. I saw some of the apparent feral Muscovy ducks fly near the condo this morning. They seem to be pretty abundant in the area; we see them often.

2/14/07

Ann and I went to the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary yesterday (2/13/07). We saw an otter and a grey squirrel. We also saw anoles, several turtles and both adult and young alligators. The anoles might have been brown anoles because they seemed to have a brown stripe down their back. The turtles that I photographed seem to be common cooters.

I saw what I believe I had id'd in the past as a royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*). Fertile fronds were seen on these ferns and I think this is what I was seeing and photographed on 2/9/07 at Fakahatchee. Several butterflies were also seen. I have not been working very hard on their id but these could have included the ruddy daggerwing and the large orange sulphur according to photos in Alden et al (1998). Several trip marks including the black and white warbler and the yellow-throated warbler as well as the barred owl.

Plants recognized included the alligator flag (*Thalia geniculata*) which was not in bloom but was to the plant list for the trip. Plants in bloom included *Coreopsis* sp., *Sagittaria* sp., climbing aster (*Symphotricum carolinianum*), pickerel weed (*Pontederia cordata*) and, possibly, lizard's tail (*Saururus cernuus*), although this species is not shown for Lee County in the AFP. I also saw and photographed what appears to be golden club (*Orontium aquaticum*) according to Alden (1998).

Today, I went to Rotary Park this morning and then I dropped Ann at the beach on Sanibel while I visited the Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge. While at the Rotary Park I saw a raccoon and a fairly large snapping turtle. I also noticed the "gold feet" of the fern I photographed at Rotary Park on 2/11/07. At Ding Darling, I photographed what seems to be a species of goldenrod. It could have been the *Solidago stricta* of Bell & Taylor (1982) but the season of blooming info isn't right.

This day had the highest single day bird count thus far (52) with several trip marks. The trip marks included a reddish egret. I have seen this species once before but it was a white phase bird recognized mostly by its behavior. This was an adult bird in full plumage. Interestingly (or not) both sightings were at the Ding Darling Refuge. A couple of shorebirds were also added to the list including dunlins, and Wilson's plovers. At first I thought the dunlins were western sandpipers but a park guide corrected me. He pointed out that these birds had the longer, decurved bill which was readily seen. Also, these were bigger than the sandpipers.

2/15/07

I spent some time checking the AFP for goldenrods this morning. The one I saw yesterday could have been *Solidago sempervirens* but more study would be needed to confirm this. I am somewhat confused by the fact that a goldenrod would be in bloom so early – back in Wisconsin all of the goldenrods are fall bloomers.

2/16/07

We spent last night at Alex's place in Naples and headed out to the Briggs Nature Center on Shell Island road.



The nature center is no longer there (as was true last year) but the half mile boardwalk is still open to the public. I was hoping to see a Florida scrub jay along the road but had no luck. I did see a shrike, though, and had seen one earlier in the day near Alex's place. Some of the ferns along the Briggs walk looked like possible coast leather fern (*Acrostichum aureum*). Their terminal leaflets were much further spaced than those of the plant earlier id'd as the giant leather fern. This distinction is based on the descriptions and pictures in Nelson (2000). This reference was also used to id a smaller fern, the swamp fern (*Blechnum serrulatum*). Fertile fronds with the apparent characteristic spore structures were seen.

We drove out to Marco Island on Collier Road and back by way of Hy93 though the Collier Seminole State Park. As we were returning to East Naples along the Tamiami Trail we passed through the Big Cypress Basin and added a snail kite to the trip list.

Back in the Naples Area we visited the Rookery Bay Estuary Education Center. We toured the exhibits and attended a presentation about manatees.

