



Friendly, fun, and Informative Bird Watching

November 2020 Issue 39

southernoceanbirdinggroup.org

Due to the CoVid-19 emergency, events are cancelled for the foreseeable future. The Tuckerton Seaport is closed, as is Jacques Cousteau NERR, Long Beach Island Foundation, and the Visitor Information Center at E. B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. The Wildlife Drive is open to drive around the Refuge, and Cedar Bonnet Island is also open; Ocean County parks facilities are open, and you can walk around the park trails. Some are doing zoom programs, so check their websites. Please use common sense, a face covering, and 'social distancing'.

Annual Dues for 2021

Dues for 2021 are due. Singles are \$20, and couples are \$35 for the year. You can send a check, payable to Southern Ocean Birding Group, to: SOBG, c/o Jeanine Apgar, 206 N. Frankfurt Ave, Egg Harbor City, NJ 08215. **Online Paypal is now available for renewals, new memberships, and donations on our website.**

Tuckerton Christmas Bird Count

December 19; details to follow. Will be separate cars and no lunch or meals together. Report individually the results to Morry Kaptian.



Friends in Southern Ocean Birding Group (group)



December 3, 2020 Virtual Holiday Party

We will have a virtual Zoom Holiday Party on December 3 at 7 p.m. We have some surprises in store, and we ask that you wear something festive for the holidays and have your favorite drink so we can toast this miserable year away.

We will have some trivia, some bird id's, a scavenger hunt, and other fun ideas. Let's get together one last time in 2020, no matter where you are and celebrate getting through it.

The Zoom invitation to the program will be sent out shortly.

Field Trips

- November 21—Island Beach State Park, looking for late migrants
- December 19—Tuckerton Christmas Bird Count
- January 18—Forsythe NWR

Send along any ideas you have for zoom programs for 2021.

Members Write What They Did the Summer That Wasn't

We are asking our members to send an email with one sentence to tell us what you did outside your home during the summer of 2020 that was fun or interesting; Join In!

Jason Nargiz: I read a lot and attended many webinars about nature and birds and was fortunate to witness the entire nesting cycle of Carolina Wrens, from nest building to fledging.

Greg's Florida Birding Adventures—Part 2

Hi folks, In the October newsletter I described being able to find some of the Florida specialty birds within the retirement village where my brother now lives, without needing to travel further. Today we're continuing with my 2020 Florida adventure by sharing some birding experiences from visiting other locations in central Florida. I was staying in my brother's house near Leesburg, located about 45 minutes west of Orlando, so I'll start with an interesting little town park in Leesburg called Venetian Gardens Park. This park, at the north shore of Lake Harris, features small canals (*a la Venice*) and a wet area that was the best place for point-blank looks at species like Purple Gallinules (a dozen or more expected per trip, often feeding near our feet or with chicks), or Limpkins (up to 5 or 6 per trip) or Snail Kite,



which both feed on Apple Snails that are abundant there. For the Gallinules and Limpkins especially, it was a photographer's dream.

One day we drove 1½ hrs to Ft. DeSoto Park in Clearwater. Although this is a well-known spring and fall migration stopover site on the gulf, we visited there in

mid-summer, yet still had a super day. I knew it was going to be special when we started with dozens of Magnificent Frigatebirds soaring together overhead as we entered the park. At the north end we walked the gorgeous beach, finding dozens of Snowy Plovers and Wilson's Plovers, dancing



Reddish Egrets (a species close to my heart), hundreds of Sandwich Terns included in a nice mixed tern flock, 35 Marbled Godwits, three dozen Roseate Spoonbills huddled together, Loggerhead Shrike, and Gray Kingbird. Mix these great birds in with a couple refreshing swims in the cool



gulf waters on a pristine beach, a nice Thai lunch, and you have a recipe for a day that will be hard to beat.

Central Florida has pine savannahs in locations such as Ocala National Forest that host a completely different set of birds. On morning walks here during breeding season, we were treated to multiple calling Northern Bobwhites (Bob-white! Bob-white!), side-by-side male and female Summer Tanagers, multiple Red-headed Woodpeckers, and the main target species for this habitat, Bachman's Sparrows in full song and breeding endangered Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. That's some very nice species, and amazingly we didn't see a single other person on the trail any time we visited there.



Perhaps the most impressive assemblage of birds that I saw in Florida was at Lake Apopka North Shore Restoration Area. Apopka is the 4th largest lake in Florida, but with a history of being devastated by farming and farm runoff killing the lake. A restoration project has been ongoing for three decades, and the number of birds here can be stunning. In addition, Lake Apopka is the top eBird hotspot in Florida, with 353 species recorded. Although I had been seeing eBird reports of 9,000 Coots and 1,000 Common Gallinules there, somehow those kinds of numbers didn't completely register, and I didn't really believe them. Yet there they were, waterfowl too numerous to count.

Apopka features an 11-mile one-way drive (similar to Brig) through the recovering wetlands, in which the task is to find other species betwixt and between all those coots and gallinules. And there certainly are 'good' species to be seen there; Black-bellied Whistling-ducks,

Fulvous Whistling-ducks, Mottled Ducks, Black-necked Stilts, and more. On a trip there in mid-August, we marveled at seeing the skies filled with 300 Swallow-tailed Kites (and a few Mississippi Kites mixed in)! That



wasn't a typo: 300 Swallow-tailed Kites feeding together!! I don't know what they were feeding on, but apparently, they appear *en masse* like that every August.

I am still looking for King Rails and Purple Swamphens (a lifer) that have eluded me there. It's nice to have a reason for returning, and I hope to find them by the time you are reading this tale. I'll let you know.