

## **Florida 16-29.03.1989**

Dedicated to Max, Mickey and Ben who helped to make our trip a success

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16.3 Miami - Everglades (Anhinga Trail)  
17.3 Everglades (Mahogany Hammock - Flamingo)  
18.3 Everglades (Flamingo - Snake Bight Trail) - Tamiami Trail – Loop Road  
19.3 Ft. Meyers, Sanibel Island, Cape Coral  
20.3 Siesta Key, Myakka River State Park, Ft. De Soto, Pine Island  
21.3 St. Marks, Wakulla Beach  
22.3 St. Marks (entrance), Scanlon (Hickory Mound), Paynes Prairie  
23.3 Lake Woodruff, Lake Monroe, Lake Jessup, Lake Mullet, Merritt Island  
24.3 Kissimee, Hammock, the Prairie area (721), Old Venus, La Belle  
25.3 Ft. Meyers (Cape Coral), Loxahatchee  
26.3 Key Largo - Key West - Marathon  
27.3 Boot Key - Ohio Key - Key Largo - Car Sound Bridge  
28.3 Everglades (Anhinga Trail, Mahogany Hammock, Snake Bight Trail), Miami  
29.3 Miami (Costello Hammock, Matheson Hammock)

### **General**

I've tried to use the American birdnames, both for species and groups. Thus waders are herons, egrets, ibises, etc. Shorebirds are sandpipers, plovers, etc. Some of the maps in the site guide are copied from material given free at the reserves.

### **When to Go**

Winter, spring and autumn are the seasons for Florida. Winter is good for waders, shorebirds and wildfowl. Spring starts end of March and Dry Tortugas is at its best in May, even though it is terribly hot then. Summer is very hot and Everglades might be so full of mosquitos that the whole area could be closed. Snake Bight Trail probably is anyway. The first passerine migrants start arriving at the end of March.

### **Flight tickets**

We had only the flight included, no accomodation. We flew with Finnair from Helsinki to New York and with Pan Am from New York to Miami. 3440 FIM (= /\$ 820). We flew business class 3//4 parts of the way because the planes were so crowded and we were late. Very nice. We discovered that in the States the check-in system is different from that in Finland in that there are several counters which serve, say, all the flights to Europe. This creates one big queue which does move a bit faster because you take whichever counter becomes free first, but if you are late there is still always a lot of people in the queue before you. They do call people out of the line if there flight is departing soon though. Be there in good time anyway (about 2 hours before departure time). On arrival in the United States remember to get your luggage and carry it through the customs yourself on the first USA-airport. If you do not do this the luggage is left behind. On the way back home it transfers automatically.

## **Money**

We used Visa which was very good when hiring a car (otherwise a big deposit is needed) and paying the motels. Not all motels accepted creditcards though. The bookshops we used all accepted Visa. We had some cash with us and used that for all smaller expenses. Although we had no trouble using Visa as a creditcard, my mother, who visited Florida just before we did, tells me that it was quite common in the shops that they would except some American creditcard, but not Visa. The exchange rate was something like /\$ 1.73 to a pound (according to Eustace Barnes and Mark Cwynarski, I did not at the time notice the pound rate, as I was intrested in the Finnish rate).

## **Transport & Traffic**

It's necessary to hire a car, there are few busses about and almost no facilities for pedestrians, especially not over bridges. There are carhire firms at the airports (at least in Miami) which are open 24 hours. We hired ours from Avis because it was the cheapest, when hiring beforehand from Finland. They claimed that prices would be 40% lower if hiring beforehand, we never checked this though. We paid /\$ 86//week + Collision Damage Waiver /\$ 10.95//day (insurance for accidents under /\$ 750), the rest of the insurance is included in the /\$ 86. The CDW is not obligatory and since it is rather expensive it could be excluded, it just felt easier and safer not having to worry about accidents. Also an additional /\$ 5 so that both of us could drive. Unlimited mileage. This price was for an A-car, i.e. the cheapest they had with four doors, which we thought essential (Not five or three, so that you have a lockable boot). They had X-cars which were cheaper but had only two doors. We got a Toyota Camry (it had been driven only 9000 miles) with which we were perfectly satisfied. It had automatic seatbelts which was very practical for getting out fast and when stopping often when it get's tedious to play with the belt all the time. The automatic windows were also a great help, but we had trouble in remembering to wind them down before stopping the car when trying to photograph a roadside bird. The car also had a very big boot and we easily fitted in all our luggage. It was the absolutely most satisfactory car we have ever hired anywhere. But of course European standards are a bit different. It was also the second cheapest. Petrol was cheap, it varied between /\$ 0.86 and /\$ 1.05 per US gallon.

Traffic wasn't very difficult. There were a lot of big roads though, which we weren't used to, but if one followed the map and the roadsigns closely it was rather easy. There is a lot of written signs everywhere, but when there is a crossing the crossing road is often announced with either a number or a name. Both might be found on the map, but it is also possible that just the other one is used on the map. They also seem to change roadnumbers a lot, so that the map might be wrong. When they change the roadnumbers, they don't just delete a number, they might move it to the next road, so be constantly awake to peculiarities. From one crossing the same road might be going in three directions (I don't understand how roads can be numbered like that...) but since there's usually a mention of the direction as well it is possible to find the correct road. The problem is that the directions aren't necessarily according to real directions, i.e. I-75 north might actually be going west. It sometimes is a bit difficult to figure out which is the right one.

The biggest roads are the Interstates (I-75, etc., red on our map). These usually have 6 lanes, speed limit is mostly 65 mph and they are not overcrowded. The crossings are on different levels. Those which are yellow are tollroads, i.e. one has to pay toll (/ \$ 0.10 - / \$ 1.00) every now and then. This is easiest with correct change as the automats can then be used, but there is always at least one box with an attendant as well. Note that pennies are not allowed in the automats. There

are hardly any queues and the whole system works well. The toll over bridges is often more expensive, about /\$ 2 - 3.

Next comes the US-roads (orange on the map). They are usually 4-laned and can be very crowded, especially when they go through cities. Part of the crossings are on the same level and there are a lot of traffic lights. Speed limit varies from 55 mph to 35 mph. Avoid using US-roads through for instance the Naples area and the area between St. Petersburg, Tampa and Clearwater. It could take hours to get through.

Next comes the Florida roads (FL-70), i.e. the small roads. These are 2-laned but aren't very crowded in less dense regions. Speed limit is maximum 55 mph.

There are also smaller roads (county, local).

In general the quality of the roads is very good (at least compared to Finland), it was easy to watch and identify a bird with binoculars while driving, this is not possible in Finland. There are some trafficrules that we don't have in Finland. Turning to the right despite red light is allowed if there is no sign prohibiting this (when pedestrian in crosswalk, for instance) giving way to traffic from the left of course. I heard somewhere that speedlimits may be exceeded by 10 miles (don't know if it is true). Trafficrules seem to be broken pretty often, but there are a lot of police about on the roads, so be careful.

We drove altogether 4930 km (3065 miles).

### **Locals**

People are friendly and easy to get along with. I found it rather amusing that Sir and Ma'am were used commonly, even to slobby-looking persons like me.

There seem to be very few 'real' birders around, those one sees are usually either foreigners or non-Florida residents. We met a couple and a man from New York, 3 Swedes, 2 men non-Florida, a couple and a man unidentified US-residents, 2 Dutch and 2 Englishmen. So don't count on hearing any news or getting help this way. Writing beforehand is the best way of getting some local knowledge. We saw a lot of people with binoculars, but mostly they are only intrested in Alligators or else they seem to be more photographers than birders. Very few carry a scope, but most people carry a camera, a lot of them with telelenses. There are quite a lot of dudes around though. Among the US-people we met, there seemed to be rather little intrest in identifying difficult species, like shorebirds.

### **Thieves**

We were warned a lot, especially the Miami area is supposed to be dangerous. Because of the druguse people need money so they steal. We always locked everything in the boot, trying not to leave anything lying about inside the car, thus making it look like the car was completely empty. Of course, it gets tedious to do this and away from Miami we sometimes left some papers, maps and such inside the car, but the valuables we always put in the boot. And we always cleaned the car out for the night. Luckily we had no problems with thieves at all. We even once forgot to lock the car (the boot was locked though) but nothing was taken. Walking about after dark is strongly discouraged and don't stop on the road if there is a car stopped there (they could fake

trouble). We didn't really walk about anywhere (except when birding). In certain areas (Miami) I suppose that could be dangerous.

### **Food**

Cheap according to Finnish standards. Hamburgers were cheap, but they didn't have much to choose from. Restaurant prices /\$ 4 - 15. There is a chain called Quincy's Family Steak House where one pays /\$ 5 for the Country Side Table which includes the salladtable, the hot meal table and the dessert table. There are several different dishes and it is possible to choose from tables laden with food and eat as much as one wants. The motel- and hotelprices do not usually include breakfast. There are a few 'Early bird' cafes where they serve breakfast early, sometimes as early as 5 am. We usually bought something from a shop for the morning and than ate dinner in the evening.

### **Motels**

Rather expensive, but it is much cheaper outside the tourist season,(i.e. april - november, I think) They usually tell you the pricexcluding tax which is about 11 /%. So if it's cheap the tax is slight, butat expensive places the tax lifts it even higher. The cheapest place we found costed /\$ 32.70 including tax. We didn't spend all that much time in looking for cheap places, there would have been no time left to sleep. We usually settled for something less than /\$ 50 depending on the area. Miami was difficult, most of the motels are on the beach and are concequently very expensive. After 2 hours of searching we found a place for /\$ 48 including tax. The cheaper motels are mostly built one room beside the other (not above each other) and they look scraggy and simple and a bit rundown (mostly whitepainted). If there's anything fancy about the place the prices will rise accordingly. Most motels have signs which announce whether they have vacancies or not which saves time. Late in the evening when you're desperate to get a place to sleep they will all be full, of course. Mostly where there is one motel, there are several, other areas are completely devoid of them. If you ask people for a cheap motel, they usually give you directions to a much too expensive one. The rooms have a tv, bathroom and shower (no handshowers though) and either one or two doublebeds. All prices mentioned are for a room for two.

The motels at which we stayed (including tax):

Miami Mardi Gras /\$ 48.00 3400 Biscayne Blvd.

Florida City Tropical Inn /\$ 33.30

Homestead Anhinga motel /\$ 38.85

Flamingo The Lodge /\$ 83.25

Sarasota Seals Cove Motel /\$ 43.20

Astor /\$ 32.70 cash only, east side of the bridge, north of the road

Hamilton Economy Motor Lodge /\$ 41.04

Marathon /\$ ~45 north side of road, just east of the Chamber of Commerce

The only place where we stayed for more than one night was Tropical Inn in Florida City (three nights).

### **Tides**

On the Atlantic Coast there are two tides every 24 hours, on the Gulf Coast only one. On the Keys the tide is different on every island and on both sides of the island (Gulf side and Atlantic

side). Especially in Everglades the tides are very irregular. Some places are essential to visit at high tide, others at low tide, so ask for information or look at the tide charts (In Everglades at the Visitor Center or Flamingo visitorroom (opposite the restaurant), in the Keys one can buy the chart (in a fishing magazine) for /\$ 1, or ask at the National Audubon Society Research Headquarters).

### **Wheather and Mosquitos**

While we were in the south it was warm and sunny, and we got burnt of course. Shorts and sandals was the thing to wear. It sometimes got a little cloudy at noon for which we were grateful. The temperature rose to over 80F. In the Keys and Everglades the wind was cooling, but otherwise it would have been too hot. The north is much cooler, but it varies greatly. On our first morning in Tallahassee it started raining and it rained for three days, with a few breaks in between. We also saw some fantastic thunders, with flashes every 3-seconds. We didn't really see any cloudy wheather, either it rained or it was sunny.