2/17/07

I have been seeing many bromeliad species while in southwest Florida. Corkscrew, of course, comes to mind especially but even places like 4 mile cove and Rotary Park have several species. One of the most obvious is the apparent Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) which is found mostly hanging from oaks. Wunderland (2003) shows 12 species for the genus *Tillandsia* and ten of these are listed for Lee County in the AFP. Judging by pictures in Bell & Taylor (1982) one of the species I might be seeing is the wild pine (*T. setacea*) which is also shown in Alden (1998).

This was the day of the Cape Coral Burrowing Owl Festival at the Rotary Park. Ann and I went there close to its opening at 10:00AM. After looking at the exhibits, we attended a talk by Tom Allen on Southwest Florida's Native Owls. After Ann left I went to another talk, Burrowing Owls: As I See Them by Dan Tudor. Tudor's photography was great although he was a bit overbearing in his presentation. An exhibit of TLC for Wildlife had live specimens of all of the other Florida owls (barn, barred, great-horned, & screech). I also walked the usual path at Rotary Park hoping to see a gopher tortoise but I had no luck. I'm not sure there are such things as gopher tortoises.

2/26/07

There haven't been many notes to compile lately. Ann and I have had lots of company including the Mudlaff's, Foti's and Helen and Lisa so I simply have not gone to many places to see stuff. Today, we went to the Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management area and did see quite a bit. A small snake, probably an eastern ribbon snake was seen along the road of the area and several turtles were seen along with several alligators. We went there because the park is supposed to have several clusters of red-cockaded woodpeckers. We never saw any of these but we did see quite a few birds and added a limpkin to the trip list.



I saw several plants including co-reopsis, blue-eyed grass, spadder-dock and, possibly, black-eyed Susan in bloom. Apparently the thistle that I saw in bloom in the everglades was also in bloom here. It could be the *Cirsium horridulum* of Wunderlin & Hansen (2003). This is consistent with the photos in Alden et al (1998) and is based largely on the lack of wings on the stem and the bracts which subtend the flower head.

It occurs to me that I have been seeing Lantana (*Lantana sp.*) in bloom in many places of southwest Florida. I add-

2/28/07

Yesterday, Ann and I took a ride to see a wildlife area in Cape Coral and I got a close look at a tree that I have been seeing along the gulf in several areas. According to the AFP, it seems to be an Australian-pine of the family, Casuarinaceae and to be *Casuarina equisetifolia*. According to the literature, this is an important invasive plant in the area.

We went to the Six Mile Cypress Slough again today. We arrived at mid-day so the bird activity was minimal. The temperature was high, though, and the anoles were abundant and active. We thought that we were seeing several different species of lizards but my references were of little help in distinguishing among them. There were also quite a few turtles around and among them was a turtle suggesting a common mud or a common musk turtle.

I also saw a blooming plant that reminded me of an *Ageratum*. The AFP for Lee County suggests *Ageratum houstonianum*. This species was added to the plant list for the trip.

3/1/07

I spent some time this morning looking at the web site, [Florida and Georgia Snake and Lizard Photos](#), hoping to find some of the lizards we saw yesterday at the Six Mile Cypress Slough. Ann had noticed a very rufous-red head on one of them and they seemed too variable to all be the same. Red dewlaps were clearly flashed by some of the critters that we saw. One brown specimen that we saw had definite rounded ridges on its back and was a light tan or brown in color. It appears to me at this time, though, that nothing that I see on the web site clearly id's any of them -- they could all have been variations of the brown anole for all I can tell. References cited on the web site suggest a possible 11 species of anoles in Florida so my id is very tentative. I do remember, though, seeing what I thought were green anoles at Corkscrew in previous years.

We visited Jeremy and Carla Fuchs this morning and Jeremy and I talked fish for a while. He confirmed that I have been seeing Oscars in some of the fresh water ponds. I remember seeing them at Six Mile Cypress Slough as well as in the everglades. While at Jeremy's, I noticed a likely species of dayflower growing in the lawn. The AFP for Lee County shows four species of *Commelina*.

