

1/22/25

We left Waukesha for our 16th. trip to Florida, mostly to the Port Of The Islands, at 7:30AM on 1\15 \25. We got to Paducah about 4:45P.M. And, after a late breakfast, continued on our way. It was a cold, but sunny day; a nice day for driving. Little wildlife was noted other than a few hawks, probably red-tailed, and black vultures. We overnighted in Paducah, KY.

The next day (1/16.25) we drove to Matt and & Nicole's house in Murfreesboro. On 1/17/25 Matt and I went to see the release of trout by the Tennessee fish and wildlife department into the west fork of the Stones River, which passes through Barfield Crescent Park. It was a beautiful day with temperatures in the 50's. We arrived after the release and quite a few fisherfolks were trying to recapture the fish that had been released, several of them quite successfully. I saw a robin, both vultures and a red-tailed hawk. I would have liked to save the hawk mark for Florida but it doesn't work that way..

We left Matt & Nicole's on the 18th. There was drizzle and light rain most of the ride to Tifton where we overnighted. On 1/19/25 we pulled into the Florida Welcome Center where I heard my first Florida bird for 2025, a Eurasian-collared dove. I also saw several boat-tailed grackles and was especially glad to see several American robins in the lawns. This is a bird that I see only occasionally in Florida and a very welcome bird to my 2025 list. Other birds seen along the way included the great blue heron, both vultures, a belted kingfisher, and a roseate spoonbill flying overhead. As we continued to the condo we got warnings of flooding possibilities to the south. Sure enough, rains hit us soon afterwards. The downpours were so heavy that I could only see the white dashes marking the edge of my lane. It got so heavy that I decided to get off of the expressway until things quieted down. . Eventually we got back on Hy.75, endured more, somewhat lesser, rains and got to the condo about 1&1/2 hours later than we had expected.

With a 90% chance of rain predicted, I headed out to the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk the next morning to satisfy my "Fakahabit". I was a bit disappointed that the new boardwalk still did not connect to the original section but things that I had read suggested that that would be the case. From the covered deck, I saw a red-shouldered hawk perched on a dead tree across the open prairie. I wondered if it was a resident to the area, since I remembered seeing one in the same area several times last year. I was really eager to find a least bittern which I had been told could be found there. As I walked the boardwalk, I met woman, a local birder, who said she had heard a least bittern as she entered the area this morning. She also reported hearing a sora as well. No such luck for me.



Unfortunately, this was one of those few times when the weatherman was right. The rain started when I was far from the shelter. I got a bit wet but not soaked. I watched and listened for birds for a while but only added the palm warbler that was sharing the shelter with me. Of course, the rain stopped shortly after I started back to the condo. My total bird count for the morning was a mere dozen. I blame the rain!

That afternoon Ann and I drove into Everglades City for dinner. Many snowy egrets were seen in the channels along the Tamiami Trail and another spoonbill was seen in one of the ponds. My first brown pelican for the year was seen in flight during dinner at the Island Café. Before returning to the condo, we took a brief detour along Union Road where we saw mourning doves as well as common ground doves.

The next day (1/22/25), having learned to trust the weatherman, I decided to scrap my plans to visit the TenK Marsh Trail. There was a 95% probability of rain at about 8A.M.. It was windy and the temperature was 45 degrees. . Ann and I decided to go out for breakfast. As we left the Port of the Islands, the rain began and it lasted for several hours. Rain was not predicted for 1/23/25. This time the predictions were wrong, It rained.

I continued on to the TenK Marsh Trail where I birded in the light rain for about an hour. The water levels were pretty high; both sides of the trail were flooded. I only saw 14 bird species and never took the lens cap off of my camera. Then, I decided to go back to the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk and see what I could find as I sat under the shelter. I played the song of the least bittern (if you can call it a song) from the Sibley app, hoping to get a response from the bird reported to me yesterday—no luck. I recorded 7 birds species as I sat there, but only the belted kingfisher was an addition to what I had seen earlier at TenK. I blame the rain!

2/3/24

Friday morning (1/24/25) was yet another drizzly morning. But, I headed out to the Turner River / Birdon Loop regardless. The herons and egrets were especially abundant as I drove along the loop, especially along the Turner River and Wagonwheel roads. Great blue herons, tri-colored herons, little blue herons, black-crowned night herons, green herons, great egrets and snowy egrets were all seen. Both mature and immature birds were present and some of the immature little blue herons were beginning to display blue patches. I was especially happy to see a purple gallinule in the



water along Upper Wagonwheel Road, only the second ever seen on the loop. A northern harrier was seen briefly flying along the prairies adjacent to Birdon Road, where I also saw my first limpkin for the year. I chased it down the road for a bit so I could finally get an action shot instead of a boring photo of a bird sitting in a tree. As I was driving along Upper Wagonwheel Road I saw a group of 10 or 12 birds sitting in a rough line across the road. As I approached, I determined that they were tree swallows. Later, on Birdon Road, I saw another lone swallow also sitting along the road. Shortly

after that, a flock of 20-30 tree swallows flew overhead. In spite of the weather, it was a pretty good day for me at this location, a total of 29 bird species was seen along the loop and the cattle egret was added at the Big Cypress Swamp welcoming Center.

I wasn't paying a lot of attention to the plants along the way but it was hard not to notice an abundance of string lilies (*Crinum americanum*) in bloom. Unfortunately, no alligator lilies were seen. I have seen them along this route before, though. As a matter of fact, I have yet to see an actual alligator on this trip.

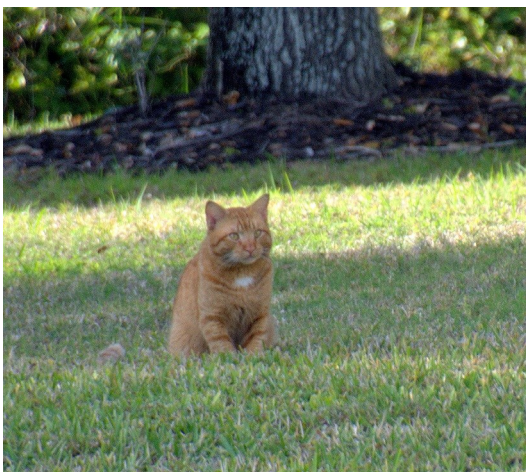
It was 39 degrees at prime birding time on 1/25/25. Needless to say, I didn't go out. The next day was a Sunday and Ann and I took our usual Sunday tour consisting of breakfast and a bit of shopping. Monday (1/27/25) the Florida weather finally arrived. I celebrated with the trip to Eagle Lakes Community Park. I managed to walk around both the middle and the west lakes, something I haven't done for quite a while. I thought my count of 39 bird species was reasonable, if not great until I saw the ebird checklist for Chris Haddon. He reported 85 species for the morning; truly a humbling experience for me.

I actually met Chris on the walk and asked him if he was seeing anything special. He didn't seem particularly excited but did mention several birds which would be nice target species for me. Chris mentioned seeing black-bellied whistling ducks and his list included hooded mergansers. I distinctly remember getting to a shaded area where I was pretty sure I was seeing the whistling ducks. I also saw two ducks and distinctly remember thinking they might be mergansers. The lighting was bad and they were at a distance so I didn't mark them, and I won't retrospectively.

I saw my first alligator for the year in the west-most of the Eagle Lakes. When I got home, I saw a huge alligator across the retention pond outside the condo.

On 1/28/25 I fought the early sunrise along Hy.41 to visit the Kirby-Storter Roadside Park only to be disappointed to find that the boardwalk, that has produced so many great experiences over the years, had been totally burned out, apparently by an out of control fire last October. Only 8 bird species were recorded in BD in the short segment that was left from the parking lot. One of these was an eastern kingbird which ebird questioned.

Seriously disappointed, I stopped at Burns Lake where I only recorded 2 bird species. A string lily (*Crinum americanum*) was seen as I drove to the camp area from Hy.41. Two other species (the false



aster (*Boltonia diffusa*) and water dropwort (*Tiedermannia filiformis*) were seen when I took a very short walk along the off-road trail. All of these were added to the plant list for the area. The water dropwort was very small compared to those seen at Shark Valley in previous years. I also saw the the white-flowered variety of pineland heliotrope (*Euploca polyphylla*) which was confirmed by [Seek](#).

On the way back to the condo, I made one more stop, the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk where I saw little out of the ordinary. Then, one more final stop at the east part of POI where I saw two eastern meadowlarks among a few other birds.

Later in the afternoon, Ann spotted a large cat across the retention pond. Poor photos suggested a large version of Bebop, perhaps in one of his later lives. After much hemming and hawing, we decided that it had to be a bobcat.