This was the driest winter in 61 years and it was really dry, which meant less birds by the roads in small puddles. Only the canals and bigger pools held birds. This meant that there were less mosquitos too, of course. Earlier in the winter there had hardly been any around, but now after a little rain, they were coming back and we had trouble with them in two places: Snake Bight Trail (big ones that were like a cloud around us (not nice to swallow) but it didn't hurt when they bit, the exposed areas didn't look too nice afterwards, however. The other place was Hickory Mound which harboured small ones whose sting was rather unpleasant. They don't seem to bother locals much, so one seemingly gets used to them with practice. We didn't use any repellents since we forgot to buy some, but I do recommend it (at Snake Bight anyway) and as covering clothing as you can bear. Gloves wouldn't be a bad idea and a head net would have been great as well. It isn't possible to stop and walk quietly and listen and watch birds if bothered by the mosquitos all the time. The mosquito situation may vary greatly from day to day, depending on temperature and wind, etc.

When we arrived (16.3) dawn was at about 6.15 am and dusk about 6.30 pm. 29.3 dawn was about 5.45 am and dusk about 7 pm.

### **Alligators and Snakes**

There are a lot of alligators around and even though they look safe, they shouldn't be approached. They can move very fast. Don't take risks.

There are a couple of snakes around, some harmful some not. We saw Brown Water Snake (non-poisonous) at Anhinga Trail and a snake that we identified as a possible Cottonmouth on Loop Road. Some of the snakes are very poisonous so be careful. Don't step over fallen trees (you can't see what's on the other side), but step on the tree and survey the ground on the other side before stepping down. Beware of Cottonmouths when walking along streams and lakes. Among the poisonous snakes are: Cottonmouth, Diamond Rattlesnake, Pigmy Rattlesnake, Coral Snake, Copperhead. There is a little booklet on Snakes of Florida by Owen Godwin which includes photos of the snakes, info about how to avoid them and what to do if bitten.

### **Parks**

There are a lot of Parks and Reserves about and mostly these are the only places that are good for

birding. Shorebirds can of course also be found on a lot of shores elsewhere. The Parks have restrooms, a Visitor Center (where they sell postcards, nature and bird books and advise). The personnel is mostly knowledgeable, much more so than they would be in Finland. Some of the parks have cafeterias as well. There are also a lot of trails for walking. Walking outside the trails, if not forbidden, would be very difficult since it's usually either wet or the vegetation is too dense. Some of the parks are arranged so that it isn't really necessary to do much walking, most of the prime spots are reached by car. But there are usually a few long trails as well, if you want to walk.

The entrance fee is mostly /\$ 2 for the car and driver and /\$ 1 each for the others, or /\$ 3 for the car and all those inside it. These prices are for non-Florida residents (Florida-residents get in for less). The fee is valid for the whole day (even if you go outside the park in between). Some of the parks have attendants at the gates, at others you put the money in an envelope, tear a part off as evidence and drop the envelope into a box. In Everglades, at the main gate, the fee is /\$ 5 and is valid for a week. This ticket is also valid if you go through the north gate. If you only wish to go through the north gate it is /\$ 3. A few parks are free.

Some of the parks are open 24 hours, others are not. In Everglades there is an attendant at the gate 24 hours, but the others which are open at night uses the envelope system. The parks which close for the night open at 7 am or 8 am and close at sunset.

### **Literature**

We had Lane's 'A Birder's Guide Florida' as our main site guide. This book is essential. But some of the roadnumbers are incorrect and the book is a little difficult to use for the foreign birder, since there is such an abundance of places mentioned. Most are mentioned rather briefly so it is difficult to pick out the good ones, i.e. those which are good enough to go a bit out the way to visit and those which one should stop at if going nearby. It is necessary to read almost the whole book to find out which are the most optimal sites. The best ones (about 10) are mentioned in a chapter for people in a hurry, but that's not quite enough for a two-week trip.

The other site guide we used was 'Birds of South Florida' by Connie Toops and Willard E. Dilley which has a lot more information about the sites included (Everglades, Big Cypress National Reserve, Corkscrew Swamp, Sanibel Island - Ding Darling, Loxahatchee, Biscayne, the Keys and parks in Miami). This book also contains a good species list and some nice photographs.

Since we had never been birding in the States before, we found that we needed a lot of field guides (especially photoguides) to deal with passerines and raptors. We had the third part of the Master Guide, Peterson (East), National Geographic Society, Eastern Birds by John Farrand Jr and for raptors 'Hawks' by William S. Clark and Brian K. Wheeler and 'Hawks in Flight' by Pete Dunne and Clay Sutton. These could all be bought at some of the Visitor Centers, but we couldn't find any books from outside the US anywhere, except Peterson's Mexico (in Miami).

We also had the following trip reports with us:

Florida 15.4 - 3.5 1981 by M. Powell et al  
Southern Florida 31.3 - 21.4 1983 by D. Page et al

The first of these was useful, the second just includes a species list.

Eustace Barnes and Mark Cwynarski visited Florida 6-14 March the same year. I've read their report afterwards and it contained some information new to me. (Site guide and a species list including also potential species.)

In *Birding World* 6,7 and 9//88 there is an article about Florida by Richard Smith.

After the trip I found the article 'Miami: An Urban Aviary' by Tony White (*The Naturalist News*, March 1989; *Winging It*, Volume 1, Number 7). Some information from this article is included in the site guide.

'The Eurasian Collared-Dove arrives in the Americas' by P. Villiam Smith (*American Birds*, Winter 1987 issue) describes the status, occurrence and identification of Collared and Ringed Turtle Doves.

A good map is of course essential, one on which there are inserts for the cities, and for Miami (if you intend to drive around there) a proper street map. We used the American Automobile Association map which had street maps of some of the bigger cities on the other side. The scale was 1 inch = 15.8 miles.

Most of the Parks have birdlists and maps of the area, ask for those that are not given to you as you pay the entrance fee.

We heard about two bookshops in Miami:

Bookstop on Kendall just west of road 826 on the south side of the road. Bookworks on Red Rd just north of 72 St on the east side of the road.

We visited Book Stop and they had a rather good collection of bird books. At least before we half cleared one of the shelves.

### **Comments on some interesting species**

There is a rather good list in Lane's Guide, but it was made for Americans, so here's my version.

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata Magnifigens* The Keys and Sanibel Island are the best spots. Keep a look out towards the sky, they fly quite near or over the islands. They arrive rather early, in the beginning of March.

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus* This species is easier to see than it's European counterpart, for instance at Anhinga Trail, Everglades or Shark Valley.

Wurdemann's Heron *Egretta alba* Look for this colour phase in the Keys, especially between Ohio Key and Summerland Key.

Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens* Not difficult in Everglades, the Keys or at Sanibel Island.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax violaceus* Apart from the Ding Darling refuge spot mentioned below, at dusk look below the bridges and at the rivers at shallow places.

Ducks *Anas* sp., *Aythya* sp. These overwinter in Florida, especially in the northern parts. Some winters numbers are low, as they overwinter further north. They start leaving in february and by the end of March there might not be many left. Loxahatchee, Myakka River State Park, St. Marks are good spots.

Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficans* This species was much more common than we were lead to think. Everglades is the best place, but we had them all over the country. Perhaps this was because it was already spring.

Snail Kite *Rosthamus sociabilis* During dry winters, this species is even more scarce than otherwise. But we heard that most people who had tried to see one had succeeded at Tamiami Trail, someone had seen 5 of them. Try near or to the west of the Miccosukkee restaurant.

Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus* This species is not common in the winter, you really shouldn't see any except in the Keys. On the other hand don't expect all Buteos in the Keys to be Broad-winged. We were told that people tended to identify too many Broad-wingeds.

Short-tailed Hawk *Buteo brachyurus* We dipped on this species, but look for it at the Anhinga Trail, Shark Valley and south of Palmdale.

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* Also rather common, especieally in the Everglades.

Crested Caracara *Polyborus plancus* The prarie area south of Lake Kissimmee is where to look. Try driving road 98 to road 721 and look especially carefully at this road. Then drive along 70 back towards Palmdale and Venus.

Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo* Try looking for it early in the morning.

Rails *Rallus* sp. Try Bailey Tract on Sanibel Island, Hickory Mound near Scanlon, Loxahatchee, Anhinga Trail, Corkscrew Swamp.

Caribbean Coot *Fulica caribaea* Don't try to see any of these, they're fakes. See the American Birds Winter 88 issue, 'White-shielded Coots in North America, a critical evaluation' by Don Roberson and Luis F. Babtista.

Limpkin *Aramus guarauna* Try evening and early morning or other dark hours at Tamiami Trail, Lake Woodruff, Loxahatchee, Shark Valley.

Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis* Easier than expected at Tamiami Trail and the Prarie.

Wilson's Plover *Charadrius wilsonia* Try Ohio Key, Fort de Soto.

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus* Now increasingly rare. In winter try Ohio Key or Virginia Key.

Yellowlegs *Tringa fla//mel* Use call to identify, Greater sounds just like Greenshank, Lesser is a bit like Redshank.



Shorebirds *Calidris*//*Charadrius*//*Limnodromus* Mudflats outside Flamingo, Ohio Key, Sanibel Island, Virginia Key.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* Try Merritt Island (bridge and Black Point), the Keys.

White-crowned Pigeon *Columba leucocephala* Try the Everglades (Mahogany Hammock) and the Keys. This seems to be a rather shy species, as most were seen taking off far away.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica* Area round Costello Hammock, James Archer Park (Homestead), Florida City.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* This species has come to stay and is spreading rapidly, but it is still regarded as an escape according to *Winging It*, July 1989 Issue. In the Winter Issue 1987 of *American Birds* there is an article about this species' arrival in the Americas. It says that Eurasian Collared Doves were brought to Nassau in the early 1970s, where they managed to escape and populate the Bahamas. Some of these birds spread to Florida (it's only 80 km from the nearest island). The population in the Bahamas is of Magnitude 5 (10,000 - 99,999), so the Dove could be seen as a wild species there. In my opinion the birds that have flown to Florida are genuine vagrants and not escapes if one considers the Bahama population to be wild. There seems to be no evidence that Collared Doves have been brought to Florida in captivity, nor that they would have arrived from somewhere else. The Florida population was of at least Magnitude 4 (1000 - 9999) in 1987. There is also a small population in the Panhandle, so it seems probable that the species will continue to spread westwards. Collared also occurs in the St. Petersburg area and hybrids with Ringed Turtle have been seen. The two species are most easily separated by voice and tail coloration. Ringed Turtle has outer web of outermost tailfeathers white. It is slightly smaller and lighter in colour. The article also considers the species status of Ringed Turtle. It seems that it may not be a valid species at all and is thus referred to as *S. 'risoria'* or Domesticated African Collared Dove (African Collared *S. roseogrisea* is regarded as the progenitor of '*risoria*').

Ringed Turtle Dove *Streptopelia risoria* See these in St. Petersburg, preferably nowhere else. Collared Dove also occurs in St. Petersburg so beware of confusion.

Parrots Lots of species have escaped, especially in the Miami area and in the Keys, almost anything could be found. See site description.

Canary-winged Parakeet *Brotogeris versicolorus* This is the only countable parrot. Try Matheson Hammock, outside the Parrot Jungle (where they don't keep Canary-winged's, because there are enough of them outside), Ingraham Highway, Fair Havens Nursing Home.

Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus* Try the Baptist Hospital, Fair Havens Nursing Home (Miami) or James Archer Park (Homestead).

Mangrove Cuckoo *Coccyzus minor* Rare in winter, even the residents are happy to see one. Try asking around for information, Everglades (Bear Lake Trail), the Keys.

Burrowing Owl *Athene cunicularia* Try Cape Coral, Ft. Meyers to the west of Del Prado Blvd

between Coronado Pkw and Shel Pk Blvd. Or Marathon, the Keys Golf Course (After the airport turn left towards Sombrero Beach and take Sombrero Blvd to the right). Or on the prairie, road 721.

Barred Owl *Strix varia* Try Mahogany Hammock, Everglades.

Whip-poor-will *Caprimulgus vociferus* The roads from Anhinga Trail towards Flamingo should be good for nightlistening. Several groups had them, even though we dipped. At Ft. Meyers the first arrived end of March.