This afternoon we went to Bunche beach. Ann got a little sun time while I looked around for some nature stuff. Fiddler crabs and anoles were abundant. Some of the fiddler crabs had distinct purple markings on their dorsal surfaces. Several interesting plants were tentatively id'd. A species of *Erigeron* was tentatively id'd as the southern fleabane (*Erigeron quercifolius*). It was very hairy, had a whorl of basal leaves and very much reduced cauline leaves. The rays were pinkish with a yellow disc. I also saw probable cowpea (*Vigna luteola*) growing along the beach. These plants were herbaceous vines with flowering stalks coming from the axils of three-parted compound leaves. The middle leaflet had distinct petioles while the other two were relatively sessile. Pepperweed (*Lepidium virginicum*) was found growing along the road and, possibly, camphor weed (*Pluchea odorata*) was found growing among the mangroves. Probable bull rushes were also seen growing on the beach but none of my references seem to show these.

3/2/07

Nothing of interest was worth noting as far as birds at Rotary Park this morning. It was interesting to note, though, that the cabbage palm seems to be providing a nice habitat for several epiphytic plants. In addition to the goldfoot described earlier in these notes, a possible shoestring fern (*Vittaria lineata*) was seen on a palm near the observation tower. There were also quite a variety of lichens growing on the broken leaf petioles.

I think I also saw one of the tasselflowers as described by Bell & Taylor (1982). This reference describes three species of this genus (*Emilia*) but only two of them are listed in the AFP for Lee County. Wunderlin & Hansen (2003) consider two of these species (*E. sonchifolia* and *C. javanica*) as synonymous. I must check to see how far the flowers extend beyond the involucre to distinguish between the two remaining species (*E. fosbergii* and *E. sonchifolia*).

3/4/07

The photos for the AFP shows a distinct difference in flower color for *Emilia fosbergii* (being quite red) and *E. sonchifolia* (more lavender, in color). According to this character alone, the plant I saw at Rotary Park the other morning (3/2/07) was definitely *E. fosbergii*. I don't know how reliable this is, though, flower color being a variable character. I added poison ivy to the plant list. I clearly recall seeing this at Corkscrew. Discussions of the plant with Tony Saunders at the wedding last night reminded me to include it.

After I left Beatnik's Café I drove to the Four Mile Cove for another chance at the clapper rails. The place was

really dead – little bird activity at all. I did see a red-shouldered hawk and a couple of mourning doves but that was about it. Later, Ann and I went to the Hickey Creek Mitigation Area for one more attempt at either gopher turtles or Florida scrub Jays – negative for both. We did see a black racer snake and a gator, though, as well as a typical water turtle (cooter?). Among the birds seen were a limpkin and a pileated woodpecker which was a trip mark.

Among the plants we saw yellow star grass (*Hypoxis curtissii*), Virginia creeper and many oak seedlings. I don't know what oak species it was. I also saw a probable species of raspberry. The AFP for Lee shows only one species of Rubus, *Rubus trivialis*, for Lee County. One woody shrub was seen to have large, white, pendent flowers. There were three distinct petals and three sepals. I still need to id this shrub.

3/6/07

Ann and I left Cape Coral yesterday morning and spent the night with the Kaczmarek's. This evening we are in Paducah, expecting to be home tomorrow. We seem to be passing the 2007 spring season as we travel north. In southern Georgia, I saw red maples flowering or, perhaps, even leafing out along the highways. As we proceeded north, the leafing out of the shrub layer was evident but seemed to disappear as we approached northern Georgia. I also thought I saw a redbud in bloom but I never saw any more as we proceeded north. Highway 24 between Chattanooga and Nashville is much more interesting going south than going north. I remember that in previous years I saw many redbuds in bloom along the south route but that may have been when we traveled to Key West in April for Jen and Tony's wedding. Tonight, in Paducah, chorus frogs are singing loudly – hopefully that sound will catch up to us in Wisconsin soon.