On 1/30/25 it was fog that I fought. An early trip to the Chokoloskee causeway did not produce any shorebirds, as I had hoped, but it did produce 11 species, among which were the yellow-crowned night heron and the reddish egret, both trip marks for 2025. I didn't see any oystercatchers off of the causeway bridge, but purple martins and a very photogenic American kestrel were seen in Everglades City. On the way back to the condo, I stopped at the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk and saw my first white pelicans of the year.



It was foggy again the next morning (1/31/25) as I drove past the fruit stand into the Picayune Strand. Several pools in the ditches along the road were loaded with concentrations of fish and that attracted hoards of egrets (mostly great—I only saw 1 snowy egret) and wood storks.

A stop at the Sable Palm trailhead was disappointing to both me and Merlin. Nothing! While I was there, a woman

showed me some photos of eagles that she had taken along the road a few days ago and suggested that a nest was probably in the area.

A short drive along the Triple G Loop did produce the first downy woodpecker and loggerhead shrike for the year. In all, only fourteen species were seen in the strand. I didn't do much better with plants. Tickseed (*Coryopsis leavenworthii*) was the only plant that I saw in bloom along the Triple G Loop and some Peruvian primrosewillow (*Ludwigia peruvian*) were also in bloom along Sabal Palm road. No eagles were seen as I left the park.

The first of February started out as another foggy morning. I went to the TenK marsh trail but few birds were seen; 27 were entered in the ebird app but not submitted. I didn't walk very far (to the first bench) or stay very long (a



little over 2 hours). The northern flicker was added as the 59th. Bird for the year.

While there, I met a fellow who told me that several interesting birds were being seen at Sugden park, including some terns, gulls and song birds. On our way back from our usual Sunday routine, Ann and I detoured into the park. It was late in the morning, not prime birding time. We only saw coot and a few other common birds.

2/9/25

I didn't have much time for birdwatching on 2/3/25 so I just took a short drive over to the east part of the Port of the Islands. Shortly into the area I was joined by 2 deer. Without the slightest doubt in my mind, I headed to where I had seen the eastern meadowlarks previously. I did not see them but I heard them distinctly. Merlin agreed, and also detected house wrens which I did not hear or record for the morning. Among the birds that I did see was another American kestrel that was not too camera shy. I only recorded 9 species in BD for the morning. While driving around the area I noticed that blue porterweed (*Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*) appeared to be getting established. Tickseed (*Coreopsis laevenworthii*) and Spanish needles (*Bidens alba*) were both abundant in the area.

Later in the day an American bald eagle flew over the retention ponds by the condo, the first one to be seen from the condo since 2011.

Matt and Nicole came to join us for a short visit on 2/3/25. Matt came with a purpose. He had been told of two good fishing spots where he might catch oscars and peacock bass. One of them was the C.R.E.W. Bird Rookery Swamp. Because of my leg problems in recent years, I had not been to that area in a while and was anxious to see it again. So, on the morning of 2/4/25, we headed out to the swamp. The ditch along Shady Hollow Blvd. W. leading to the swamp was loaded with long-legged waders and my checklist already had most of the herons and egrets before we even got to the parking lot. That, too, had much bird activity. The ponds near the parking lot were also alive with jumping fish. Matt went on ahead as I loitered behind, looking for birds and interesting plants.



When I caught up to Matt, I was happy to see that Eve, the large alligator that usually blocked the trail was not up yet. Matt fished. I birded and botanized. Although Matt did see oscars in the water, he could not coax any of them to his lures. I went a bit beyond where he was fishing, noticing how much the area had become overgrown since my last visit. I also noticed that the invasive climbing fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*) was getting established, at least in one location [photos 2025\_02\_04\_005-7]. I photographed some of the plants

in order to update the species list for that location in my Florida plants database [photos 2025\_02\_04\_002-11].

Birding was OK but not sensational. I only had 25 species for the morning and, unfortunately, no warblers. As I was leaving, a fellow that I met told me exactly where I could find an American bittern along the ditch from the boardwalk. Right on! It was exactly where he said it would be. Unfortunately, my camera battery expired just then. Being the quick thinker that I am, I never thought to use my iPhone for some sensational closeup photos of the bird.

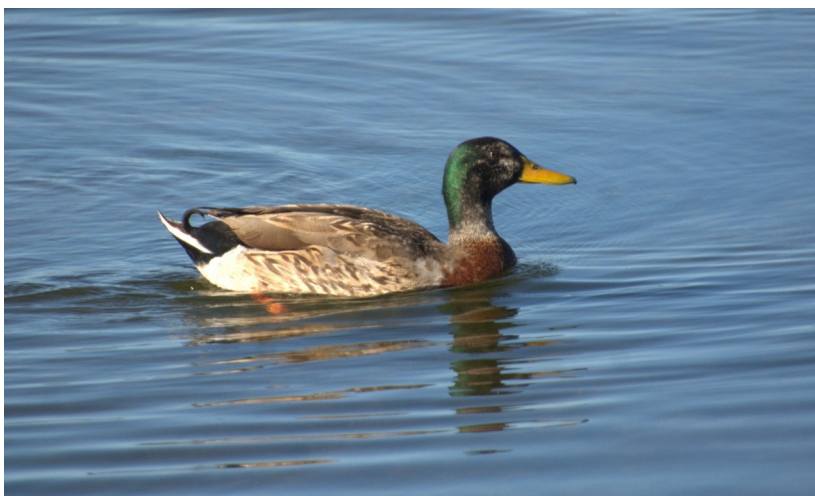
I had an appointment with Dr. Sharma on 2/5/25, so Matt went on his own to another fishing spot he had been told about while Nicole got in some pool time. On the way back from getting a shot in my eye, I saw “my” caracara in a tree just a bit north of the 6L’s Farm Road. Matt and Nicole left on 2/6/25. As they were preparing to leave, I saw a great crested flycatcher from Lanai.

Getting back to my routine, I went to Janes Scenic Drive on 2/7/25, Egrets were numerous along Hy.41. That is apparently where they roost this year. I was happy to find the gate open when I arrived at the park slightly before 8:00 O’clock. I drove slowly along the drive through the prairie areas and mostly at idle speed in the area of the cypress swamp, carefully watching the flooded areas along the road for some interesting photo opportunities. The area of what could be Tram 6 was obviously being cleared and I walked a short way along the path. Then I went on to Tram 7 and did likewise. Shortly along the way I found several specimens of an orchid which Seek identified as the centipede grass orchid (*Zeuxine stateumatica*) [photos 2025\_02\_07\_008-11]. I recalled having seen the orchid previously. Birding that morning produced just 19 species.

Ann and I went to the seafood festival on 2/8/25. On the way there, a huge flock of white pelicans seen over the car on Hy.41. That’s only the second group I’ve seen so far this year.

2/14/25

Even when shopping it’s good to keep an eye out for birds. While heading out for our usual routine on 2/9/25, we thought we saw caracara in trees just south of the 6L’s area. But wait, if indeed it was caracara, there were two of them. I’ve been seeing just one in that area for several years. Now I need to really watch that area. A bit later I saw house sparrows in the parking lot of Hooter’s when we stopped for breakfast. Later a pileated woodpecker flew over the car as I waited for Ann in the parking lot of the Baell’s Outlet. Not a bad morning considering that I wasn’t even birding. Unfortunately though, we haven’t seen the limpkins in the 6L’s area yet this year.



Sugden Regional Park was the destination on 2/10/25. Although I didn’t see most of the birds reported in recent eBird checklists, I did get some easy 2025 marks including rock dove, and ring-billed gull among others. I marked a probable Forster’s tern although I never have been comfortable distinguishing it from the common tern. I also marked the mallard [photos 2025\_02\_10\_001-4] although those I saw were likely hybrids. Twenty-one species were recorded in BD for the morning, bringing the 2025 total to 74.

I heard that Fred and Alyce Townsend had recently come to the POI. Expecting to possibly run into them, I went to the TenK Marsh Trail on 2/11/25. Clearly, the water had begun to draw down. As soon as I began my walk to the observation tower, I saw my first shorebirds for the year; killdeer and greater yellowlegs. The killdeer, usually seen running around the roads and vacant fields of POI, were perhaps trying to recover their reputation as shorebirds. I thought I also saw lesser yellowlegs later on my walk but they flew before I could confirm the identification.