Chuck-wills widow *Caprimulgus carolinensis* Try Matheson Hammock.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris* This species is tiny. Much smaller than the sunbirds of the old world. In flight I could hardly distinguish it from an insect. It buzzes past in the same way an insect does, one doesn't see anything of the body, just the shadow of the wings. Look for them around orchid trees.

Red-cockaded Woodpecker *Picoides borealis* Try asking for a known site or look into old pine woods in north and central Florida, for instance Ocala.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius* Woods, Costello Hammock.

Cave Swallow *Hirundo fulva* Look under the bridge at Cutler Ridge, Miami. Bahama Swallow has been recorded here several times, too.

Kingbirds, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher Try the Keys, especially Rowell's Marina on Key Largo, the Fire station area on Stock Island and the airport on Marathon.

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus* Try Costello Hammock (Miami) or Snake Bight Trail (Everglades).

Scrub Jay *Aphelocoma coerulescens* At Lake Kissimmee State Park near the gates. Offer peanuts. Richard Smith (Birding World) says that they are easy to find in Highlands Hammock as well. We didn't look for them there (didn't offer peanuts) so we didn't see any.

American/Fish Crow *C. bra/oss* These are very much alike. Identify by call. Fish Crow has a two-part call rather like Jackdaw. American Crow has a one-part gruff call more like the European Crow.

Titmice, Nuthatches Northern part of the country.

Hill Myna, Chestnut-fronted Macaw Matheson Hammock.

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* Miami, Royal Palm Tennis Court, see site description.

Pine Warbler *Dendroica pinus* Look in pine woods, at Venus, Corkscrew Swamp, Ocala.

Louisiana Waterthrush *Seiurus motacilla* Look for this species at small creeks.

Indigo and Painted Bunting *Passerina cyanea* and siris At Costello Hammock, see site description.

Spot-breasted Oriole *Icterus pectoralis* Miami, see site description.

### **Site Guide**

For the rest of our records at the various sites, please refer to the itinerary. The sites are arranged in the order we travelled. The numbers after the site names are pagenumbers in the Lane's Guide (L) and the South Florida Guide (SF). If there is a map on another page this page is mentioned.

#### Everglades (L91, SF30, map 10,11,13)

Entrance, see above. The Visitor Center is outside the gates and is open 8 am to 4 pm. They have books and a video show (ask about tides). There is also a Visitor Center at Royal Palm Hammock (Anhinga Trail) open 8 am to 4 pm + restrooms, and snacks and soft drinks can be bought from an automat. The next place with freshments and restrooms is Flamingo.

#### Anhinga Trail (L92, SF30)

It is a half mile long boardwalk through a swamp. Except for very early in the morning there are lots of people and this is a problem if you want to photograph since the boardwalk trembles if anyone is walking on it less than 500 feet away. The birds are very tame, some of them so much so that they will allow you to touch them. This is a very good place to photograph Purple Gallinule, Great Blue Heron, Double-crested Cormorant, Green-backed Heron, Anhingas, Alligators and Snakes (Brown Water Snake).

#### Gumbo Limbo Trail (L92, SF30)

This is half mile loop which goes through a dark hammock. We only went here once and didn't see anything except a Hermit Thrush. Another birder told us it's usually rather empty, but 'Birds of South Florida' claim that the hammock is good for Pileated Woodpecker, Barred Owl, Great Crested Flycatcher, Ovenbird and wintering warblers.

#### Pa-hay-okee Overlook (L93, SF31)

This is a short boardwalk which goes through cypress and sawgrass. We didn't see anything, but it could possibly be good as a watchingpoint for raptors.

#### Mahogany Hammock (L93, SF31)

Another short boardwalk loop. This is supposed to be very good for Barred Owl and we saw one adult and a nest with two young. Some 4-5 pairs were supposed to be nesting in the area. Also supposed to be good for White-crowned Pigeon but we didn't see any here, although we had them in several other places.

#### Paurotis Pond (L93)

This is a large pond which was rather empty, a few ducks at the far end and a few waders. We had Pelicans, White ibis and White-eagle in the air though. The pond can be watched from the parking area.

### Nine Mile Pond (L93, SF32)

A rather big pond, but all birds identifiable with a scope. Good for Egrets, terns, herons. We had Roseate Spoonbill and White-crowned Pigeon as well. This was the best pond in our opinion.

### Coot Bay Pond (L94, SF33)

One Thick-billed Grebe, nothing else.

### Mrazek Pond (L94, SF33)

This is a small pond which is reputed to be very good a short time of the year when it is full of fish (January - April). It was now almost completely dried out, not filled with a little of water as it should be, but there were a few Blue-winged Teals and a Spotted Sandpiper.

### West Lake (L94, SF32)

This was the best place for ducks in the Everglades, most of them Blue-winged teals and Mottled ducks. This lake can be watched from two spots, the first is at the restrooms in the parking lot, the second is from the trail (which goes to the lake, just a short trail). Most of the birds were in the lagoon by the restrooms, but there were a lot of Coots out in the lake.

### Snake Bight Trail (L94, SF32)

The Trail is about 2 miles, goes through Red and Black Mangrove and follows a 'canal' where we saw a Louisiana Waterthrush (the canal is good for them, but it is a bit difficult to get good views of the canal as you walk by it as the vegetation is rather dense. This place is full of mosquitos (see above) but should also be one of the best places for passerines. But move slowly. We rushed through (without repellent it wouldn't have been easy to do anything else) and hardly saw anything, but then we arrived about 10 am and we should have been there at dawn. Walking at a very fast pace (stopping for just a few birds) it took us about 35 minutes to reach the beach. There is a boardwalk 100 feet out to a platform from where there is a good view of the area. Unfortunately we had been told that the best time was low-tide which was quite wrong (maybe something near high tide would be the best?) because the mudflats were endless and the birds miles away. And walking out on the flats didn't seem to be a good idea. I don't know if it is allowed or not, but you would need either to go barefoot, use wellingtons, or get very muddy.

### Rowdy Bend Trail (L94)

This trail wasn't on the map and we only went there to twitch Mangrove Cuckoo, but it's probably good for warblers. It's about 2 miles south of Snake Bight, on the same side of the road. The trail first goes in a short way (about a 100 yards), there is a gate in front and the road goes to the left. We only went as far as that gate.

### Bear Lake Trail (L94, SF34)

This is supposed to be good for passerines, mangrove cuckoo and mosquitos but we didn't visit it since time did not permit.

### Flamingo (L94, SF34)

Here we have the Lodge (prices see above), camping area, cottages (which must be hired beforehand, or they will be occupied), restaurant, shop, harbour and birds.

At low tide there will be two sandbanks out in the bay in front of the restaurant. In the evenings the sun is behind the back when watching from the restaurant. There is a terrace on the second

floor where one can get good views with a telescope (without one, one is rather lost, the birds are far away). With a telescope (27x) we could just identify Dunlins and Knots, but the peeps were too small. These sandbanks were completely packed with shorebirds (until two Bald Eagles appeared and scared them off). There are also two islands, one of which is a bird sanctuary. These harbour a lot of waders.

The Camping-ground and the rest of Flamingo are worth exploring, I gather, but we did not have time to do this.

#### Eco Pond (L94, SF34)

Here is a big colony of White ibises but also some other birds like egrets, herons and passerines. Birding here at sun-up was quite nice, since the light came through so it was even possible to photograph. We had our only Northern Waterthrush here. There is a platform about 2 metres above the ground for better views. A guided tour starts here for 'dudes'. The guide didn't seem to know very much, however.

#### Tamiami Trail (L89, SF35, map 13)

There are canals on at least one side of the road at least from FL-27 westwards, but they looked rather barren in the beginning. We stopped at a place or two where we could see birds in the canals, but there were only coots, moorhens, egrets and herons.

We stopped at Shark Walley, but didn't go into the reserve since we were told that the Yellow-crowned Night-Herons weren't there any longer and that the whole area was very dry (getting dryer every year) and that all that could be seen were a few egrets, herons and Anhingas. Later, some birders told us that it had been possible to get rather close to the birds (for photography) but they hadn't seen anything special there either.

Opposite Shark Walley, on the north side of the road, is the Indian Restaurant Miccosukkee, which is mentioned in the Lane Guide. We did what the Guide said, ordered a beer and sat down on the terrace to drink it. Sure enough, ten minutes later, a Snail Kite was spotted, moving over the fields some 3000 feet away. It didn't come close however, but we were able to watch it for some five minutes and were quite satisfied.

A few hundred yards ahead was a good spot for stopping and scanning the fields to the north. Lots of waders of course, but also some Greater Yellowlegs, a Limpkin and two Sandhill Cranes. It was late afternoon and there really was a lot of flying about everywhere.

#### Loop Road FL-94 (L90, SF37)

Just before the Cypress region starts, there is a small dirt road to the left, with a sign to some chapel, the road really looks like nothing, but gets a little better. The telegraph poles have big holes and we found a Screech-Owl in one of them. Later on we saw a Barred Owl in a treetop. By now it was getting dark, but we had some passerines as well. I liked the quietness and the vegetation in there. The road gets rather bad about halfway (for a few miles) but later it gets better again. We had no trouble going through, but it wasn't possible to exceed 10-20 miles an hour on the bad part, so it takes some time. The road is about 24 miles long, it returns to Tamiami Trail near Monroe Station.

#### Corkscrew Swamp (L76, SF39)

We never visited this swamp since we were told that it was very dry and that we wouldn't find anything new there. I suppose that it is a very good place though, and certainly worth a visit under other circumstances. It should be good for Waders and passerines.

#### Sanibel Island (L71, SF41, map 15)

The bridge to the island is a tollbridge. Most of the island is worth exploring. We were there on a Sunday, which was a mistake, but I suppose at that time of the year, the place is always stuffed with sun-bathers. The traffic on the mainroad is also slow (small road, lots of traffic), so coming very early in the morning would be a good idea.

#### Ding Darling Wildlife Refuge (L72)

The entrance fee to the park is /\$ 3. Envelopesystem, but an attendant is available in the parking lot office hours if you need change. There is a visitor center with books and some stuffed animals and birds. The one-way road which goes through the area conveniently goes through the good areas, so it isn't necessary to walk anywhere. There is a trail marked on the map, but it was closed due to some nesting. The ponds are big and the shorebirds are partly too far away to be identified, even some of the waders are a bit too far away. There is an observation tower at the best spot for shorebirds. Just before the park ends, on the left side after a bend, there are some Yellow-crowned Night-Herons.

#### Bailey Tract (L72, map 15)

There are a few ponds with a trail around and between them. These ponds should be good for rails (we didn't see any), herons, egrets, passerines. A nice place.

#### Captiva Island (L72, map 15)

We also visited this island but the beaches were so full of people that the birds had a hard time squeezing in. We saw a few Sanderlings, Willets and Turnstones. We didn't see any Frigatebirds even though next to the Keys, Sanibel Island should be the best place for them.

#### Cape Coral, Ft. Meyers

The best place for Burrowing Owl in the country. Look for them at the unused lots. If you dip here, try a bit further to the west. They are easy to see during the day.

#### Myakka River State Park (L52, map 17)

Entrance fee /\$ 3, open 8 am - sunset. There is a 6-mile road that goes through this area to the gate on the other side (which is open during weekends only). The road first passes through woodland (the first place in the south where we had more than just a few passerines) which is varied, interesting and beautiful. Stop frequently and listen. Then there is a pond on the righthand side (with picnic tables) The pond itself was rather empty, but on the other side we had a Turkey, the only one we managed to see on the whole trip. The Turkey isn't easy to see and so try to be there early in the morning. Some people told us that if you were the first to go through the area you might see larger mammals, which then would disappear. We didn't see any, but then we weren't very interested in them. We were there at 8.00 am but there was a lot of traffic on the road already, we couldn't quite make out if they were locals who use the road for their daily travel.

Next there are larger ponds on the lefthand side and these are good for egrets, herons, ibises and ducks. This was the only place where we had Ring-necked Duck, and we had a Fulvous

Whistling-duck and a Cinnamon Teal here as well (none were seen elsewhere).

In the middle of the area a road to the left leads to the restrooms, a shop / Cafeteria and a big open lake with hardly any birds.

