

# **SOUTH FLORIDA**

**APRIL 24 – MAY 4, 2006**

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**Leaders: Kim Eckert and Brennan Mulrooney**

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc.**

### **SUMMARY**

Birding South Florida involves idyllic and serene experiences: Barn Owls roosting by day in an isolated grove within a vast region of agricultural fields; a single day's count of more than 30 Swallow-tailed Kites; Wood Storks and Roseate Spoonbills wading side by side at Corkscrew Swamp; a Barred Owl deep within the Big Cypress, obligingly flying in despite its following of harassing grackles; and flocks of Bobolinks by the dozens over the grasslands of the Everglades. These and other memories make it easy to forget about a certain cuckoo, conspicuous by its absence.

Birding South Florida at this time of year can be challenging, since most of the specialties of this region are quite possible to miss, with some of them only possible at one place on our route. But they are fun to look for and involve some interesting places, and, with one exception, we saw them all. Smooth-billed Anis were still found by Fort Lauderdale's airport, now the only consistent site for this declining species. Our luck continued the next day in the Lake Okeechobee area with an obliging singing male Bachman's Sparrow, three soaring Short-tailed Hawks, and a Limpkin that flew in on cue to a recording of its call.

Thank goodness for that flamingo. After a La Sagra's Flycatcher was last seen in Miami the day our tour met in Fort Lauderdale, and a Western Spindalis disappeared from the Everglades three days before we arrived in the park, we were wondering if our itinerary would ever match up with the presence of any reported rarities. But finally, on our second-to-last birding day, we caught up with that Greater Flamingo which had been present for several days just a few miles from our hotel in Key West. (But it was a close call; as far as we know, the bird was gone the day after our observation.)

Another challenge of this tour involves those exotic birds flying around residential neighborhoods of Miami and elsewhere. For the most part, these are interesting and colorful species well worth looking for. Just finding some of them is hard enough, but you first have to plot a strategy to avoid freeway traffic, which alternates between frantic and stagnant, and simply get to where the birds are. You also have to be aware which species have established and "countable" populations, and at times you wonder how anyone determines this.

It makes sense that birders count Monk Parakeets, Red-whiskered Bulbuls, and Spot-breasted Orioles, and that most don't include Purple Swamphens and Hill Mynas on their life lists. On the other hand, it seems odd that the widespread Common Myna is not considered countable while you can count ugly barnyard ducks along the roadsides—a.k.a. Muscovy Ducks. (And please

don't even ask what the deal is with the "Canary-winged" parakeet complex of Yellow-chevrons, White-wingeds, and their hybrids.)

Despite relentless development around Naples on the west coast, a pine stand favored by Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and Brown-headed Nuthatches was somehow still intact. From there we headed back east along the Tamiami Trail, which yielded but a single Snail Kite, and in the Everglades we had a most cooperative singing male Seaside Sparrow of the endangered Cape Sable race. Our tour concluded with a drive down the Keys, where the last of the specialties were found: Roseate Terns at the end of the Seven Mile Bridge, Antillean Nighthawk at the Key West airport, and a pair of Shiny Cowbirds at a favored Key West feeder.

## **ITINERARY**

April 24 – Meet in Hollywood at the Day's Inn, with our first mynas en route to dinner.

April 25 – Morning with anis at Fort Lauderdale's airport, swamphens at Pembroke Pines, and at Wakotahatchee Wetlands; afternoon drive to Clewiston via a Miami Canal Barn Owl roost, John Stretch Park, and Clewiston's boat ramp area.

April 26 – Birding loop west of Lake Okeechobee: Hwys 74 and 731, Sheppard Rd, Fisheating Creek WMA, Venus and Archbold areas; afternoon return to Clewiston via Lake Placid, Hwy 621 by Lake Istokpoga, Hickory Hammock, and Hwy 721.

April 27 – Morning return to Clewiston's boat ramp (for Limpkin), and drive to Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary via Hwys 833 and 846; afternoon to Shell Island Rd and Marco Island.

April 28 - Dawn at the "usual" Red-cockaded pine stand on the edge of Naples, followed by Marco Island, Goodland, and Tigertail Beach; afternoon at Collier Co water treatment plant and Eagle Lakes Park.

April 29 – Fort Meyers Beach, return to Eagle Lakes Park, Big Cypress Visitors Center and Loop Road, the kite area on Tamiami Trail, and drive to Florida City.

April 30 - Miami and vicinity for exotics (parakeets, bulbuls, mynas, orioles), including Kendall, A. D. Barnes Park, and Matheson Hammock; afternoon return to Florida City via the Cutler Ridge swallow bridge and a nearby shorebird spot.

May 1 - All day in Everglades National Park, including Taylor Slough's seaside sparrows, Paurotis Pond, West Lake, Flamingo, Long Pine Key, and Anhinga Trail; late afternoon and evening at Lucky Hammock road and to Long Pine and the Visitors Center (for nightjars and owls).