I got to the trail shortly after sunrise and there were already several cars in the parking lot. They all seemed to belong to guys with huge lenses. My setup was almost embarrassing. One of the photographers told me that the egrets and ibis were roosting there at night and that when he got there before dawn the mangroves were full of white birds. He also called my attention to the water boiling with fish. He anticipated some great shots when they were discovered by the wading birds. All of the photographers were gone by 8:15 AM. I birded a while longer, getting a list of 25 birds for the morning. 76 and climbing!



When we went to the market on Marco Island on Wednesday, 2/12/25, we saw burrowing owls along the way. I had seen them previously, perhaps on the previous week's market trip, but I forgot to mark it in BD. I did so for this date. Later in the day, I went to Everglades City to listen to a presentation about the turtles of southwest Florida. The presentation was given by an intern with the National Park Service. I left for the talk early enough to make a quick birding trip along the Chokoloskee Causeway. I didn't see much there except for a single-yellow crowned night heron. I photographed it as it appeared to probe the beach area for small crabs.

On Thursday, 2/13/25, I left for the TenK marsh trail at the crack of dawn. I wanted to see the large mass of egrets and



other wading birds that roosted in the area at night. I was too late. As I approached the observation tower, I could see a steady stream of birds leaving the area. They seemed to be mostly white egrets. There were plenty of birds remaining, though, and I had one of my best counts so far this year, second only to the January 27th count at Eagle Lakes Community Park. Of particular interest were at least 2, possibly 3, reddish egrets feeding along with a number of great egrets, snowy egrets and other long-leggers. I took a lot of photos, spilling onto a second memory card but few of them were particularly memorable. Several

photos of the reddish egrets fishing were acceptable but only after some cropping and a bit of editing. Especially neat was the sighting of a lone American avocet. It was in clear view but too distant for my camera-lens combination. I've only seen this bird in recent years and it seemed early for its arrival in Florida.

I was late again for the mass exodus of egrets on 2/14/25. The egrets, including the reddish, were again putting on a show of their various feeding strategies. A few photographers had scoped out the best areas for photographing the show so I contented myself with a few photographs of snowy egrets who were very competitive about their fishing spots. This time I saw 2 avocets but, again, they were too distant for my photo equipment. I didn't stay at TenK very long. After all, it was Valentine's day and I had a bit of shopping to do.



2/24/25

Shelly and Dan joined us on 2/14/25. Surprisingly, they decided to skip the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary this year. Instead, we went to Shark Valley on 2/16/25. We

took the tram ride and I noticed that many plants were in bloom along the way. Being on the tram, it was not easy to examine them close-up, but most of them were familiar to me. In terms of number of birds species, it was somewhat disappointing although we got really good looks (if not photographs) of a male anhinga on a nest and a great blue heron who had just caught a fish.



On 2/18/25 we drove out to Ave Maria to show Dan and Shelly the town. I had hoped to see caracara along the way, especially along Oil Well Road, but no such luck. All we saw were cormorants, anhinga, vultures and a few herons and egrets along the way. No records were kept. That evening, while sitting in the Lanai, we heard a Chuck-Wills-widow. According to BD, that is exactly 1 month earlier than I have ever recorded it, but then, I don't listen for it regularly. It did not register with Merlin. Neither did the black-crowned night heron that I thought I was hearing. If, indeed, it was a black-crowned night heron, it would be a new condo bird. I'll need to keep listening for it to get a confirmation. After Dan had a bout with food poisoning, possibly from Stan's fish tacos, Shelly and Dan left on 2/21/25.



I've been anxious to get back to TenK since the experiences of 2/13 and 2/14, so on 2/22/25 I headed to the marsh trail. With the days getting longer, I arrived at the path shortly after dawn. It was an unbelievable contrast. I recorded 21 species but the numbers were way down. There were few egrets (no snowys' or reddish) and, of the few that I saw, none of them presented good photo opps (feeding, fighting, etc.). I did add a shoveler to the trip list but that was about it for birds.

I walked to the second bench and, with little bird activity, naturally turned my attention to the plants. There was nothing particularly interesting among the herbs so, with Seek's help, I began to look at the shrubs and vines. Those that were identified are shown in the table below. A check of the Florida plant database indicated that most of them, some by other common names, were already in the database. Some had to be added for the TenK location. Two of the plants (Florida swampprivet and medicine vine) were not in the database and had to be added. Nelson (1996) seemed to support both identifications, the Florida swampprivet simply referred to as the Florida privet and the medicine vine as the doctor's vine. Both species are shown for Collier County by the AFP but of the two, only the swampprivet is found in TenK according to the IRC. The medicine vine is not listed, even by a synonym. I give Seek a lot of credit for these identifications. I've been trying to identify the medicine vine for several years, I think, even with Seek. I wonder if Seek's database is growing.

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>PHOTOS</u> <u>[2025_02_22_0-</u>
Brazilian pepper ( <i>Schirus terebinthifolia</i> )	21-22
Eastern poison ivy ( <i>Toxicodendron radicans</i> )	17-20
Florida swampprivet ( <i>Forestiera segregata</i> )	
Green buttonwood ( <i>Conocarpus erectus</i> )	
Hammock vipers-tail ( <i>Pentalinon luteum</i> )	
Laurel dodder ( <i>Cassytha filiformis</i> )	15-16
Medicine vine ( <i>Hippocratea volubilis</i> )	30-33
Myrsine ( <i>Myrsine cubana</i> )	34-35
Saltwater false willow ( <i>Baccharis angustifolia</i> )	28
Virginia Creeper ( <i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i> )	29
Wax myrtle ( <i>Myrica cerifera</i> )	25-27
White Indigoberry ( <i>Randia aculeata</i> )	12-14
Wild cowpea ( <i>Vigna luteola</i> )	23-24

My identification of the oaks along the TenK marsh trail is really confused. Prior to this hike, I had listed two oak species for the site, the sand live oak and the dwarf live oak. Seek again identified the sand live oak (*Quercus germinata*) on this trip.

Later that day, Ann and I went to see the orchid show at the Naples Botanical Gardens. The show was phenomenal [photos 2025\_02\_22\_036-53]. Luckily, we came back home without any new orchids to take back to Waukesha and kill.

Many of the residents at POI seem to have an appreciation of orchids. Quite a few of them have orchids planted in the trees around their condos. Most of the common areas have a variety of tropical and native plantings. Scarlet milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) is abundant outside our condo. It was planted there by one of the owners (Jim). He also planted a nice fern which he says is native to Florida. According to Seek, it is a species of musk fern (*Microsorium grossum*) which is not native to the state but is found in tropical areas of Australia and Oceania.

Although they are being reported, I have yet to see my first swallow-tailed kite for the year. I'm about a week behind my earliest recording of 2/18/2000. Where is Matt when I need him? We've not been seeing the limpkin along Hy.41 as we've seen in the past even though the long grass has been cut for some time. A couple of stops at 6L's have not produced any snail kites and with Kirby Storter down and the BCBB not completed, I'm beginning to expect only a few warblers on this year's list. And, yet to visit any of the beaches, I'm not too optimistic about shorebirds. My excuses being said, I'll just hope for the best.



3/1/25

Now that I've bemoaned not having seen a swallow-tailed kite yet this year, I saw one in Marco Island as Ann and I were returning from breakfast on 2/25/25.

I took a close look at the scarlet milkweeds (*Asclepias curassavica*) outside the condo on 2/25/25 and photographed them. I noticed that the flowers on one of the stalks were solid yellow; without the red of the others. Hammer (2014) indicates that some plants have all yellow flowers, but this stalk is part of a plant where the others produce the typical red and yellow flowers. I noticed that there are quite a few ants on the flowers and, what appears to be yellow aphids can be seen on a leaf below the yellow flowers. These could be oleander aphids (*Aphis nerii*) as described at BugGuide: <https://bugguide.net/node/view/6167>.



Since Shelly and Dan were not interested in going to the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, we waited until 2/26/25 to go there without them. We saw a total of 21 bird species but missed the buntings and warblers except the black and white and the northern parula. Ann finally saw her 1st (and 2nd) limpkins for the year. I photographed some of the plants that I saw, mainly to document their presence, but nothing was new to the location.



A drive to Clam Pass Park on 2/27/25 turned out to be a bust. No huge accumulations of gulls, terns and skimmers was to be found; only people. The only bird added to the trip list was a laughing gull, and I only saw 1 of them. It was among the 5 species seen while Ann sunned herself on the beach.

The morning of 2/28/25 started out pleasantly. As I was cleaning the morning dew from my car windows, I heard the familiar song of the brown thrasher. Then I saw the bird sitting on the power line along the road. This was a trip mark. Then I fought the morning sunrise on the way to the Turner River-Birdon Loop. I started, as usual, at the H.P. Williams boardwalk where a great blue heron and an immature black-crowned night heron were the first birds on the ebird checklist. The morning's list was to include a total of 34 species, 6 more than the earlier trip of 1/24/25. There were no new trip marks but I got a few decent bird photos.