Continuing on the main road the north end of the big lake comes into view. At the northernmost end there is a short boardwalk out in the lake, and here there were some ducks, herons, etc.

#### Keys near Sarasoto

These Keys (Siesta Key, Lido Key, Longboat Key, Anna Maria Key) are situated on the coast from Sarasota to Bradendon. They are probably all good for shorebirds, we only visited Siesta Key briefly. Richard Smith (Birding World), says that at the harbour north of the causeway to Lido Key there is a colony of Rough-winged Swallows. We didn't remember this information when we passed the spot, so we didn't check it. But we dipped on Rough-winged. I don't know whether it is a difficult species or if we just didn't look close enough at the swallows.

#### Fort De Soto, Mullet Key (L49, map 19)

No entrance fee or other facilities. This area seems to be for people who want to go to the beach. There were shorebirds in two places. Where the road ends on the east side there was a flock on the south shore. It was possible to drive along the beach and use the car as a hide.

On the west side (more tourists) there was a long sandbank (no road, leave the car in the parking lot) which could be walked along. The shorebirds we saw were rather near the beginning, but we didn't go in for a closer look as time did once again not permit it.

#### Pine Island (L46)

We reached this area when it was almost dark, so we may not have seen it in the right light. The road first traverses a marshy area which might be good for waders, shorebirds, Clapper and Virginia Rails, Sharp-tailed and Seaside Sparrows. Where the road ends at the point there is a parking lot. There were gulls and shorebirds on the shore (shorebirds on the westside). We tried to get closer to the birds, but it was difficult, since all the roads were private with Keep Out signs.

#### St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge (L31, map 21)

At New Port, where the road to St. Marks begins, we had many new species of songbird. The Park itself is very good for wildfowl and seabirds. Entrance fee /\$ 3 (for car with 2 persons), envelope system. The road that leads to the beach is 7 miles long from the Visitor Center (from the main road to the Visitor Center it's a few miles as well and this area is worth exploring for passerines. The Parking lot area at the center was quite good for passerines as well. We didn't walk any of the longer trails (partly due to rain) but there are several. Between the Visitor Center and the beach there are several big ponds. There is a lighthouse on the beach and this is a good seawatching point. There is also a small pond nearby. The Visitor Center is open 8 am - 4.15 pm Monday - Friday and 10 am - 5 pm Saturday - Sunday.

### Wakulla Beach (L32, map 21)

Take the right road (to Shell Point) and drive to the end. The beach is good for shorebirds.

### Hickory Mound, Scanlon (L34)

3.8 miles past the junction of FL-14 there is a dirt road posted to Hickory Mound. Take this to the ponds (9 miles). This was a very good place for rails, the only place where we had them actually. They could be seen in the canal (ditch) between the ponds and the road. There were also a few sandbanks on which a lot of shorebirds rested. This was the only place except Snake Bight Trail where we had mosquitos, but these were much smaller and very naughty.

### Paynes Prairie State Reserve (L37, map 23)

Entrance fee /\$ 2, open 8 am - sunset. We only went here because we drove past it, but it wasn't worth the visit. There was a visitor's center with a good view northwards, but few birds about. The Visitor Center is closed Mondays and Tuesdays.

### Lake Woodruff (L54)

No entrance fee, attendants or facilities. One chemical toilet in the parking lot. Walk round the ponds for waders, ducks, sparrows and shorebirds (Tringa species). There is a short trail in the woods, but we didn't go there.

### St. Merritt Island (L65, map 25)

No entrance fee. Great Place. Take road 402 (or 406, this road is diffusely numbered so I'm not sure which is the correct number) from Titusville over the bridge to Merritt Island. (This bridge is the northernmost of the bridges leading to the island.) Where the bridge ends there is parking on the righthand side. Walk over to the left side and scan the area for Bonaparte's Gull. About a hundred yards further on there is a small road the right. There are signs saying 'Hunting Area'. This road circles some ponds and then returns to the mainroad. When we were there (high tide) the ponds were filled with shorebirds and ducks and one flock of about 5000 coots which was just a black mass. Photography was quite good from the car. Avocets, Great Northern Diver, Grey Plover, Killdeer, Black-winged Stilt, Bonaparte's Gull.

On the other side of the Road, the Blackpoint Wildlife drive begins. This is a one-way road with markers on the good spots. Stop frequently, scan the shore, ponds and other areas, it seemed to be packed with shorebirds, Gulls and Waders. We had a lot of Skimmers here as well.

It is forbidden to drive on the road towards the Spacecenter, but we had 2 Eagle Owls at the gate.

We didn't have time to visit the shore to the north which is supposed to be good too.

In Titusville there is a Quincy's Family Steak House (on the road going northwards).

### Lake Kissimmee State Park (L59, map 26)

Entrance fee /\$ 3, open 7 am - sunset. We went here to see Scrub Jay, as we had been told they were very tame at the gate. Take some peanuts with you and offer them. Some of the birds will feed from the hand, others will only take from the ground. There were also a few Rufous-headed Towhees around. It is forbidden to stop the car on the road which goes through the reserve, and



as there are no parking lots on the way to the other end, birding has to be done there, but there wasn't much to see there. There is a tower with good views over a marsh (but this was dry now), there were some Bald Eagles, a few Cranes, but not really worth going there I thought.

We only had three Scrub Jays outside this park, all on 'the prairie'.

#### Highlands Hammock State Park (L59)

Open 8 am - sunset. Here they only asked us to pay the Florida resident fee /\$ 1.50. The area was under repair and this meant that the swamp, the only area which seemed interesting, was unaccessible, so I couldn't really say anything about the area, but it didn't seem good enough to be included in a two-week stay. There was a lot of hammock and we hoped for Pine Warbler. But the whole place was very quiet (it was in the middle of the day). According to Richard Smith (Birding World) there should be Scrub Jays here as well.

#### The Prairie (L61)

We drove along US-98 to 721, south to FL-70 and then back along FL-70 to US-27. We had all birds on 721, which included three Caracaras, Cowbirds and Sandhill Cranes. We didn't see any Burrowing Owls, but they're supposed to be along here somewhere.

#### Old Venus (L62)

There is a small wood here, which is supposed to be good for Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Pine Warbler and Bachman's Sparrow. We had one Pine Warbler here, the only one of our trip. Watch for Short-tailed Hawk along the road.

Stop 2 miles south of Palmdale and look for Short-tailed Hawk. We didn't see any, but we had several Swallow-tailed Kites.

#### Loxahatchee (L80, SF42)

Entrance fee /\$ 3. Gates close automatically at 7 pm so don't get left inside. There is a short trail through a swamp and some ponds which can be walked around. When we visited the area it was very dry, almost no water in the ponds and consequently almost no ducks, i.e. only a few Mottled Ducks. When dusk came a lot of egrets and herons came in to roost in some trees. This area is supposed to be good for Snail Kite but we didn't see any. It's rather difficult to see the large marsh beyond the ponds because of a row of trees, so one has to make do with the ponds. I read somewhere something about a snail farm which would be good for the Kites, but I don't know anything about its whereabouts. Loxahatchee is supposed to be very good for ducks.

#### Miami

Information on Fuch's Park, James Archer Park (species list above), Fair Havens Nursing Home, Ingraham Highway and the Parrot Jungle was taken from 'Miami: An Urban Aviary'. We did not have the information at the time of the trip, so we did not visit these sites. Some additional information on Royal Palm Tennis Court has been added from this article to the site information below. The map below is also from this article.

#### Royal Palm Tennis Court

It is situated near the crossing of SW 72nd Ave. and SW 98 St. Go here for Red-whiskered Bulbul. We saw about 7. If you dip on Red-whiskered here, head up 98th St., turn south on 72 Ave and then east into 99th Court. Check the ornamental trees at the end of this dead-end road.

#### Forchgott's

Number 6901 on SW 96th St. Art and Betty Forchgott has Red-whiskered Bulbul and Spot-breasted Oriole in the garden and round the house and she can whistle them up and knows of their whereabouts. She also keeps a visitors book, be sure to sign it.

#### Parrot Jungle

It is situated at the corner of 112th St. and Red Road (57th Ave). Free-living parrots are attracted to this site, so drive around it and check the trees.

#### Matheson Hammock (L87, SF53)

Situated in South Miami near the beach. Whip-poor-will, Hill Mynah, Canary-winged Parakeet and Parrots.

#### Ingraham Highway

Follow Old Cutler Road from Matheson Hammock to Coral Gables Waterway, then turn right onto Ingraham Highway. Look for Hill Mynas, Canary-winged Parakeets, and macaws. Use your ears to locate the birds as this is a residential area. Go north on 37th Aven, turn right on Poinciana Ave and go left on Main Highway toward Coconut Grove.

#### Fuch's Park

Head west on Dixie Highway (route 1) and take it south until you get to Fuch's Park at Dixie Highway and SW 80th Street. Across 80th St. from the park is an apartment building with Australian Pines (causarina trees). Hundreds of parrots roost in these trees each night. They can be seen returning right at dusk. The birds are skittish, and when there are observers present, they delay their reuturn until the last possible moment before dark. Orange-winged Parrots are presently the most common species at the roost, but over ten species have been found here.

#### Fair Havens Nursing Home

Situated on Curtiss Parkway just north of Miami International Airport. Go here for Monk and Canary-winged Parakeets.

#### Virginia Key

The bridge (on the island side) was very good for photography (terns, pelicans, Turnstone, Blue Heron) since the birds were very tame. The Beach should be good for shorebirds (including Piping Plover) but we didn't go there, since at that stage we didn't know which way to go. There is a toll fee of /\$2 to get to the Beach.

#### Costello Hammock (L89, SF51)

To get there, get of the Turnpike at Cutler Ridge, drive 216 St. (Hainlin Mill Dr.) to 162 ave., turn left. The park is on the left. Drive in through the main gates and park in the parking lot. In front of you there is an office with restrooms. The feeders are behind the office. If they are empty ask the office personnel to put out some more feed. Sit down and wait. The birds are rather tame. Photographing is good except for the light, the feeders are mostly in the shade. I'd say evening is

the best time lightwise.

### The Keys (SF-45)

Except for the sites mentioned below, we didn't have much luck on the spots in the Keys Guide. We didn't go to the Tortugas because the flights were full.

### Upper Key Largo

We drove over Car Sound Bridge at sun-down so I don't know anything about it, but it should be good for sea-watching. Just past the bridge there are some ponds (called the Crocodile Lakes) (ducks, etc.).

### Key Largo MM 104.6 (Rowell's Marina)

This place is good for Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (which we did see) and Gray Kingbird (which we didn't) and other Kingbirds.

### Plantation Key MM 89 (National Audubon Society Research HQ) (L96)

Take Indian Mound Trail towards the north. The office is open officehours, but the manager lives across the road and may come over to show you around and give advice if he sees you poking around after closing hours. Anyway, the 'Guide to Birding in the Keys' should be available outside the office. Ask about tides.

### Grassy Key, Lake Edna (L97)

There are a few ponds here, drive around all of them. Shorebirds and Waders.

### Missouri Key (L97)

On the north side of the bridge there are some mudflats. These can be viewed from the old bridge.

### Ohio Key (L97)

Absolutely the best place for shorebirds. Go here an hour or two before high tide. The birds will first be on the shore, then when hightide comes they will move to the pond. We had Piping Plovers, Wilson's Plovers, Pectoral Sandpiper, Least Tern and about 1800 other shorebirds here. Photography is good on the shore, but the pond is a little muddy, so getting close is difficult. The area is private property, ask for permission at the service station on the other side of the road.

### No Name Key (L98)

Yellow-crowned Herons under the bridge at sun-down. Lots of tame animals (including deer) on the road, drive slowly.

### Dry Tortugas (L102, SF49)

Phone a couple of days beforehand to ensure a seat on the plane. Price was currently /\$ 99 + /\$ 6 tax per person (children under 6 /\$ 53.00) and the only firm flying there was based at Key West (or in fact on the island just before, Stock Island) 'Key West Seaplane Service' (5603 Jr. College Rd, Key West, Florida 33040, phone (305) 294-6978). These halfday trips departs 8.00 and 12.00. On demand flights are available. All flights provide forty minutes of sightseeing each way and approximately two and one-quarter hours on the island.

