



Friendly, fun, and Informative Bird Watching

January 2022 Issue 53

southernoceanbirdinggroup.org Due to Covid, all in person meetings at the Tuckerton Seaport are cancelled for the foreseeable future, but we are hoping that we can all get back together for meeting in the spring.

Annual Dues for 2022

Dues for 2022 are due from now. 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 available for renewals, new memberships, and donations on our website.**

January Field Trip

Eight brave members went out in 20+ degree weather to check out birds in Ocean and Monmouth County ponds, which were mostly frozen over. Around 30 species were seen with the highlights being Redhead duck, Eurasian Wigeon, huge numbers of Brant, and only the third sighting of an Osprey in January.



Program Exchange with Tucson Audubon

Exciting news for our April 7 meeting; we will have a presentation by Tucson Audubon on "Southeast Arizona's Most Wanted Birds". More details to follow but save the date!



February 3, 2022 Virtual Meeting

We will have a virtual Zoom Meeting on **February 3, 2022** at 7 p.m, with a presentation on "Using eBird & Merlin: A General Guide" with presenter and member, Josh Gant.

Josh is a naturalist with Ocean County Dept. of Parks and Recreation, working at Wells Mills County Park. He is also an instructor for Stockton University/Continuing Studies. The program will cover all you need to know about eBird and Merlin and how the two apps work together to help you out in the field.

A Zoom invite will be sent the end of shortly. In the meantime, stay safe and get vaccinated and boosted. Only vax'd and boosted members will be allowed in any indoor events.

Tuckerton Christmas Bird Count

As Morry was out of the country recently, the results will be available next month.

Field Trips:

February 19—Forsythe NWR, GBYBC

March 19—Wings Over LBI

Birds and Butterflies in December: Florida trip December 5 through 11, 2021

By Jeanine Apgar

In early December, several of us SOBGers headed to the southern Florida sun for a week of tropical birds and butterflies. The week's weather started out extremely pleasant with temps in the 70's, ending with upper 80's, warm, but not too hot. Every day we went to a different location searching for Florida species.

We stayed in Cape Coral in southwestern Florida. One of the most interesting birds in this region, the charismatic Burrowing Owls, are protected by the city, and most



vacant lots, even in our neighborhood, had one or two burrows. We were pleased to find their homes were encircled by PVC pipes, which were meant to keep people and dogs at a

distance. They would sit by their burrow during the day, then fly about locally in the evening to hunt and interact, giving ample opportunity for photos and observation.

Some of the nearby nature areas we visited were Rotary Park, 3 miles from our rental house, Six-Mile Cypress Slough Preserve, Ft. Myers Beach, and Lovers Key State Park. A nearby Baseball complex had nesting Monk Parakeets which were accommodating, posing high in the trees. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Yellow-rumped and Palm Warblers were everywhere and kept us scanning the trees. At the Six-Mile Preserve there were a few other warblers (Black and White and Pine), as well as Anhingas, White Ibis, Cooter Turtles, and a family of young Alligators.



We found Ruddy Turnstones, Mottled Ducks, Tri-colored Herons, as well as lots more White Ibis at Ft. Myer's Beach and the State Park. Many of the butterflies found in this area were southern Mangrove species, only found near mangrove thickets-Mangrove Skippers and Mangrove Buckeyes. Zebra Longwings and White Peacock butterflies were delighting us all with their amazing colors. I was thrilled to see Tropical Checkered



gold.

Skippers, Gulf Fritillaries, and on the vines of tropical Dutchman's Pipevines alighted Polydamas butterflies, a tail-less swallowtail that is rimmed in

We ventured further to Harns Marsh, Babcock-Webb



WMA, Ding Darling and Corkscrew Swamp. The birds were rewarding, especially Gray-headed Swamphens, and Short-tailed Hawks, lifers for me. We enjoyed Limpkins, Common Gallinules and

Loggerhead Shrikes.

Ding Darling has a wildlife drive where Roseate Spoonbills and Yellow-crowned Night Herons were much closer than we find in New Jersey, as well as a Reddish Egret giving us a nice show. We were unable to locate one of our target birds, Mangrove Cuckoo, so I hope to return another time and try again. Corkscrew was very active this time of year, with many wintering warblers making for an entertaining morning. Black-throated Greens, Northern Parulas, American Redstarts, Common Yellowthroats were fun to see, as well as Common Ground Doves, Blue-headed Vireos, Great-crested Flycatchers and even two calling Barred Owls.



To end the trip, we took a boat-trip through a section of the Everglades and helped the local birding group with



the Christmas Bird Count, finding over 400 American White

Pelicans. Overall, it was a nice opportunity to escape winter in NJ for a week and to see some great birds and new butterflies.



Friends in Southern Ocean Birding Group (group)