Early into the drive I saw an obvious legume bush in bloom. Seek identified it immediately as the sweet Acacia (*Vachellia farnesiana*) and it was added to the plant database [photos 2025\_02\_28\_033-36]. The AFP showed it as a native plant, found in Collier County. Later, a bed of pitted stripeseed (*Piriqueta cistoides*) [photos 2025\_02\_28\_037-39] was found at the place where I had previously seen a common bittern years ago. No other plants new to the database were found but a short hike along the Concho Billie Trail added a few species to its location list. One of the additions was identified by Seek as the silverling (*Baccharis glomeruliflora*). The AFP lists 4 species of *Baccharis* for Collier County. Two of them have previously been identified along the TenK marsh trail. Needless to say, according to Seek, this was not one previously identified. According to the IRC, *Baccharis halimifolia* is the only *Baccharis* species found in the Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge. That being one previously identified, this plant will be considered to be of that species until or unless further work with this genus is done.

Seek also identified the common reed (*Phragmites australis*) growing along the edges of the wet areas of the Concho Billie tram. I've seen this at multiple location, such as the Janes Scenic Drive, in the past but never identified it to species. It was added to the

database. The Carolina water-hyssop (*Bacopa carolineata*) and the creeping primrose willow (*Ludwigia repens*) were also suggested, but confirmation of these awaits a later trip to the site.



Serenity Walk Park is a haven for woodpeckers. The multiple snags and open areas seems to encourage several species. Northern flicker, downy woodpecker, red-bellied woodpecker and the target species, the red-headed woodpecker were all seen on 3/1/25. I couldn't find the other target species, the brown-headed nuthatch and warblers but it was a pleasant, should I say serene, walk. The only warbler that I saw was the common yellowthroat but Merlin did register a yellow-rumped warbler, which I did not record, as well. Only a dozen species were recorded in BD, a quarter of them woodpeckers.

A couple of woody plants were added to the Serenity Walk Park location and one of the grasses, Thalia lovegrass (*Eragrostes atrovirens*) was added to the database, suggested by a Seek identification.

On the way back to the condo, I made a brief stop at 6L's. The area had dried out quite a bit and had been cut. No interesting birds or plants were seen.

3/9/25

Finally, another swallow-tailed kite was seen along Hy.41 as Ann and I returned from our usual Sunday shopping. The trip count is at 90 now; probably well below last year, but I am not comparing the counts at this time.

Although I rent just a building from Fred and Alyce Townsend, I never see them except out in the field. I ran into them again on 3/3/25 as I was leaving the Rookery Bay Briggs Boardwalk. At the time I saw them, I had recorded 15 bird species, two of them (the American kestrel and the eastern towhee) along Shell Island Road as I approached the boardwalk. Both vultures were added along the road after we parted.

Without a lot of bird activity, much of my attention was on the plants. While updating the database for that location, I added several plants to the database. Needlegrass rush (*Juncus roemerianus*) and Southern beaksedge (*Rhynchospora microcarpa*) were among those added. I seem to recall that these plants are very sensitive to salinity, the rush replacing the sedge as the salinity increases. I also added Myrtle oak (*Quercus myrtifolia*). All of these identifications were based on Seek. I wonder if I am relying too heavily on the application although the AFP does indicate that all three of these species are found in Collier County.



I then drove to the end of Shell Island Road, parked the car and hiked along the trail leading to the channel. The path leading to the water was lined with profuse growth of sea purslane (*Sesuvium portulacastrum*) and saltwort (*Batis maritima*), the latter being added to the database along with goatweed (*Capraria biflora*) and coma (*Sideroxylon celastrinum*). Of all these plants, only the goatweed was in bloom. Again, all of these plants are found in Collier County, according to the AFP.

As I was leaving the condo to go to the BCBB on 3/4/25, I ran into Fred and Alyce Townsend in the Parking lot. They, too, were going to the boardwalk so we met there and birded together. We did not see much and I never took the lens cap off of the camera. I recorded 15 bird species, including a pine warbler. Fred's count of 14 did not include the pine warbler. I added winterberry ( ) to the location field for the boardwalk.

I went back to Eagle Lakes Community Park on 3/5/25. What a difference since I was last there. The park had dried up considerably. Most of the open water areas were much reduced. I only managed 30 species for BD, none of them new



to the trip list. I ran into Chris Hadden again. He was hoping to see the bronzed cowbird which he said was late this year. He only recorded 13 species but I don't think he walked around the lakes. I only walked around the middle lake. As I rounded the last bend I noticed a lot of southern amaranth (*Amaranthus australis*) growing in the wet soils.

BTW: On my way to Eagle Lakes, I saw one of the caracaras in the area of 6L's. I seen them in that area on several recent occa-

sions.

Thursday, 3/6/25 began as a cool and gusty morning. Certain that Ann's water aerobics would be cancelled, we breakfasted in Everglades City and drove the Chokoloskee causeway and checked for possible shorebirds. The tide was pretty high and the shoreline was too rough; not a bird to be seen. We then drove to the Big Cypress Swamp welcoming center where we saw a couple of manatees and a black and white warbler. I also added tievine (*Ipomoea cordatotriloba*) to the database.



On the way back, a swallow-tailed kite flew over the car. Not many of them have been seen yet this year.

The last 2 days have had pretty weak birding numbers; only 10 birds were recorded for each morning. In defense, I wasn't concentrating on birds, I was into the plants. After a slow drive along Janes Scenic drive on March 7th, I made a brief stop at Gate 2 to check on the condition of the hand fern (*Cheiroglossa palmata*). Its growth didn't seem as luxurious as in previous years but it was beginning to develop its spore producing structures [photos 2025\_03\_07\_006-9]. Then I noticed a sedge which Seek identified as the fragrant beaksedge (*Rhynchospora odorata*) [photo 2025\_03\_07\_010-13]. Although identification of a sedge by sight is highly questionable for me, both the AFP and IRC suggest its possible presence at this location. I added it to the plant database and collected a sample of the flower head from the sedge before I left the tram. Seek also suggested the silverling (*Baccharis glomeruliflora*) which I again includ-

ed as *Baccharis halimifolia* as I had previously.

Then I continued to Gate 7. After a short walk, I noticed a ground orchid next to the path [photos 2025\_03\_07\_017-24].



Seek identified it as the hairy shadow witch (*Ponthieva racemosa*). According to Brown (2005) this orchid is common throughout the state. The IRC expects its presence in the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park and the AFP is in agreement. It is included in the [Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park Plants list](#) given to me by Mike Owens years ago and the [Vascular Plant List of Fakahatchee Strand State Park](#) (Austin (undated)). I added it to my plant database.

The fragrant beaksedge was found again along this tram as well as the false hop sedge (*Carex lupuliformis*) which I recognized immediately [photos 2025\_03\_07\_025-27]. I had seen this plant along the BCBB before as well as along Tram 7. As I continued I found another sedge [photos 2025\_03\_07\_028-30] between posts 7 and 8. Seek id'd it as the green and white sedge (*Carex longii*). Although I had never seen it before, it was included in the two previously mentioned lists for the park. I added it to the database. I walked as far as post 10, updating the location field for Gate 7 before returning to the car.

On 3/8/25, I drove along Sabal Palm Drive to the parking lot of the Sabal Palm Trailhead. I sat there for a

while, hoping to hear the calls of Bob White Quail. That not happening, I decided to hike the trail, listening for the birds. I never heard the quail but I got totally immersed with the plants and hiked further than I had planned. I saw many of the plants seen previously at this location but one of them caused me to pause. Seek identified it as the early whitetop fleabane (*Erigeron vernus*). It certainly had the appearance of a fleabane and Hammer (2014) describes the plant. The range map on the AFP shows it for the county and its photos are pretty close to mine. In my database, I alluded to a possible other *Erigeron* species along this trail but I'm quite sure that what a recorded previously (2012 & 2015) actually describe the false aster or doll's eyes (*Boltonia diffusa*). I converted the record to *E. vernus*. And moved its previous entrees to the false aster records.



Seek also recognized two other species along the trail, false fennel (*Eupatorium leptophyllum*) and Baldwin's eryngia (*Eryngium baldwinii*). Both of these would be new to my plant database but I will await further study before adding them.