It is also possible to stay over-night. There is a drinking fountain with purified rain water. There are restrooms, but no showers. The price if you stay over-night is /\$ 175 + /\$ 10 tax. Max stay is 14 days.

The seaplane brochure says that 'the most bird activity is March through September'. Eustace Barnes and Mark Cwynarski mention 2000 Brown Noddy and 100.000 Sooty Tern there 13 March, but apparently little else. The vagrants occur later, in April and May.

Flights are made by reservation only. A /\$ 50.00 deposit per person is required on advance reservations. Credit cards and cash are acceptable at the time of take off.

## **Itinerary**

### Wednesday, 15th March

We departed from Helsinki, Finland 14.05 local time to New York which we reached 17.25 (local time). We started from New York 20.30 and arrived 23.00. Our luggage (2 out of 3 pieces) was left behind in New York, because it had not reached the interline in time. Our flight was on time though, and we had three hours to transfer in, so I suppose somebody messed it up. That meant that we had to stay in Miami overnight, which we had not planned to do. They told us the luggage would arrive about noon. When we had found out that the luggage was not lost and would arrive it was already 1 am. We got our car from the Avis counter (situated at the baggage claim area) and tried to find a motel. We did find some expensive ones over 70 dollars for a room), but finding a cheap one was really difficult. Finally, after two hours driving around, we were lucky. Look for the motels near the beach, not the interior. We also learnt that in Miami, a street map is needed. The Avenues go from north to south and the Streets from east to west. They are numbered but sometimes the roads don't go through the whole city, in which case the numbers are missing, so read the map carefully.

### Thursday, 16th Mars

We woke at 9 and left at once for Virginia Key and spent the forenoon there. After noon we went to the airport to get our luggage and it had arrived. We then drove straight to the Everglades. Since there was a lot of stopping on the way, when we finally got to the Everglades it was already rather late, so we decided to visit only the Anhinga trail and the Gumbo Limbo Trail. It got dark there and we tried to listen to Nightjars on our way back to Florida City, but heard nothing.

The night was spent at the Tropical Inn. There was a rather peculiar smell in the room, but since it was cheap we were satisfied.

### Friday, 17th Mars

The next day was spent in the Everglades. We had breakfast in Florida City (Earlybird breakfast place which opened at 5 am). We spent some time on the way of course, so again we did not get to Everglades very early. We visited the Pa-hay okee, which produced nothing, walked round the Mahogany Hammock where we found an adult Barred Owl and later we were shown a nest of the same species.

We had a quick look at Paurotis pond and saw our first Bald Eagle soaring far away, we also had our first White ibis flying past. A Lesser Scaup female and 17 White Pelicans were also

recorded.

The Nine Mile Pond was a very good spot, with a lot of birds and good possibilities for photography (Forster's and Caspian Terns that flew past and Herons and Egrets that came close). Beware of the Crows though. I left a film on one of the tables and moved 10 metres away to photograph a Little Blue Heron. Suddenly I noticed a crow standing beside the film and when I tried to scare it away, it took the film in one foot and flew off with it over the wood. I ran out in the road (on the other side of the wood) and miraculously the crow had landed with the film beside the mainroad. It had tried to open the pack, but had not succeeded with the plastic. As it was standing a feet away from the film I scared it off and managed to retrieve my film undamaged.

We then noticed that it was getting late and decided that we would not have time to do Snake Bight Trail, so we drove straight to Flamingo, reserved a hotelroom and explored Eco pond. We then found that the shorebirds had all collected on two sandbanks visible from the restaurant and spend the rest of the evening trying to identify the sandpipers, but even though the light was good, we weren't quite able to identify the peeps. We then ate a good meal at the restaurant which wasn't too expensive.

#### Saturday, 18th Mars

We first went to the Eco Pond and had the only Smooth-billed Ani of our entire trip there. With more time available it would have been a good spot for photography, the light was from the right direction in the morning.

We ate a quick breakfast at the restaurant, forgot to buy insect repellent and went to Snake Bight Trail. Again we were too late as it was already about 10 am, and most of the birds had quitened. I suppose there weren't all that many mosquitos about (because of the little rain), but quite too many for us. It wasn't really possible to stop without getting both eaten all over and getting a lot of them in the mouth, nose and throat. So when we did see a bird, a minute or two was all we could stand to watch it. We should of course, have walked very slowly along the track and stopped frequently and listened, which we certainly didn't. We walked as fast as we could, without actually running. We managed two new species though, Black-and-white Warbler and White-eyed Vireo. The beach was a big disappointment, we had been told that lowtide would be good, but the birds were terribly far away and it didn't look recommendable to leave the platform and start walking in the mud. We stayed a while to get relief from the mosquitos and saw two Bald Eagles and a few shorebirds flying past as well as our first Reddish Egret and some other waders.

On the way back we walked just as fast and saw the same species.

We then left Everglades and drove straight to Tamiami Trail. The canal seemed rather empty, sterile sort of. We went to the Shark Valley entrance since we had a ticket for the Everglades, but when we were told that the Valley was very dry, we decided not to go there at all. We heard later from a group who had been there, that they had seen some passerines and waders, but nothing we hadn't seen on the whole trip.

We had the beer and the Snail Kite at the restaurant on the opposite side of the road. Afterwards we drove towards the west trying to stop at good looking places and found our first Sandhill

Cranes and a Limpkin.

It was again getting late and we decided to spend what time was left driving along Loop Road. There wasn't very many birds about, but we had three new species (Screech-owl, Great Crested Flycatcher and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher). When we found the flycatcher it was already almost completely dark and we heard it whistling a long time, before I finally managed to pinpoint it in a bush only 2 metres from where I stood. I just had time to see enough to get an identification and then it flew off. The road had a nice quietness about it and the vegetation was also rather varied. There were some cars driving both ways though, that would go rather fast and push up a lot of dust.

It got dark about halfway through. When we got back to the main road, we found a phone-booth and phoned Max, with whom we were to stay the next night.

### Sunday, 19th Mars

We talked with Max and Ben in the morning and got a lot of good advice. At about 10 am we left for Sanibel Island. On the way through the city we twitched Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. We saw 3 birds out of the five supposed to be present on Bass Rd (between Sumerlin Rd and Gladiolus Rd).

Sanibel at this time of the day was full of traffic. We first went to the Ding Darling Reserve. We drove slowly along the road, met two American birders and saw a lot of waders and shorebirds. Unfortunately most of the shorebirds frequented an area which was behind some trees and rather far away. Every now and then a flock would fly to another spot nearer the road, sometimes almost colliding with us. This spot could be watched both from the road and from the observation tower. Some Spoonbills also flew around the tower. We had our first Prairie Warbler here. The area round the tower seemed to be the best. After that the road went through some wood which seemed rather empty, except for the breeding Yellow-crowned Herons.

After having a beer we went to the northern part of the island and discovered that the beaches were literally covered with sunbathers. We did see some Willets and Sanderlings, but birding in such a crowd is not very nice so we left soon, after having tried to see some seabirds without any luck.

Next we went to the harbour on the north side of the island, bought some ice-cream and tried to photograph a Little Blue Heron on the beach.

The last place to visit was the Bailey Tract pond area. There are several rather big ponds with some trees in between. Consequently it is necessary to walk the whole area to be sure that one has seen all the ponds. We did not have time to do this, but walked around part of the area with an Englishman. Some passerines were seen (our first Rufous-sided Towhee), some waders and a couple of Black-winged Stilts. Though the area was supposed to be good for crakes, we didn't see any. But it was a nice place.

The Englishman told us he had seen lots of shorebirds by the bridge which had been very tame (Westerns etc.) and we tried to find those, but no luck.

We drove straight to Cape Coral which we had been told was one of the best places for

Burrowing Owls in the country. Even though it was almost dark we managed to spot one immediately on a telegraph line. Another was later seen in the headlights.

We wanted to be near Myakka State River Park in the morning so we drove northwards. We had a great difficulty in finding a motel, however. Either there weren't any of the cheap kind or then they were occupied. In the end, just as we were about to give up and sleep in the car, we found a cheap motel with one room left.

### Monday, 20th Mars

As the park would open at 8 am we spent some time on the shore on an island called Siesta Key. A great many tourists were already walking along the beach as this was hotelcountry, but there was a big flock of shorebirds present anyway. It consisted of Knots and Sanderlings and they seemed to be very tame. Unfortunately the people walking on the beach didn't seem to understand that as we were photographing the birds we didn't want them flushed away. A woman walked through the flock so that it moved to the shade, so we stopped photographing and left for Myakka.

At 8 am sharp we were at the gates, thinking that we would be the first to drive through the park, but it seemed as though there were a great many locals coming from the other direction so it was not that quiet after all.

Quite near the gate there was a good area for passerines with nice vegetation and we spent some time here and had a lot of ticks. Carolina and House Wren, Solitary Vireo, Parula, Bobwhite, Kinglet and Great Crested Flycatcher. Further along on the right hand side there was a picnic table by a pond. The pond was rather empty but we spotted a Turkey on the other side of the pond. It was only briefly in sight as it moved in the high grass.

The best area was in the middle of the reserve with some marshy water where there was a lot of waders and wildfowl. These were rather far away, but with a scope it was quite possible to identify them. We found the only Whistling Duck of the trip here and to our surprise a male Cinnamon Teal in a flock of Blue-winged Teals. It was rather far away, but as the light was good it was easy to identify. There were also quite a few Green-winged Teals about and some Ring-necked Ducks. This pond was the best of the whole trip for waterfowl, both numbers and species.

After this it got emptier. We visited the cafeteria and spotted a Bald Eagle flying over the lake.

We spent about half an hour on the boardwalk at the north end of the lake and managed to get some photos of a Glossy Ibis which was wading close by. Some of the birds were quite close, but the waterfowl was swimming near the north shore, identifiable with a scope though. We then went back to the main gate as the other gate would not be open on a weekday, but as it was getting hot, we didn't really see any passerines anymore.

As we left there was an armadillo by the road, a victim of the traffic. My brother-in-law tells me that hitting an armadillo with a car is like hitting a rock. We later found several of these, also other animals. Rather surprising that they were not instantly eaten by vultures or other animals.

We had a hard time deciding whether to drive on the west or the east side of St. Petersburg. We had already decided to go the Fort De Soto Park which meant that we would have to cross the

11-mile bridge. This bridge crosses a few small islands and we stopped on one of the them as we spotted a small flock of shorebirds, Turnstones, Dunlins, Short-billed Dowitchers, a Grey Plover and a Whimbrel. The Grey Plover was elusive as usual and we didn't manage to approach it, but using the car as a hide we got some photos of the others as they rested on the rocks.

Next stop was the Park which is on an island (Mullet Key) on the south side of St.Petersburg. It is supposed to be a good place during the migration of passerines and that I can well believe, situated as it is. Now there was a lot of tourists there though, especially on the west side. We first went to the east part and found a flock at the turning point. We got some photos of this flock, but as it was rather large, they were not that tame. There were also some Forster's and Caspian Terns on the beach of which we also got photos. We had a couple of Wilson's Plovers here and the first Westerns and Leasts. Lots of Short-billed Dowitchers of course and Dunlins.

The west part seemed rather dreary with all the tourists, even though there was a long sandbank-island outside the beach which would probably have been nice to walk. There was a flock of shorebirds near the south side (were it started from the beach), but we were content with watching them with a scope (identifying the larger birds.) Walking the sandbank would have required some time (an hour or two at least), so we went to the harbour (south side), photographed the tame Brown-backed Pelicans on the jetty and bought some ice-cream.

We took the interstate through St. Petersburg and traffic wasn't too bad. We had planned to visit several birdingspots on our way up north, but we realized that we would only have time for one, and we chose Pine Island. Unfortunately it was getting dark as we arrived and as it was also difficult to reach the beach (most of it was private) we didn't see much. There were a few shorebirds about and a lot of gulls at the head. We had a Sandwich Tern and a rail which we saw very briefly and as it didn't appear again, we didn't find out what it was.