May 2 – Return to Lucky Hammock; then drive to Key West via Card Sound Road, Key Largo, Marathon Government Center, and Rockland Key's flamingo; dusk at Key West Airport for nighthawks.

May 3 - Sugarloaf/Saddlebunch Keys. Big Pine/No Name Keys. Ohio Key, west end of Seven Mile Bridge, and a 17<sup>th</sup> Terrace & Flagler feeder (for pigeons and cowbirds); option to Zachary Taylor State Park (for those not packing for the Tortugas).

May 4 - Return home for those not continuing to the Dry Tortugas.

**BIRD LIST** (species listed in **boldface** were the main highlights of the tour, either as unexpected rarities or as South Florida specialties)

Muscovy Duck ("countable" barnyard-like ducks)

Wood Duck (with babies at Corkscrew)

Mottled Duck

Blue-winged Teal

Wild Turkey (only 1 briefly)

Northern Bobwhite (heard-only)

Northern Gannet (diving off Tigertail and Fort Meyers Beach)

Brown Pelican

Double-crested Cormorant

Anhinga

**Magnificent Frigatebird** (best at Marco Island and Fort Meyers Beach)

Least Bittern (best at Wakotahatchee)

Great Blue Heron (incl. "Great White" Heron, possibly a distinct species, and a "Wurdemann's" hybrid)

Great Egret

Snowy Egret

Little Blue Heron

Tricolored Heron

Reddish Egret

Cattle Egret

Green Heron

Black-crowned Night-Heron

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (including a Corkscrew nest)

White Ibis

Glossy Ibis

Roseate Spoonbill (best at Corkscrew and Paurotis Pond)

**Wood Stork** (best at Paurotis Pond)

Black Vulture

Turkey Vulture

**Greater Flamingo** (staked-out immature at mile 9 on Rockland Key)

Osprey (many near Lake Istokpoga)

**Swallow-tailed Kite** (including 30+ on Day 3)

**Snail Kite** (only 1 adult male)

Bald Eagle

Northern Harrier

Cooper's Hawk

Red-shouldered Hawk

Broad-winged Hawk  
**Short-tailed Hawk** (total of 3; best views at Hickory Hammock)  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Crested Caracara (west and north of Okeechobee)  
Peregrine Falcon (2 with a turnstone at Tigertail!)  
**Purple Gallinule** (best at Wakotahatchee)  
Purple Swamphen (not yet "countable")  
Common Moorhen  
American Coot  
**Limpkin** (best view in Clewiston)  
Sandhill Crane (including some with "colts")  
Black-bellied Plover  
Wilson's Plover  
Semipalmated Plover  
Killdeer  
Black-necked Stilt  
Greater Yellowlegs  
Lesser Yellowlegs  
Solitary Sandpiper  
Willet  
Spotted Sandpiper  
Whimbrel (Fort Meyers Beach)  
Ruddy Turnstone  
Sanderling  
Semipalmated Sandpiper  
Western Sandpiper  
Least Sandpiper  
White-rumped Sandpiper (unexpected at Eagle Lakes Park)  
Baird's Sandpiper (ditto!)  
Dunlin  
Short-billed Dowitcher (= 20 shorebird species)  
Laughing Gull  
Ring-billed Gull  
Herring Gull  
Caspian Tern  
Royal Tern  
**Roseate Tern** (3 at west end of Seven Mile Bridge)  
Least Tern  
Black Skimmer (especially at Clewiston's WalMart and Flamingo)  
Rock Pigeon  
**White-crowned Pigeon** (best at 17<sup>th</sup> Terrace & Flagler)  
Eurasian Collared-Dove  
White-winged Dove  
Mourning Dove  
Common Ground-Dove  
**Monk Parakeet** ("countable")  
**Yellow-chevroned Parakeet** (Kendall fly-bys; not "countable" – yet)