3/17/25

It was time for the birds again on 3/10/25. I went to TenK hoping to see shorebirds. As I approached the observation tower, I saw in the neighborhood of 50 dowitchers, probing in the mud. I listed them as long-billed, basically because they were in fresh water which, I know is not a definitive character. They weren't vocalizing much but Merlin recorded them as long-billed as well. Then I ran into Chris Madden. He also said that they were long-billed. They were long-billed! I left Chris, and a few other birders, and continued down the trail. There were a few American avocets, but no black-necked stilts. As I approached the second bench, I could hear a lot of wading birds and could see an occasional great white egret fly over the trail. It was a feeding frenzy! Apparently the fishing was so great that the birds risked my coming close rather than give up the best fishing opportunity of the season. Great egrets, snowy egrets, white ibis, American white pelicans, roseate spoonbills, and a few great blue herons, little blue herons, tricolored

herons and even an occasional double-crested cormorant were all there. Photography opportunities were difficult because of the shrubbery along the shore, but I took a lot of photos [photos 1025\_03\_10\_002-59]. Eventually other birders joined in and the limited vantage locations for taking good pictures made it even more difficult. So I left with a species count of 31, including the northern shovelers that I saw on the way back to the car, for the morning, a truly great morning.

“Twenty-four little hours” does, indeed, make a difference. When I went back to the TenK marsh trail on 2/11/25, all the birds (well, most of them) were gone. Although I did get a higher species count (34) than I had on the previous day (31), the number of birds was drastically reduced; my hopes of getting additional photos thwarted. So I did what anyone else interested in B&B would do, I looked at the plants. I confirmed my ability to identify the Florida swamp privet (*Feoestiera segregate*) [photos 2025\_03\_11\_001-2] and lime prickly ash (*Zanthoxylum fagara*) as well as some of the other shrubs along the trail. The avocets and the dowitchers were too far away for decent photos but I took a few to document their presence.

On 2/12/25 I revisited the BCBB. The area had seriously dried-up since my last visit. No open water (just dried mud) was found along the boardwalk. I only recorded 14 bird species for the morning. I was hoping to see some of the warblers along the way, but there were none that I hadn't seen before. I did add a house wren to the trip list, 94 species seen thus far. The house wren had been reported on some of the ebird checklists recently and Merlin heard it on some of my previous walks, but I hadn't actually seen or heard one until now.

I updated the plant species list for this location by adding a few shrubs and, with Seek's help, a couple of the grasses (sand cordgrass (*Sporobolus bakeri*) and maritime bluestem (*Andropogon tenuispathus*). The cordgrass was added to the database. A bluegrass (*Andropogon glomeratus*) had the previously identified on Tigertail Beach on 3/20.16 based on photos in Taylor (2013). According to the AFP, these two species are synonymous within a confusing taxonomy. I've only seen this grass in a dried up condition [photo 2025\_03\_12\_017]; never in active growth.

I haven't been out lately; getting the car serviced, buying a new car, shell show, etc., but I saw a robin flying over Hy.41 this morning (3/14/25). It's not the first I've seen on this trip but it's the first I've seen in the POI area for several years. I remember seeing them fly out of the Fakahatchee Strand by the hundreds years ago.



I went to Sugden Regional Park on 3/15/25. It was a pretty good morning: Two new trip marks (spotted sandpiper and royal tern) were among the 25 bird species that I saw. I got a kick out of watching the ugly duckling (Ann's name for the Muscovy) feed. They paddled around in shallow water and stirred up the bottom with their feet [photos 2025\_03\_25\_010-18]. Then they dipped for whatever they found. I couldn't tell what they found; the mud hiding it.

In some areas of the water, there was an aquatic plant in bloom, its flower stalks projecting above the water level [photos 2025\_03\_25\_038-40]. It appeared to me to be one of the Potamogeton's and Seek recognized it from the photos as *P. illinoensis*. According to the AFP, Collier County has 13 species of Potamogeton, several of which have multiple varieties and/or forms. *P. illinoensis* is native to Collier County and is found in two forms.. I added this to the species list although the taxonomy of this species is confusing to say the

least.



I reached 98 trip marks on the morning of 3/17/25 with the addition of the black-necked stilt and the lesser yellowlegs. I birded the TenK Marsh Trail. Water levels have been dropping quite a bit and the birds seem to be congregating right before the observation tower and along the channel from the parking area. My count of 28 species included mostly of the wading birds, but few songbirds. Roseate spoonbills were seen but no American white pelicans. As always, my identification of the yellowlegs is somewhat tentative.

3/29/25

On 3/18/25 Ann and I drove to Alva FL to what was formerly the White's residence. We checked the feeders there, mostly for buntings and saw many indigo buntings and several female painted buntings. Unfortunately, no male painted buntings came to the feeders while we were there. Also, we didn't see any of the white-winged doves which had been common there in past years.

We then drove on to Harns Marsh. I walked to the second bend. The area had become much overgrown with tall vegetation since I had been there. There was little open water along the area that I walked. I recorded 19 bird species including several gray-headed (purple) swampheens; no ducks other than blue-winged teal and no snail kites. It was a somewhat disappointing morning, although I did add 3 trip marks.

I drove to the Picayune Strand on 3/21/25. In the morning sun, the dust coating the trees along the way looked like morning dew. I stopped at the Sabal Palm Trailhead and walked the loop 1, partially in reverse of my usual path. With [Seek](#)'s help I listed many of the plants that I saw along the way. Later, back at the condo, some of them were added to the list for that location. Seek recognized two species of bracken; the common bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and the southern bracken (*P. caudatum*). According to Hanson () only 1 species with several subspecies exists in the state. Gilson () also describes only 1 species, as does the AFP. According to the IRC, two species are found in the Picayune Strand State Forest (*P. caudatum* and *P. pseudocaudatum*). I'm not qualified to enter the debate; they're all *P. aquilinum* to me.

Three of the plants that [Seek](#) identified; Florida bully (*Sideroxylon reclinatum*, Baldwin's eryngio (*Eryngium baldwinii*) and pink red-stem (*Ammania latifolia*) await further observations before being entered into the database. I was hoping to see or hear Bob White quail as I walked along—no such luck.

Back to Eagle Lakes on 3/22/25. I only saw 18 bird species but only went around the center lake. I was hoping to see cowbirds, especially bronzed cowbirds, but any would do. No such luck. [Seek](#) identified possum grape (*Cissus verticillata*). The AFP does show this plant for Collier County. Eagle Lakes is not included as a conservation area for the IRC.

We arrived in Homestead on 3/23/25. We located our Air B&B, which was right in the middle of the Redland agricultural community, and then drove right to [Robert Is Here](#). After a couple of shakes we came back to the rental and settled in for the afternoon and evening.

I walked around the yard on the first morning (3/24/25) and identified some of the "weeds". In addition to the familiar white beggarticks (*Bidens alba*), Virginia pepperweed (*Lepidium virginicum*), coatbuttons (*Tridax procumbens*) and dwarf plantain (*Plantago virginica*), I found a plant new to my Florida species list, the Santa Maria feverfew (*Parthenium hysterophorus*).

After a breakfast at the Market Café we drove to the Everglades National Park. We stopped briefly at the visitor's center and then drove straight to Flamingo. Then we took the backwater boat tour. The naturalist on board was knowledgeable and informative, pointing out several crocodiles along the way. One, for unknown reason, had lost part of its jaw. I had previously thought that the crocodiles in the area were unusual individuals; I was surprised that there were so many there and they apparently bred there as well. He also described the mangroves and bromeliads. Giant bromeliads (*Tillandsia utriculata*) and cardinal bromeliads (*Tillandsia fasciculata*) were both seen shedding their seeds. He also mentioned the northern needleleaf, but I didn't see them. We didn't see many birds along the way. One tricolored heron flew onto a branch near us. The guide described how they tended to follow boats because the wakes washed fish to the shore where they were "easy pickins" We also saw a swallow-tailed kite in flight. Two dolphins were seen. The captain described how they drove the fish with a corkscrew-like swimming patters, forcing them to jump from the water. More "easy pickins".



I had no idea that the park had such large bodies of open water. We crossed Coot Bay, which we were told was one of the largest bodies of fresh water in Florida, second only to Lake Okeechobee. It was a very interesting tour.

Key Largo was the destination for Tuesday (3/25/25). I Wanted to visit the John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park. I thought that it might be a good place to get to the shore and possibly see some shorebirds, which my trip list sorely needed. I was pretty disappointed when we got there. It was a neat place, with a nice, if short, aquarium. But other than that, it seemed mostly a place for snorkelers, bathers and boaters; there was little room for shorebirds at the time of our visit. I did see a few birds (white ibis, common grackle, palm warbler) but these were begging for scraps of food near the Blue Heron Café. I also saw an interesting lizard which Seek identified as Peter's Rock agama (*Agama picticauda*).