As it was already dark we drove straight to Tallahassee where we stayed with my sister.

### Tuesday, 21st March

In the morning we drove towards St. Marks Wildlife Refuge. At New Port we first took the wrong sideroad and as we saw a few birds we stopped and watched for half an hour. At this road and at the beginning of the St. Marks road we had Pileated, Red-bellied and Downy Woodpecker, Parula, Yellowthroat, Yellow-rumped, Yellowthroated and Orange-crowned Warbler, Solitary Vireo, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher (pair with nest), Brown-headed Nuthatch, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Chipping Sparrow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet. The Orange-crowned was the only one of the trip, and we had some problems in identifying it. When it first appeared we wondered at how much it looked like a Phylloscopus-warbler, but as it couldn't be that we looked through the book several times and managed to identify it later, when we read that the orange crown isn't very visible. Because we certainly didn't see any orange even though we had good views.

At the entrance to the park we again stopped and had several new species: Robin, Yellow-throated Vireo, Brown Thrasher. We also had a quick look at the visitorcenter and got a map.

First stop was at a big pond with lots of wildfowl. Part of these were too far away to be identified but there were some fishermen about who flushed them from time to time so that we were able to identify most of them. There was a track behind the pond along which one could walk, but not



drive, and we planned to go there later.

At a small pond at a bend of the road we had a Sora.

There was another pond nearer the beach in which we had some Redheads. Otherwise it was rather empty. But we saw one of the Redheads suddenly trashing about and then fly off, probably an alligator had tried to catch it.

At the beach we tried sea-watching for about an hour and had several Great Northern Divers, some flocks of Buffleheads, lots of Cormorants, Lesser Scaup. We also saw a dark seabird flying near the horizon very far away. It was big with slow and stiff wing-beats, immature Gannet or a big Shearwater perhaps? Our experience of seabirds is rather limited, as they don't occur in Finland. We've had some experience of Gannet, Cory's and Manx Shearwaters and that's about all.

We also saw an alligator take a really big fish. When we returned to the first big pond, it started raining and we left St. Marks.

Even though it was now raining rather hard, we decided to try Wakulla Beach. We first drove to Live Oak Point, from where we saw that the shorebirds were at Shell Point, so we went there. All the houses here were built on poles about 2 - 3 metres above the ground. Because of floods? We walked the beach and had 1- 2 Semipalmated Sandpiper candidates, but they disappeared before we had a good enough look. Also a Gannet and some sparrows which disappeared before we had time to identify them. There was a nice flock of shorebirds there (Dunlins, Willets, Least Sandpipers, Western Sandpipers, Dowitchers, Oyster-catcher), but unfortunately also some tourists walking the beach who scared the birds away. There was a sandbank at some distance away from the beach and most shorebirds flew there. The sandbank was too far away for us to be able to identify anything but the largest birds. It was now raining really hard and thundering as well and getting rather dark, so we went back to my sister's. The evening was spent in 2 bookshops and at a Quincy's Family Steakhouse.

### Wednesday, 22nd March

We started at first light and made our first stop on the St. Marks road where we had had several passerines the day before, but now it was much quieter.

Our next stop was Hickory Mound near Scanlon. By mistake we first drove to Scanlon which turned out to be a camping area with a nice river. We saw a Downy Woodpecker at the river and several Bobwhites along the road.

Taking the right road a mile further on we soon reached the mound. As soon as we had passed the gates we spotted a rail in the ditch. As it came closer we had to leave the car to see it and were immediately attacked by a host of very nasty small mosquitos which bit and flew into the nose and mouth. After some quick views of the Clapper Rail, we ducked back into the car. We then stayed in the car and drove slowly along the road. We had 3 King and 5 King//Clapper, a Hummingbird which Tapani saw briefly before it disappeared. There were also several White-eyed Vireos around. The road continued towards the beach, and we drove about 5 miles further but without reaching neither the beach nor any sort of viewpoint. Since the road was not on the map at all, we turned back to avoid loosing more time. I still don't know where the road went.

We had planned to reach the east coast the same day, so we drove on towards Lake Woodruff. There was rather a lot of traffic though and the road was slow. After passing Gainesville it was already getting late and as we thought that we wouldn't have many more daylight hours we stopped at Paynes Prairie Reserve. We first walked some 100 yards along the track on the hill, but had only Solitary Vireo, Kinglet and Tufted Titmouse. We decided to enter the reserve, but in retrospect we should have spent the time wiser. There was a visitor centre with a view over a marsh which was very large and we didn't see anything.

Just before darkness closed in on us, we had an Eastern Bluebird on the telegraph line at Astor.

We found a cheap motel just past the bridge to Astor and had our supper in a small family bar, where they were overwhelmed when they found out that we were from Finland as they just had some Swedes staying in the neighbourhood. The news of the week it seemed. That evening we saw the most fantastic series of lightnings we'd ever seen, at intervals of 3 seconds, all in complete silence.

#### Thursday, 23rd March

We left early and were at Lake Woodruff at dawn. We walked round the ponds once. There was rather a lot of species, but numbers weren't all that high. We saw a Limpkin, 2 Robins, Swamp Sparrows, Savannah Sparrows, Song Sparrow, Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, 12 Ospreys, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, waders and wildfowl. The weather wasn't very good though. It started raining when we were about three quarters through and we did the last part rather quickly. We saw no birders here, but a few fishermen and women.

We then drove towards St. Merritt Island. On the way we checked Lake Monroe, Lake Jessup, Lake Mullet and St. Johns River. Some waders and gulls, but really not worth the wasted time. We were looking for Bonaparte's Gull which was a possibility, but found none. At Lake Monroe we had a Bald Eagle.

We arrived at St. Merritt Island in the afternoon, so we had less than half a day to do the island in, which was not nearly enough. At least a full day is needed here, not because of the size of the area (it's actually rather small), but because of the very large numbers of birds. We started at the bridge where we had an adult and two young Bonaparte's Gulls. We got rather good photos of them as they flew near the bridge.

Just past the bridge on the south side of the road we discovered a road which went round some ponds which was posted as a hunting area. The ponds were filled with birds and we drove slowly around the road photographing all the time (which took about 2 hours). We had our first American Avocets. We also saw 3 Northern Flickers, Reddish Egret, Black-winged Stilt (20), Glossy Ibis (400), 1 Bonaparte's Gull, both Yellowlegs. There was one flock of Coots which was the largest I've ever seen, and the birds were so close together that at first we couldn't make out what the black mass was. We estimated 5000 Coot.

The Black Point Wildlife Drive was a one-way road so that it wasn't possible to rush back and forth, but everything had to be done in order. Our first stop was at point 2, where there were thousands of shorebirds. Unfortunately we had the sun against us, so identification was rather difficult. And it wasn't made any easier by the fact that most of the birds were rather far away,

even with a telescope. A semipalmated Sandpiper might easily have gone undetected. We estimated Western Sandpiper 500, Least Sandpiper 200, Dunling 5000, Sanderling 20, dowitcher 200, Yellowlegs 50, Grey Plover 100, Willet 15.

From then on there were birds on both sides of the road, first in a big half dry pond on the left, which held 380 Skimmers, a Marbled Godwit, 3 Bonaparte's Gulls, 9 Gull-billed Terns, 25 Forster's Terns, 60 Royal Terns. Here we also saw a birding couple, but they weren't Florida residents either. Then on the right, there were wildfowl (Ring-necked Duck 14, American Wigeon 400, Shoveler 150, Blue-winged Teal 50 and Green-winged Teal 20), Wood Stork, Egrets and Herons. Also 2 Black-crowned Night-herons in a tree.

We stopped at the gate and walked to the observation tower, but while the view from there was quite nice, the area to the north of the tower was almost completely empty. There was water there, but no birds. So we didn't walk to the hide at all which stood alone in the emptiness.

From then on there weren't very many birds, some egrets in the canal, little else. It was already getting dark, but we decided to try to discover if there was a good beach somewhere so we drove eastwards to the space center crossing. I don't know if things have changed, but it seemed to us that it wasn't possible go any further from here, both the southwards and eastwards roads were closed off. Maybe there would have been some good spots to the north though. We had two Eagle Owls at the crossing sitting on the telegraph lines and just visible (it was by now completely dark). As we were watching the Owls, a car stopped beside us and a man stepped out and asked what we were watching. When we told him, he was disappointed and told us that he was expecting to see a shuttle to be launched that night from the Kennedy Space Center.

We decided to drive the Wildlife drive once more in hope of more Owls or other night birds. We saw some alligator's eyes (they really shone in the darkness) and another Eagle Owl in a tree.

We had supper at a Quincy's Family Steakhouse, and then drove inland and southwards. We tried to find a motel near Disneyland, but there were no cheap ones so we had to drive on. Near Hamilton, we finally found one with empty rooms, after having asked at several other places.

#### Friday, 24th March

We drove straight to Lake Kissimmee. Just before the reserve we had two cranes, 2 Common Ground-doves and a Scrub Jay. We stopped as soon as we had passed the gate to the reserve as we had been told and immediately we spotted a Scrub Jay in a dead tree some distance off. We opened our peanut can and kept our hands open. We did not have to wait many seconds, before there were two Scrub Jays near us. One was daring enough to take peanuts from the hand, but the other one would only take them from the ground. A Rufous-sided Towhee also took some off the ground.

We drove to the observation tower which had a nice view over the marsh, but we only saw 3 Bald Eagles soaring rather far away, 5 Loggerhead Shrikes, 9 Bobwhites. On the way back to the gate we had 3 Brown Thrashers crossing the road.

Our next stop was the Highlands Hammock State Park, where they let us in for the resident fee, because, they told us, most people cheat and claim they are residents anyway, and it wouldn't be

fair to punish honest people by charging them more. A very sound view, in my opinion, as I also think most people cheat. I don't know whether she noticed my foreign accent or not, but I never tried to cheat because I could hardly pretend to be able to speak American with a Florida accent.

Unfortunately the reserve was a waste of time, as the best part (the marsh) was under reconstruction and closed off. We did stop a few times, but as it was the middle of the day it was very quiet and we left pretty soon. The cafeteria was also closed. There was a small museum open though.

From US-27 south of Sebring we took US-98 eastwards and then turned south on road 721. We drove slowly and tried to check all the fields. At the railroad crossing we took a dirt road westwards (use of road was prohibited, railway property) and after 500 yards we had a Caracara. And then another. They were in the air just a few seconds and then landed in the field where it was very difficult to see them, as there were some trees in the way.

We took Boat Ramp Rd eastwards and at a small bridge we had another Caracara walking about on the north side of the bridge. Caracaras do seem to spend most of their time walking on the ground.

As we drove south on 721 we had two Sandhill Cranes and then among some cows our first Cowbirds, a flock of 30. Despite looking for them, we didn't see any Burrowing Owls.

Our next stop was the small wood near Old Venus. We had our only record of Pine Warbler here as well as 3 Bobwhites, 12 Cowbirds and a Scrub Jay. The wood is supposed to be good for Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Bachmann's Sparrow and Short-tailed Hawk, too. We did hear a lot of noise from the bushes, but it was terribly hard to see the birds. We stayed on the road, because the wood was full of sharp undervegetation.

Back at the main road we stopped for an hour 2 km south of Palmdale and tried for Short-tailed Hawk, but to no avail. We had 5 Swallow-tailed Kites and a Red-tailed Hawk.

At Belle we managed to twitch Red-headed Woodpecker in a park, we had two birds there. The night was spent at Lehigh Acres.

#### Saturday, 25th March

The morning was spent at Cape Coral photographing Burrowing Owls. They were very tame, and despite our approaching to about 5 metres they showed no signs of being disturbed.

Afterwards we drove to Loxahatchee, taking road 832 on the way. This road was supposed to be a little more wet in an otherwise very dry area and so it was. A few ditches and canals held some egrets, ibises, herons, 1 Common Ground-dove and 5 Eastern Meadow Larks.