Mitred Parakeet (also in Kendall; not "countable")  
Yellow-billed Cuckoo (but where were the Mangroves?!)  
**Smooth-billed Ani** (still reliable at Fort Lauderdale's airport)  
**Barn Owl** (at a Miami Canal roost)  
Eastern Screech-Owl (finally spotlighted by the visitors center)  
Burrowing Owl (2 residential Marco Island burrows)  
Barred Owl (attacked by grackles on the Big Cypress Loop Road!)  
Common Nighthawk  
**Antillean Nighthawk** (right on cue at Key West Airport)  
Chuck-will's-widow (in the road at Long Pine)  
Chimney Swift  
Red-headed Woodpecker (with the Red-cockadedes)  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Downy Woodpecker  
**Red-cockaded Woodpecker** (that Naples pine stand is still intact)  
Northern Flicker  
Pileated Woodpecker  
Great Crested Flycatcher  
Western Kingbird (unexpected along Lake Istokpoga road)  
Eastern Kingbird  
**Gray Kingbird**  
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (also on Lake Istokpoga road)  
Loggerhead Shrike  
White-eyed Vireo  
**Black-whiskered Vireo**  
Blue Jay  
**Florida Scrub-Jay**  
American Crow  
Fish Crow  
Purple Martin  
Tree Swallow  
Northern Rough-winged Swallow  
**Cave Swallow** (West Indies individuals nesting under the "usual" Cutler Ridge bridge)  
Barn Swallow  
Tufted Titmouse  
Brown-headed Nuthatch (with the Red-cockadedes in Naples!)  
**Red-whiskered Bulbul** (at our first stop in Kendall and "countable")  
Carolina Wren  
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher  
Eastern Bluebird  
Gray-cheeked Thrush (mostly leader-only at Zachary Taylor)  
Gray Catbird  
Northern Mockingbird  
(Brown Thrasher – leader-only, heard-only)  
European Starling  
**Common Myna** (not "countable" – yet)  
**Hill Myna** (pairs in Matheson Hammock Park; not "countable")

Tennessee Warbler (Zachary Taylor Park)  
Northern Parula  
Yellow Warbler (the “West Indies” race)  
Magnolia Warbler  
Cape May Warbler  
Black-throated Blue Warbler  
Pine Warbler (Long Pine Key)  
Prairie Warbler  
Palm Warbler  
Blackpoll Warbler  
Black-and-white Warbler  
American Redstart  
Prothonotary Warbler (cooperative on the Loop Road)  
Ovenbird  
Northern Waterthrush  
Connecticut Warbler (2 mostly leader-only fly-bys in the Keys)  
Common Yellowthroat  
Scarlet Tanager (Zachary Taylor Park)  
Eastern Towhee  
**Bachman's Sparrow** (cooperative singing male near Rainy Slough)  
**Seaside Sparrow** (great views of the highly local "Cape Sable" race)  
Northern Cardinal  
Rose-breasted Grosbeak  
Indigo Bunting  
Painted Bunting (2 late-lingering females)  
Bobolink (probably 200+ migrants in the Everglades!)  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Eastern Meadowlark  
Common Grackle  
Boat-tailed Grackle  
**Shiny Cowbird** (pair at 17<sup>th</sup> Terrace & Flagler)  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
**Spot-breasted Oriole** (“countable” in Kendall)  
Baltimore Oriole  
House Sparrow

ALSO SEEN (butterflies & dragonflies compiled by Brennan):

Bottlenosed Dolphin  
(Manatee – leader-only at Faka Union Canal)  
White-tailed Deer (including the endangered Key Deer)  
Raccoon  
Gray Squirrel  
Eastern Cottontail  
Marsh Rabbit

American Crocodile (Flamingo!)  
American Alligator  
Cottonmouth (Corkscrew!)  
Florida Banded Watersnake  
Garter Snake  
Green Anole  
Brown Anole  
Bark Anole  
Florida Red-bellied Turtle  
Florida Soft-shelled Turtle

Fiddler Crab  
Portuguese Man-o-war

### Butterflies

Giant Swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*)  
Palamedes Swallowtail (*Papilio palamedes*)  
Florida White (*Appias drusilla*)  
Checkered White (*Pontia protodice*)  
Great Southern White (*Ascia monuste*)  
Cloudless Sulphur (*Phoebis sennae*)  
Orange-barred Sulphur (*Phoebis philea*)  
Large Orange Sulphur (*Phoebis agarithe*)  
Barred Yellow (*Eurema daira*)  
Ceraunus Blue (*Hemiargus ceraunus*)  
Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*)  
Julia Heliconian (*Dryas julia*)  
Zebra Heliconian (*Heliconius charithonius*)  
Phaon Crescent (*Phyciodes phaon*)  
Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*)  
Common Buckeye (*Junonia coenia*)  
Mangrove Buckeye (*Junonia evarete*)  
White Peacock (*Anartia jatrophae*)  
Ruddy Daggerwing (*Marpesia petreus*)  
Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)  
Queen (*Danaus gilippus*)  
Mangrove Skipper (*Phocides pigmalion*)  
Hammock Skipper (*Polygonus leo*)  
Horace's Duskywing (*Erynnis horatius*)  
Tropical Checkered-Skipper (*Pyrgus oileus*)  
Fiery Skipper (*Hylephila phyleus*)  
Twin-spot Skipper (*Oligoria maculata*)

### Dragonflies

Regal Darner (*Coryphaeschna ingens*)  
Florida Baskettail (*Epitheca stella*)



Four-spotted Pennant (*Brachymesia gravida*)

Halloween Pennant (*Celithemis eponina*)

Needham's Skimmer (*Libellula needhami*)

Great Pondhawk (*Erythemis vesiculosa*)

Seaside Dragonlet (*Erythrodiplax berenice*)

Blue Dasher (*Pachydiplax longipennis*)