After a brief tour of Key Largo, we headed back to the Air B&B. Because of problems with the air conditioner, we were relocated to another home which was much roomier and had more conveniences. I sat in the Lanai in the afternoon and listened for birds with Merlin. In 2 listening periods, Merlin recorded 18 bird species, several of which did not register with my hearing aids. I did add the white-winged dove (which I both heard and saw) to the trip list. I had missed this mark at the White residence earlier. One of the birds that Merlin heard was the Indian peafowl. This species, totally new to me, has been widely introduced with some feral populations found in southern California, according to the Sibley bird app. At this time I did not add it as a life mark. I repeated the same procedure several times the next day. Merlin heard many of the same birds, but added a few others to its list. Of special interest was the red-whiskered bulbul, another potential lifer. I suspect that the red junglefowl was a domesticated chicken derived from junglefowl stock.

As we were going out for breakfast on 3/26/25, I saw a common Myna in Homestead's historic downtown area. Later that day, Merlin heard one at our first location as we were waiting for Nancy, our host, to tell us to return to that location. After breakfast we went on to the Fruit and Spice Park where we took a guided tour of the park. We didn't see many birds but we got to taste several exotic fruits. We also saw several more of the Peter's Rock agamas, apparently both the colorful males and the more plain females. The guide indicated that these lizards were very dangerous invasive species, a major threat to bird populations. He was a very good guide, seemingly knowledgeable about many aspects of the natural history of the area. Later, back at the Air B&B, I noticed several of the same lizards in the yard.



We went back to Everglades National Park on 3/27/25. This time we concentrated on 3 areas:

We spent a lot of time along the Anhinga trail. False nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*) lined much of the path in the beginning and I saw a single plant of common sow thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*). This plant had to be added to the database. A very bold female anhinga sat on the rail at one point and allowed tourists to sit right next to it [photos 2025\_03\_27\_007-11]. Several of the alligators were seen with their mouths open; perhaps as a way of ventilating [photos 2025\_03\_27\_001-4]. The boardwalk area had lots of buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) and pond apple (*Annona glabra*), some loaded with the cardinal air plants (*Tillandsia fasciculata*) [photos 2025\_03\_27\_012-17]. Unfortunately, there were no great white herons to be seen.

After taking a few landscape shots along the way we moved on to the Pa-hay-okee Overlook, only to find the area closed due to construction.

Then we went to the Mahogany Hammock Trail. Much of the periphyton had begun to settle to the bottom as the dry-down occurred. A pair of barred owls were seen high in one of the trees. The diversity of woody plants was fantastic. Seek identified marlberry (*Ardisia escallonioides*) while I soloed with myrcene (*Myrsine cubana*). Seek also found Surinam cherry (*Eugenia uniflora*), which had just been described at the Spice and Fruit Farm tour yesterday, and pigeon

Birds id'd by Merlin
<b>3/25/2025</b>
Indian Peafowl *
Eurasian Collared Dove
White-winged Dove *
Mourning Dove *
Killdeer *
Little Blue Heron
Red-bellied Woodpecker *
Blue Jay *
Fish Crow
Purple Martin *
Northern House Wren
Brown Thrasher *
Northern Mockingbird *
House Sparrow *
Red-winged Blackbird *
Palm Warbler *
Prairie Warbler
Northern Cardinal *
<b>3/26/2025</b>
American Robin
House Finch
Broad-winged Hawk
Red Junglefowl
American Kestrel
Red-whiskered Bulbul
Chimney Swift
Northern Flicker
* Heard Both Days

plum (*Coccoloba diverifolia*). I doubt that I would be able to recognize some of these plants without Seek's help.

Later that evening (6:30ish) , as Ann and I were driving along SW 248th St. on our way to dinner, we spotted several chickens along the road. Could these be the red junglefowl that I dismissed as domestic chickens earlier? With this in mind, I decided to take a morning walk outside the B&B on 3/28/25. I walked a 1.42 mile square, to the end of SW 164 Ave. and then to SW 244th St., I took that back to SW 167th Ave and then back to the B&B on SW 248th St. I only saw 9 bird species along the way and that included all three of the local doves (no common ground doves). Merlin, though, reported the sound of the red junglefowl. I heard the chicken-like sound but never saw the bird.

As I walked along, I took notice of the various herbaceous and woody plants along the way. I noticed a lot more of the Santa Maria feverfew (*Parthenium hysterophorus*) and, at one home, Mexican prickly poppy (*Argemone Mexicana*) growing along the roads. The woody plants, both those growing wild and those planted for landscape purposes, were really interesting. Seek and I identified quite a few of the more interesting varieties (see table to the right). None of these plants were added to my database of Florida Plants.

Later in the day we drove to Biscayne National Park. The park didn't

### Plants Identified on 3/28/25

River Jasmine (*Jasminum Fluminense*)  
Australian Umbrella Plant (*Heptapleurum actinophyllum*)  
Burmese Fish-tail-palm (*Caryota mitis*)  
Inchplant (*Tradescantia zebrina*)  
Canistel (*Pouteria campechiana*)  
Lesser Bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea glabra*)  
Swiss Cheese Plant (*Monstera deliciosa*)  
Logan (*Dimocarpus logan*)  
Avocado (*Persea americana*)



require an admission fee so I didn't even need my senior pass. We were not interested in a boat tour, or in bathing or fishing, so there wasn't much for us to do. I asked one of the game wardens about where to see shorebirds. She really knew her stuff and gave me some ideas of good places to try. I asked her about the red junglefowl and the Indian peafowl and she immediately began to show a negative response. She was familiar with my location and said that those calls were coming from agricultural establishments; not countable! So, any idea of counting those as lifers was caput.

One of the places that she suggested for good birding was Lucky Hammock. As she began to describe it, I knew immediately where it was. So, after we left the park, we drove back towards the Everglades National Park to the parking area for the Lucky Ham-

mock, shortly before the national park entrance. I walked for about 1/4 mile to the hammock. It was so windy that there was little to see. The only birds that I saw were the turkey vultures gliding above. I did notice, though, an abundance of the Santa Maria feverfew and a few of the Mexican prickly poppies at that location.

3/29/25 was a shopping day. We went to several shopping centers in the area including The Falls and the Southland Mall. The Falls was way too expensive for our taste and the Southland Mall was just ok. The best of them all, though, for a little taste of the Redland Agricultural Area was the Cauley Square Heritage Village. There were several interesting shops there, although we didn't find anything to buy. There was also a whole lot of domestic fowl. That's where I got my photo of the Indian peafowl and the red junglefowl. End of story—they don't count!



We took one more trip to Everglades National Park on 3/30/25. Our first stop was Paurotis Pond where we were told of possible nesting roseate spoonbills. I did see several wood storks in the trees across the pond and a spoonbill in flight, but nothing that I could be certain of a rookery. I also saw a single white egret and, as I was leaving, an anhinga over the area.

Then we drove on to Nine Mile Pond for possible white-crowned pigeons. I didn't see any pigeons; only a lonely crow and a palm warbler. A patch of herb-of-grace (*Bacopa mannieri*) was found along the water's edge and the surrounding shrubbery included Poisonwood (*Metopium taxiforum*), Swamp bay (*Persea palustris*) and pigeon plum (*Coccoloba diversifolia*).

A quick stop at West Lake didn't produce anything new, so we went on to the Snake Bight Trail. I took a short walk along the trail and immediately found an abundance of giant air plants (*Tillandsia utrivulata*). Some were growing in trees above the water and others were over or along the path. Well developed flower stalks were found on several of them but none that I saw were actually in bloom. What was in bloom was a small shrub which Seek identified as the yellow joyweed (*Alternanthera flavescens*). Seek also identified coma (*Sideroxylon celastrinum*) along the path. I walked for about 1/2 mile each way along the Snake Bight trail and only heard white-eyed vireo, American crow and Northern cardinal along the way. This was a neat trail, though, with promise of interesting bird species (even some shorebirds) if visited early in the morning and taken to the end.

On our last day in Homestead we visited the Fairchild Botanical Gardens. I had a nice talk with



Margorie Stoneman Douglass while we were there. We took the free tram tour, so we got see the whole park. There were several families of Egyptian geese there, but I knew better than to count them. There were also a few crocodiles that apparently move freely between the park and Biscayne Bay. Although the plants were the main attraction at the park, I got pretty excited to see my first Florida iguanas. Some of them were pretty large. The volunteer driving the tram taught me a new biology term. Cauliflorous, producing flowers from the main stem or older branches. Several cauliflorous plants were seen in the park and I remember seeing some outside the Lanie at the house we stayed at while air condition was being repaired.