At Belle Glade we had 3 Collared Doves. According to the field guides, Collared Doves are rare and can be seen only in the Miami area, but the fact is that they have spread and are all over south-east Florida. St. Petersburg is the only place where Ringed Turtle Dove occurs.

We arrived at Loxahatchee 4 pm and after visiting the visitor centre we walked round the short wood trail which produced nothing. The pond area was a great disappointment, since

Loxahatchee had been our last hope of seeing several species of wildfowl that we had missed so far. The only wildfowl we saw were three Mottled Ducks, the whole area was too dry. The ponds held some water, but obviously not enough. The usual species of egret, heron, Anhinga and ibis were around, a Killdeer we photographed near the tower. At the tower there were also 2-3 small trees in which we found a Gray Kingbird, a new species for us. We walked the west bank, trying to look westwards into the main area beyond the bank in the hope of seeing Snail Kite, but it was difficult as there were big trees in the way. We had 2 raptors extremely far away, one of them was probably a Kestrel.

It was again getting dark and the egrets and herons started to fly in and land in two trees among the ponds. Soon the trees were filled up, and we walked there to get some photos. On the way we passed the small trees at the observation tower and found a Kingbird which didn't look quite like the Gray Kingbird we'd seen earlier (and which was still present) and also didn't look like anything else we could think of. But since we had left our field guide in the car, we could only take notes before moving on. As we photographed the egret trees a Black-crowned Night-heron flew over. It was now nearly 7 pm and the gates were closing. We walked towards the cars with a couple from New York, and I asked (giving a description) if they'd seen the funny-looking Kingbird at the tower? 'Oh yes', they said, 'it's a Cassin's Kingbird, a first for Florida and it's been here since December'. Now, were we pleased, here we'd had a spontaneous first for Florida. Lucky that we found out what it was, we'd never dared to put a name to it later by reading the field guide, as it's not one of the easiest species to identify. Near the cars we heard a rail, which the couple told us was a Virginia Rail.

When we got to the car, I noticed that the doors were unlocked and got quite a shock, but nothing was touched (we hadn't left anything inside the car anyway, and the boot was locked).

The evening was spent in Miami, where Mickey gave us a lot of good advice on the Keys and Miami area. Afterwards we drove to a motel in Homestead where we arrived about 1 am.

### Sunday, 26th March

We drove straight to the Keys, not via Car Sound bridge, but directly. Our first stop was at Rowell's Marina where there is a good chance of seeing Gray and Brown Kingbird and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. We did find a Scissor-tailed immediately sitting on the telegraph line, but despite some search, we couldn't find any Kingbirds. On the shore there were some shorebirds, and as we were watching them a Frigatebird flew past.

The John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park wasn't open yet and there was already a queue, so we didn't stop. We did look into the pond behind the Burton Memorial Methodist Church, but it was almost empty.

We went to the Audubon Research HQ, and despite it being Sunday the manager soon came along and we got a look inside and some advice and information, particularly on tides as the tide-table we had bought at the Marina wasn't very easy to understand as it lacked information on Ohio Key which was our prime target. He also gave us the booklet 'Birding in the Keys' which was very useful, even though it is rather difficult to tell which are the really good spots, as all places are mentioned more or less equally. But maybe that varies with the time of the year or situation.

As we had been told that the good tide (high) for Ohio Key had already begun we drove there as fast as possible. We asked permission at the service station as we had been told (the island is owned by the camping area owners on the north side of the road), but it seemed as though the service man didn't really know what to say. We got a mumble of 'I don't really know, do you camp here? Oh, well maybe it's all right, I couldn't really say' which we took to mean yes. We parked the car near the service station and walked along the track to the pond in the middle. The birds were already in the pond, it was filled with birds. We estimated Piping Plover 15, Wilson's Plover 40, Semipalmated Plover 300, Grey Plover 75, dowitcher 750, Turnstone 15, Willet 60, Least Sandpiper 80, Dunlin 30, Sanderling 140, Knot 25, Western Sandpiper 150. We also had a Merlin, 4 Frigate birds, two male Prairie Warblers, a Sandwich Tern, two Common Ground-doves.

We spent quite some time here counting and photographing some of the nearer birds (Wilson's Plover, Piping Plover). The mud on which we stood was a bit wet and it wasn't possible (without getting thoroughly muddy) to approach the birds very much. At the distance at which we stood (maybe 50 yards) from the birds we were free to watch them as they fed, none flew off. Unfortunately we weren't the only people present, from time to time some campers would come to the pond and stand at the edge, scaring the birds, so that they flew to the other side of the pond and disrupted our counting. Counting was rather difficult anyway as the birds stood so close to each other. Then the birds started to fly off as the tide lowered, we didn't see where they went, except that a few strayed on the shore. As we were leaving, a shorebird with a tail like a Ruff flew past and disappeared before we had a chance to get a proper look.

We had planned to stay some time at Key West, but the island was so crowded that we got claustrophobia and had to leave rather soon. Traffic was really heavy. We did drive a bit along the south shore and found a flock of some ibises and a Yellowlegs which we photographed.

Going back towards the mainland, the first island was Stock Island. Here we had a parrot which we didn't recognize with a long tail, black vent, pale secondaries and otherwise mostly grey. Later at the Audubon HQ we managed to find it in a book, a Cockatiel.

On Sugarloaf Key we had another funny parrot, a Green Parrakeet. This one was easily recognized though.

On Cudjoe Key we stopped briefly to peer into a pond on the south side of the road and counted 95 Blue-winged Teals.

On Torch Key we had our only white phase Reddish Egret of the trip. It was easy to identify as a Reddish, typical bill and posture.

Under the bridge to No Name Key we had 4 Yellow-crowned Herons catching crabs at dusk. Two Wurdemann's Herons were seen here as well. This is the place to see the Key Deer, which is rare and protected. They were very tame as they seem to be fed by most people. The other animals (skunks, squirrels) were tame as well.

Our last stop for the day was at Bahia Key, where we had another Yellow-crowned and a Peregrine flew past.

As Key West is both full and expensive, we took a motel room on Marathon which wasn't all that expensive. We had supper in a bar which the hotel owner recommended two blocks west of the hotel, and it was a rather nice place, but we ordered the wrong food. (I.e. the food item wasn't what we were led to believe it was. We thought it was lobster, but it turned out to be a mishmash of lobster and bad meat. At least I think there was some lobster in it somewhere.)

### Monday 27th March

In the morning we drove to Boot Key, which was empty, except for a Spotted Sandpiper of which we got some shots.

We watched the mudflats at Missouri Key from the old bridge (which it is forbidden to walk on, since it hasn't been checked since the new bridge came into use). Here we had one Reddish Egret, 30 Knot, 40 dowitcher, 12 Grey Plovers, 12 Least Sandpipers, 13 Turnstones, 16 Willets, 17 Royal Terns, 3 Forster's Terns, 2 White Ibis, 3 Tricolored Herons and a Great Egret.

Going back to Ohio Key, we discovered that even though it wasn't quite high tide yet (an hour and half before), the shorebirds had gathered quite nicely on the shore where they were much easier to photograph. So we went down on our stomachs and lay there as long as we could. Suddenly there was a Pectoral Sandpiper among them and we understood that that must have been the bird we had seen the day before but failed to identify. (This was my fourth spontaneous Pectoral in four different countries as I have had one in Norway, one in Finland and one on Mallorca, never had to twitch one yet).

When the tide had risen so much that Tapani was lying in water and the birds started to fly to the pond we got up and found a Bonaparte's Gull swimming quite close. We looked through the pond again and found a Least tern and some Roseate Spoonbills, otherwise numbers were much the same as the day before.

It was midday and we rushed back to the hotel to give the key up by 12. After I'd taken a quick shower (it was really hot and sweaty), the hotel owner told us that every winter he had one or two Broad-winged Hawks (or Broad-tailed as he called them) staying with him. Once there had been a big white male (I don't know where he got his ideas on identifying sexes), and there had been a young bird also. They had all been tame and came when he whistled to take a fly which he caught for them. We were a bit sceptical, but he said he had one there now and showed us. There it was, sitting in a tree above one of the motel rooms. It didn't take any of the flies he threw towards it, but we did see it very well and got some nice shots of it, too. There was also a Kestrel which stayed in the area (he refused to believe it was a Kestrel, just called it a little hawk). He told us that near the south shore, by the golf course there were several Burrowing Owls nesting. In the end we did not go there, as we had already had good views of Burrowing Owls, and time was again getting short.

We had breakfast at a cafe opposite a small airport (where it is possible to see Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and Burrowing Owl, though we didn't) where we tried to get a ride to the Tortugas, but they only made short trips.

Driving eastwards we stopped at Lake Edna on Grassy Key. Some rather big ponds were we had: Tricolored Heron 1, Reddish Egret 1, Little Blue Heron 1, Accipiter sp. 1, Grey Plover 100,

Least Sandpiper 40, dowitcher 380, Black-necked Stilt 1, Greater Yellowlegs 5, Semipalmated Plover 90.

Between Grassy Key and Key Largo we didn't leave the mainroad much. At Lower Matacombe Key we had a Reddish Egret and at Upper Matacombe Key two White-crowned Pigeons. We did go onto List Street (0.1 mile south of Four Winds) but didn't find anything. We visited the Four Winds Book Store where they were able to provide us with a map to the Upper Keys, but the one to the lower Keys hadn't arrived yet. They also had some Kodachrome for sale cheap, but as they only had a few rolls, we didn't buy any.

At Crocodile Lakes, Key Largo, we had 60 Blue-winged Teals, 2 Mottled Ducks, 1 Tricolored Heron and 4 White Ibis.

When we got as far as Car Sound Bridge the sun was just going down, so it was too late to do any seawatching.

The night was spent at Tropical Inn where we'd stayed before.

#### Tuesday, 28th March

In the morning we again went to Everglades, starting with the Anhinga Trail, where we had a Ruby-throated Hummingbird which sat for quite a while on top of a straw. Then we met a birder who told us that there was a Mangrove Cuckoo at Rowdy Bend Trail and a Bahama Swallow in Miami under the same bridge as the Cave Swallows nest. We went to Rowdy Bend immediately and when we got there a New York birder had just seen the bird. We waited for some time and then we heard the Cuckoo from afar. Suddenly it was quite close and we got good views and some photos. Then we heard a call from afar again, so there must have been two birds present. We also had 3 Swallow-tailed Kites flying over. And there were almost no mosquitos.

Stopping very briefly at the Nine Mile Pond (nothing new) we drove towards Miami. We parked a block away from Cutler Ridge and walked to the bridge and under it, back and forth and found nothing (except some nests). No Cave Swallows at all, despite the fact that Mickey had seen lots just a few days earlier.

We called Mickey, who came to look for herself, but to no avail. While waiting for Mickey, we spent some time at Costello Hammock, and had Painted and Indigo Bunting there. Also Brown Thrasher and White-winged Dove came to the feeder.

It was rather dark, but we got some shots anyway.

After visiting the bridge again with Mickey we twitched Red-whiskered Bulbul at the Royal Palm Tennis Court and Spot-breasted Oriole at Mrs Furchgot's and wrote our names in the Diary. We also went to Matheson Hammock, and had some parrots, but not the only countable one (Canary-winged Parakeet).

The night was again spent in Florida City.

#### Wednesday, 29th March

The last day. We went back to Cutler Ridge and had three Cave Swallows, but no Bahama Swallow. We again spent some time at Costello Hammock, where we had an Ovenbird, and



heard that someone had seen the Bahama Swallow the previous day.

We were also told of another bridge at which we could possibly see the Swallows and we saw three (probably the same) Cave Swallows briefly before they flew away.

We drove to one bookshop on our way to the airport.

### **Species**

176 + 6

Note that of the Keys mentioned in this list Virginia Key, Mullet Key and Siesta Key are not situated in the Keys.

Common Loon *Gavia immer* 21 Mar 1 summer and 3 winter plumaged birds at St. Marks and 6 winter plumaged birds at Wakulla Beach. 23 Mar one winter plumaged at Indian River (Merritt Island).

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* Recorded almost daily. Max. 50 at Myakka River State Park 20 Mar.