After breakfast at the Market Restaurant, which has become our favorite Homestead restaurant, we left the area on 4/1/25. We had a little time to kill, so we made a stop at Shark Valley and drove the Loop Road back to our condo. It was already a hot, sunny day by the time we reached Shark Valley. A great blue heron was feeding

in the shallow water, but it would not attempt a kill while I was focused on it. I also saw a purple gallinule and took several photos. None of them compared with those taken in the past. After a short time, we went on to the Loop Road. Alligators were abundant as we drove along and most of the wading birds were seen. I documented 16 bird species (Shark Valley + Loop Road) on the way. I also found an interesting plant in bloom that I had not seen before. Seek id'd it as the catchfly prairie gentian (*Eustoma exaltatum*) and Hammer (2014) included the plant. Although it was not shown to be present in Collier County, according to the AFP, it was shown in Miami-Dade County. Growing along the dusty gravel road as it was, the photos [photos 2025\_04\_01\_026-31] are a bit inaccurate, especially regarding color. When we got back to the condo, we were greeted by a northern curly-tailed lizard which I didn't recall seeing there before.

I had a blood draw scheduled for the next morning (4/2/25) as well as an appointment to get my hearing aids repaired. Between those two events I spent about 2 hours at Mackle Park, hoping to share the time with magnificent frigate birds, Although I did see 11 bird species as I waited there, no frigates were among them.

I went to the TenK marsh trail the next morning (4/3/25) to see what effect the dry-down was having. I was hoping to find some shorebirds. I did see greater yellowlegs, black-necked stilts and long-billed dowitchers, but none of the smaller waders were found. I only walked to the first bench but did see 25 species I met Fred and Alyce Townsend there and, after our usual exchanges about birding, we said good-bye for another year. They plan to leave for home next Tuesday.

Trevor joined us on 4/3/25. After a good night's rest and with temperatures destined for the upper 80's we headed out to the Big Cypress Swamp visitor's center and walked the boardwalk on the lookout for manatees. No manatees were found, probably because of the high temperature. Then we drove down Janes Scenic Drive as far as gate 7. Trevor took a few infrared photographs but no bird or plant records were taken.

The next morning, 4/4/25, we went to the TenK Marsh Trail. Trevor let me use his 200-500 telephoto lens at TenK while he took several landscape infra-red photos with his D70. We weren't concentrating on the birding; only 12 species were recorded for the morning. I did add a least sandpiper to the trip list, though. I got several decent photos of an anhinga, black-necked stilts, long-billed dowitchers and the least sandpipers as well as a few of the larger wading birds. And, of course, the alligators. The lens, although a bit heavy, was fairly easy to handle without a tripod and many of the photos turned out pretty well [photos 2025\_04\_05\_001-55].

Trevor and I drove the Loop Road the next day (5/6/25). We entered on the west end and drove to my usual turn around and back again. At the Clearwater Strand we came across an alligator feeding on a group of fish that appeared to be cichlids [photos 2025\_04\_06\_001-34]. We both took quite a few photos, but the sun being right on the gator and the underwater activity made things a bit tough. I did save the photos for possible later editing. As we continued, we stopped at several culverts and concentrated on landscape photos. Along the way I noticed a few plants in bloom and updated the plant database for the location. I was especially glad to get better photos of the catchfly prairie gentian (*Eustoma exaltatum*) [photos 2025\_04\_06\_052-55].



Although Dan had not been interested in a trip to the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, Trevor had that in his plans. So, on 4/7/25, we headed for the Audubon Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. It turned out to be a great day, not in the number of bird species, but in the great photo opportunities. I took a total of 204 photos and Trevor took 396. Of course we both discarded most of them, but some were definite keepers. The lettuce lake area was drying up and the wading birds were feasting on the concentrating fish. Most of the long-legged waders, including the spoonbills were participating in the feeding frenzy [photos 2025\_04\_07\_020-25, 030-40] . A couple of racoons were entertaining [photos 2025\_04\_07\_041-45] as they hunted probable crayfish in one of the shallow ponds and a banded water snake was also seen. We only recorded 23 bird species for the morning but neither of us was disappointed.

I saw a number of interesting plants in bloom along the boardwalk and updated the location field of the plant database. Seek recognized a Balbis's air plant which I thought was new to me, but it turned out to be synonymous with the northern needleleaf (*Tillandsia balbisiana*). Seek also suggested the giant airplant (*Tillandsia utriculate* .). The leafless beaked lady orchid (*Sacoila lanceolata*) was seen in bloom and the swamp dock (*Rumex verticillatus*) was seen as it had been on the last trip to the swamp. Several plants that I thought were new were noted: Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica*), herbwilliam (*Ptilimnium capillaceum*), scarlet rose-



mallow (*Hibiscus coccineus*), and the roundpod St. John's-wort (*Hypericum cistifolium*). It turned out that, of these, only the rosemallow was new to the database. It was not in bloom at the time and I decided not to add it to the database. Several long strapferns (*Campyloneurum phyllitidis*) were also recognized.

An obvious mallow was identified by Seek as the saltmarsh mallow (*Kosteletzkya pentacarpos*). I had identified it previously as the salt marsh mallow (*Kosteletzkya pentacarpos* .). The two appear to be synonymous, according to the AFP. *K. pentacarpos* appears to be the preferred name. This correction has been made in the 2014 edition of Hammer's guide. I changed the database entry to reflect this change and added the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary location for the species.

Later in the day Trevor noticed a duck in the retention pond. It turned out to be a mottled duck and it was a new condo-bird. More exciting, Trevor later spotted a black bear cub in the retention pond area. It was getting dark and, although we both jumped up with our cameras, shutter speeds were slow and my the photos were a bit blurry to say the least.

Trevor loaded my photos into his computer and used his software to clean them up and remove some of the graininess [photos 2025\_04\_07\_064-71]. They turned out to be at least acceptable to document the bear's presence. We never did see the adult bear—probably a good thing!

Trevor left on 4/9/25. Several times when he was here, we noticed a pair of cardinals apparently eating seeds from the two pots of Brown's blechum (*Ruellia blechum*) outside the lanai. That area also seems to have a persistent growth of Mayflower marshpennywort (*Hydrocotyle umbellata*). The grounds folks sprayed it once while we were here but it seems to keep coming back, showing its weedy character.

One (at least, this one) rarely sees swallow-tailed kites perching in a tree. But, on 4/10/25, as I was driving the Turner River—Birdon Loop, there it was. It perched in the tree [photos 2025\_04\_10\_001-5], preening itself, for as long as I waited there. Then I drove on, reporting a mere 15 species of birds in Birder's Diary. Although an eastern bluebird would have been nice, it was the plants that were my real targets. I had passed a clump of Baldwin's milkwort (*Polygala baldwinii*) along the Turner River Road and then stopped at the Concho Billie Trail to update the location field in my Florida plants database. I also added several plants and reviewed the taxonomy of some of the others:

The AFP shows shows 3 species of Baccharis for Collier County: *B. angustifolia*, *B. glomeruliflora* and *B. halimifolia*. On this date, Seek identified the silerling (*Baccaris glomeruliflora*) but I have previously marked *B. halminiflora* for this location.

According to Wunderlin & Hansen (2011) the differences between these species relate to floral characters not seen at the time.

The blue-flowering Carolina water hyssop (*Bacopa caroliniana*) was found in bloom and added to the species list.

Brown's blechnum (), a species found growing in pots outside the lanai of our condo was added to the database.

Seek id'd the shortleaf fig (*Ficus citrifolia*). I did not add it to the database because I'm not sure I would recognize it again.

Swamp bay (*Persea palustris*) was added to the database.

An aster was also found in bloom. Seek was confused between the saltmarsh aster (*Symphotrichum tenuifolium* and Simmond's aster (*S. simmondsii*). Judging by photos alone, it appeared more like the saltmarsh aster. This had previously been identified along Janes Scenic Drive. The identification is quite uncertain.

A couple of lichens were also identified. The old gray ruffles (*Parmatrema tinctorum*) was identified by Seek and I identified another as *Usnea sp.* Seek had no opinion on the second lichen.



I couldn't have picked a better morning to visit Tigertail Beach than 4/11/25. The tide was very low, Chris Hadden was there and shorebirds were all over the place. I was greeted by a reddish egret when I approached the lagoon and then started to see the shorebirds. I marked 15 bird species and 8 of them were shorebirds that were new for the trip. The least sandpiper was the only shorebird seen by Chris that I didn't see.

After I left I drove to the Otter Mound Preserve. I didn't stay very long but there was a group of 7 or 8 birders watching a particular tree where they reported that a male painted bunting and a summer tanager were frequenting. I watched with them for a while and a female tanager flew into the tree. There was some confusion as to which of the tanagers she was, but the consensus was that she was a scarlet tanager. I got good photos of the bird [photos 2025\_04\_11\_05-12] which confirmed the id as that.

I went to the Otter Mound preserve again the next day (4/12/25), and ran into Chris again. He was looking for the bird seen on the previous day, the scarlet tanager. There was a meeting of the birders there; almost more birders than birds. I only saw 12 species including an indigo bunting. I didn't stay too long but, as of the time I left, Chris hadn't seen the tanager.

Then I drove a short distance to Mackle Park. I sat for about 30 minutes, hoping that a magnificent frigate bird would do a fly-bye. That didn't happen and I didn't keep any records of the few birds seen there. BTW: On both of the two days on Marco, burrowing owls were seen, but not recorded. Also, swallow-tailed kites are now being seen almost daily but limpkins and my crested caracara have rarely been seen lately.

On our usual Sunday routine of 4/13/25 we took a quick drive through Sugden Regional Park. Nothing worthy of comment or note.

On the morning of 4/14/25) I went out to the Sabal Palm hiking trailhead. When I arrived I found the area roped off due to the Wiggins' wildfire. Seeing no signs of a fire and no fire fighting equipment, I walked around the tape barrier and proceeded to look at the plants while listening for birds. By the time I left, I heard or saw only 6 bird species. Unfortunately, that did not include a Bob White quail, but it did include a brown-headed nuthatch, a trip mark for the year.

I was happy to finally see the Baldwin's eryngo (*Eryngium baldwinii*) in bloom. As my photo [photo\_2025\_04\_14\_002] shows, the bloom was not as showy or colorful as I had anticipated, but good enough to confirm the identification. The AFP did show the species for Collier County and the IRC listed it for the Picayune Strand State Forest. Based of this information, I finally added the plant to the database.

I also saw Britonica peluda (*Melochia spicata*) and the longleaf milkweed (*Asclepias longifolia*), which had previously been seen there, as well as a few of the plants I had noticed on my previous trip to the area. The gallberry (*Ilex glabra*) was also seen [photos 2025\_04\_14\_014-18]. It, according to Seek's records, had been identified back in 2022 but had never been added to the database. Mohr's thoroughwort (*Eupatorium mohrii*) [photos 2025\_04\_14\_019-22] was also identified by Seek. It was not in flower and, in my view could be easily confused with other composites. These plants were not added to the database.

Seek had a busy day. It also identified 2 species of St. John's-wort: the sandhill St. John's-wort (*H. tenuifolium*) and the peelbark St. John's-wort (*H. fasciculatum*). *H. fasciculatum* had formerly been identified at Burn's Lake as the marsh St. John's-wort. The sandhill St. John's-wort was new to me but I did not add it to the database at this time.



Eighteen bird species including a wild turkey (a trip mark), were seen along Janes Scenic Drive Janes on 4/15/25. I made my usual stop at Gate 2 to check on the hand fern (*Cheiroglossa palmata*), which, although it did seem to have spore structures, didn't look all that healthy to me. I also noticed a vanilla orchid (*Vanilla phaeantha*) growing on a cabbage palm nearby.

I drove on to Gate 7 and took another short walk. The green and white sedge (*Carex longii*) had several culms with flowering heads. The location of these sedges, close to the false hop sedge (*C. lupuliformis*) made me wonder if I had falsely identified the Florida hammock sedge (*C. vexans*) back in 2011. I used Seek on a number of the beaksedges along the trail. It seemed to be inconsistent with its identification. The sandyfield sedge (*Rhynchospora megalocarpa*) and the millet sedge (*R. millacea*) were among the sedges id'd. Given my lack of confidence in both my and Seek's ability with this group, these were not added to the database. Similarly, a number of plants in the Smilax group were also examined but not added.

Ann had the gambling bug on 4/16/25 so I dropped her at the Immokalee casino and drove on to the Ann Olesky Park on Lake Trafford. I was surprised by the number of birds that I found there in spite of it being a rather busy area. The 15 species found there included a purple gallinule as well as a limpkin.

The shoreline around the area had an extensive growth of marsh pennywort (*Hydrocotyle umbellata*) which Seek referred to as the Mayflower marshpennywort [photos 2025\_04\_16\_020-25]. The plant was in bloom but scattered among its flowers were these of a small sedge, *Cyperus richardii*, by Seek's identification [photo 2025\_04\_16\_021]. This sedge, according to the AFP is found in Collier County and was added to the plant database. Lake Trafford was added as a location in the plant database and this sedge as well as other familiar plants seen there were added to that location. Another plant added to the database was the swamp smartweed (*Persicaria hydropiperoides*). This plant suggested the pinkweed (*P. pennsylvanica*) to me, but Seek id'd it as the swamp smartweed [photos 2025\_04\_16\_036-40]. The photos on the AFP and it's location in Collier County are consistent with Seek.

When I went to the TenK Marsh Trail on 4/17/25, the continuing dry-up was clearly evident. Much of the area consisted of slabs of mud drying into various geometric patterns. In the few of the deeper areas small ponds or streams hosted the few birds that remained. Once again, the area around bench 2 had the greatest variety of birds; most of the long-legged waders recorded for the morning were found there. That is also where I saw several lesser yellowlegs, the only shorebirds recorded. Seek identified a familiar grass growing along the trail as the pinewoods fingergrass (*Eustachys petraea*). I had previously identified this grass based Tinner (1993).

notes

It was high tide when I arrived at the Chokoloskee boat launch area on 4/18/25. Boats were everywhere but birds were not. A few ruddy turnstones were seen along the beach and the purple martins were seemingly interested in the shoreline; landing there for short periods. After a quick survey of Chokoloskee, I drove to the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk. There was little of interest there. After taking a few photos of several plants, I returned to the condo.

The owners of the condo decided to intrude on our stay by having windows installed while we were there. So, on 4/21/25 we sat through the inconvenience. It turned out to be a bit entertaining, though, as a persistent black racer did not want to abandon its place in the evergreens so that the workers could do the outside part of the bedroom window. Although it was flung some distance initially, it returned to claim its space. One of the installers was visibly afraid as he continually watched out for the snake.

I drove along Shell Island Road through the Rookery Bay area on 4/22/25. As I parked, I noticed a red-flowering shrub by the car. Seek identified it as the jungle flame [photos 2025\_04\_22\_001-3] (*Ixora coccinea*), a new, although introduced species, for the database. Good start! Birds were not my primary focus for the morning, I only recorded 7 species. It was the salt marsh at the end of the road and its trails into the mangroves that I was interested in. I was hoping to see some of the plants in bloom that I saw on my earlier trip. Initially, I was disappointed. Although there was much sea ox-eye (*Borrichia frutescens*) in bloom along the path, the sea purslane (*Sesuvium portulacastrum*) was not in bloom and I could only find one blossom on the several goatweed (*Capraria biflora*) plants that I examined. I reinforced my identification of coma (*Sideroxylon celastrinum*) and the Florida swamp privet (*Forestiera segregata*) but was overwhelmed and confused by some of the other woody species along the way.

But I was not disappointed by a detour that I took along a trail that led into the mangroves. The seepweed [photos 2025\_04\_22\_020-22] (*Suaeda linearis*) seen along this trail as well as along the main path was new to the plant database. It stood out because of its slightly bluish color. Saltwort (*Batis maritima*) [photos 2025\_04\_22\_023-29], added to the database earlier this year, was found in bloom this time. Another plant seen in bloom along the trail was the silverhead [photos 2025\_04\_22\_012-19] (*Blutaparon vermiculare*). None of these three plants were included in Hammer 2014), which seems to ignore the salt marsh altogether, but Witherington & Witherington (2017) does describe the silverhead and Taylor (2013) describes all three in his chapter on salt marshes.



Several large clumps of prickly pear were seen along the way [photos 2025\_04\_22\_034-36]. The AFP shows three species of *Opuntia* in Collier County: *O. austrina*, *O. mesocantha* and *O. stricta*. Seek vasculated between the Florida prickly pear (*O. austrina*) and the shell mound prickly pear. As has been done before, I will leave the taxonomy of this plant at the genus level. As I was leaving the area I saw the aloe yucca (*Yucca alofolia*) in bloom along Shell Island Road.



Summary:  
5 new plants added to the database.