Horned Grebe *Podiceps auritus* Only records: 21 Mar a summer plumaged and a winter plumaged at St. Marks and 1 at Wakulla Beach.

Northern Gannet *Sula bassana* One record: 21 Mar an adult at Wakulla Beach.

American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos* Clearly scarcer than Brown Pelican. Seen on five days.

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis* Almost everywhere near the shore.

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus* Recorded almost everywhere where there was some water. Largest flock at Lake Monroe ~80 on 23 Mar.

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga* Small numbers almost daily. Breeding at Anhinga Trail (Everglades) and at Loxahatchee.

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens* At several of the Keys, 10 altogether between 26 and 27 Mar.

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus* One record: 16 Mar at the Anhinga Trail (Everglades).

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* Very common and easy to see. The Blue phase was the normal one, we had a few white ones and 3 Wurdemanns (No name Key and between Ohio Key and Summerland Key).

Great Egret *Egretta alba* Seen on several days. Largest number at Ding Darling Reserve (Sanibel Island) 55 on 19 Mar.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* Largest concentrations: 65 at Ding Darling Reserve on 19 Mar and 50 at Loxahatchee on 25 Mar.

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea* Commonest egret at the Ding Darling Reserve where 90 on 19 Mar. In Loxahatchee 70 on 25 Mar. Smaller numbers elsewhere. Most birds were of the blue phase, we had about 10 birds of intermediate phase (which were mostly white with a little blue).

Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor* Somewhat less common than the former. 70 at Ding Darling and 50 at Loxahatchee.

Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens* Rarest of the egrets. 15 seen altogether, one of them of the white phase (at Torch Key).

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Very common and easy to see, especially near the water canals of the cultured areas.

Green-backed Heron *Butorides striatus* A few birds recorded almost daily. Easiest to see on the Anhinga Trail (Everglades).

Black-crowned Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* 2 16 Mar at Key Biscayne, 23 Mar 5 at St. Merritt Island and 1 at Loxahatchee 25 Mar.

Yellow-crowned Night-heron *Nycticorax violaceus* A pair building nest at Ding Darling (Sanibel Island), 26 Mar 4 (one of which was a juvenile) at the bridge to No Name Key and 1 at Bahia Key.

White Ibis *Eudocimus albus* Typical species of the area. 140 at Eco Pond (Everglades), 350 at Black Point (St. Merritt Island).

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Small numbers seen on several days. Max. concentrations 100 at Lake Woodruff and 400 near the bridge at St. Merritt Island.

Roseate Spoonbill *Ajaia ajaja* 2 at Nine Mile Pond (Everglades) and 30 at Snake Bight Trail (Everglades). 50 at Ding Darling (Sanibel Island), 10 at Myakka River State Park and 2 at Ohio Key.

Wood Stork *Mycteria americana* Small numbers almost daily.

Fulvous Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* Single record: One at Myakka River State Park 20 Mar.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa* Only records: 3 at Myakka River State Park and 19 at Lake Woodruff State Reserve.

Green-winged Teal *Anas crecca* 3 at Myakka River State Park, 5 at St. Marks, 4 at Lake Woodruff, 18 at Black Point (St. Merritt Island) 3 at Indian River (St. Merritt Island) and 1 at Nine Mile Pond (Everglades).

Mottled Duck *Anas fulvigula* Small numbers on some days. Max. 30 at West Lake (Everglades) 17 Mar.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* Commonest of the wildfowl. Seen almost daily. Larger concentrations: West Lake 150, Myakka River State Park 280, St. Marks 500, Lake Woodruff 200, St. Merritt Island 200.

Cinnamon Teal *Anas cyanoptera* Single record: Male at Myakka River State Park on 20 Mar.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata* West Lake 4, Sanibel Island 2, St. Marks 50, St. Merritt Island 180.

Gadwall *Anas strepera* Single record: 3 at St. Marks 21 Mar.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* Myakka River State Park 16, St. Marks 100, Lake Woodruff 2 and Black Point (St. Merritt Island) 140.

Redhead *Aythya americana* Recorded on two days only, 9 birds 20 Mar at Tierra Verda and 4 + 8 birds 21 Mar at St. Marks.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* Only Records: 12 20 Mar at Myakka River State Park and 14 23 Mar at Merritt Island. At Merritt Island we also recorded 110 *Aythya* sp.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila* One record, a female at St. Marks 21 Mar.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* Recorded on three days: female in Everglades Paurotis Pond 17 Mar, 35 at Tierra Verda 20 Mar and 60 at St. Marks 21 Mar. At St. Marks we also recorded 50 *Aythya* sp.

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* Recorded 21 Mar only at St. Marks where altogether 70 birds swimming on the sea near the shore in small flocks.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* Seen almost daily in small numbers.

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus* Seen daily, but numbers smaller in the south than in the north. Missing on the southern Keys.

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura* Recorded daily, on the best days numbers over 100.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* Surprisingly common. Even breeding in rather urban areas if compared to Finnish conditions.

Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficans* Seen on seven days, altogether 28 individuals. Max 8 birds in Everglades 28 Mar. The southernmost record was at Key Largo 26 Mar and the northernmost one near New Port (St. Marks) 24 Mar. All records as follows. 4 16 Mar, 3 17 Mar and 4 18 Mar in Everglades. 1 between New Port and Scanlon 22 Mar. 5 at Palmdale and 2 between Palmdale and La Belle 24 Mar. 1 at Key Largo 26 Mar. 8 in Everglades 28 Mar.

Snail Kite *Rosthamus sociabilis* One adult hunting at the Miccosukkee restaurant on Tamiami Trail 18 Mar. The bird was in sight about 5 minutes some 3000 feet to the north.

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* Seen on 8 days, altogether 21 birds. 5 seen simultaneously in Everglades 28 Mar. All records as follows. 1 at Paurotis Pond, 2 ad at Flamingo 17 Mar, 2 at Snake Bight 18 Mar. 1 at Myakka 20 Mar, 2 ad and 2 subad at St. Marks 21 Mar. 1 subad at Lake Mullet 23 Mar, 2 ad and 1 subad at Lake Kissimmee 24 Mar. 1 at Saddle Bunch Key 26 Mar and finally 5 in Everglades 28 Mar.

Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus* Small numbers recorded on seven days.

Sharp-shinned//Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter striatus//cooperi* 2 recorded. The first at Grassy Key 27 Mar which was seen briefly flying far away. Without previous experience we couldn't decide on the proportions. The second bird was in Miami 28 Mar and was probably a Sharp-shinned. It was seen briefly flying low over some houses.

Red-shouldered Hawk *Buteo lineatus* Recorded almost daily and was clearly the most common Buteo of the trip. Mostly the birds were found on telegraph poles or lines and several allowed close approach for photography (from the car). A few were seen flying.

Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus* One bird in our motelyard at Marathon 27 Mar. The motelowner told us that the bird had been there all winter and that he has Broad-winged's every winter staying there (one or two birds). He whistled to them and threw large insects for them to eat.

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis* Recorded on seven days in small numbers mostly on the east coast and in the central parts of Florida. More often seen in flight than Red-shouldered.

Crested Caracara *Polyborus blancus* 2+1 on road 721 24 Mar. Two birds first seen near the railroad about 400 feet east of 721. One bird seen later on Boat Ramp Rd at the bridge. See map page 26.

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* Single birds evenly by the roadside sitting on telegraph poles and lines.

Merlin *Falco columbarius* One recorded 26 Mar at Ohio Key.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* One flying past 26 Mar on Bahia Key at dusk.

Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo* Single record on 20 Mar at Myakka River State Park about 9 am.

Northern Bobwhite *Colinus virginianus* Pair in Myakka River State Park 20 Mar, 14 near Scanlon 22 Mar, 9 at Lake Kissimmee and 3 at Venus 24 Mar. The birds were mostly at silent small roads in the morning in small groups.

Clapper Rail *Rallus longirostris* Single record: 1 At Hickory Mound (Scanlon) 22 Mar.

King Rail *Rallus elegans* 3 at Hickory Mound 22 Mar.

King//Clapper Rail *R. lon//ele* 5 at Hickory Mound 22 Mar. Most of these birds were seen too briefly to ascertain the species. One or two calls were heard.

King//Virginia Rail *R. ele//virginia* 2 at Hickory Mound 22 Mar.

Rail sp. *Rallus sp.* 1 at Pine Island which was seen very briefly as it dived for cover. Two heard at Loxahatchee one of which New York birders identified as Virginia Rail.

Sora *Porzana carolina* One at St. Marks 21 Mar.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyryla martinica* Small numbers in most wetlands.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Typical species of the wetlands, seen almost daily.

American Coot *Fulica americana* Largest concentration at Merritt Island 23 Mar, where about 5000 birds had gathered into a very very tight group.

Limpkin *Aramus guarauna* All records: 1 near Florida City 16 Mar, 1 about 1 km west from the Miccosukkee restaurant on Tamiami Trail 18 Mar, 2 at Lake Woodruff State Reserve 23 Mar.

Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis* All records: 2 near Miccosukkee restaurant on Tamiami Trail 18 Mar, heard in Myakka River State Park 20 Mar, 6 at Lake Kissimee and 2 on road 721 24 Mar, 1 at Loxahatchee 25 Mar.

Black-bellied Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* Small numbers at most beaches with other shorebirds. Largest concentrations: Black Point (Merritt Island) 100, Grassy Key 100 and Ohio Key 75.

Wilson's Plover *Charadrius wilsonia* All records: 2 at Ft. de Soto Park 20 Mar, 1 at Wakulla Beach 21 Mar, 40 26 Mar and 30 27 Mar at Ohio Key.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* Largest concentrations: 40 at Flaming, Everglades 17 Mar, 300 at Ohio Key 26 and 27 Mar, 90 at Grassy Key 27 Mar. Elsewhere flocks were smaller than 15 birds.

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus* Recorded at Ohio Key only where 15 on 26 Mar and 12 on 27 Mar. Among those a colour-ringed bird.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* The Killdeers were found in the fields, not on the beaches or mudflats as the other shorebirds. Breeding was beginning: At Lake Woodruff 23 Mar we found a nest with one egg. Recorded on 6 days, altogether 30 birds.

American Oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus* All records: 1 at Captiva bridge, Sanibel Island and 2 at Tarpon Bay, Sanibel Island 19 Mar. 5 at Mullet Key, Fort De Soto and 4 at Pine Island 20 Mar. 4 at Wakulla Beach 21 Mar.

Black-winged (-necked) Stilt *Himantopus himantopus mexicanus* The migration was seemingly

at the beginning, numbers were increasing. Recorded on six days in small numbers.

American Avocet *Recurvirostra avocetta* Single record: 53 birds at Merritt Island (Hunting Area) 23 Mar.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* Seen at almost all suitable spots in small numbers. Recorded more often near the sea than Lesser Yellowlegs.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* About as common as the preceding species.

Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus* Typical species on the beaches. Largest concentration was in Flamingo (Everglades) about 1000 birds 17 Mar.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* Recorded on five days, altogether 8 birds. They were all still almost completely in winter plumage, a few had a few spots on the underside.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* Two records: 1 at the St. Petersburg bridge 20 Mar and 1 at St. Marks 21 Mar.

Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa* All records: 230 in Flamingo (Everglades) 17 Mar and one bird 23 Mar at Black Point (Merritt Island).

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* Recorded on seven days, altogether 85 birds. Largest concentration 20 in Miami at the bridge to Virginia Key 16 Mar.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus* All records: 50 in Flamingo (Everglades) 17 Mar, 140 at Siesta Key and 1 at Fort de Soto 20 Mar, 25 at Ohio Key 26 and 27 Mar. 30 at Missouri Key 27 Mar.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* Recorded on five days, altogether ~500 birds. Largest concentrations were 270 at Siesta Key 20 Mar and 140 at Ohio Key 26 Mar.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* All records: 5 at Fort de Soto (Mullet Key) 20 Mar, 2 at Wakulla Beach 21 Mar, 500 at Black Point (Merritt Island) 23 Mar, 150 at Ohio Key 26 and 27 Mar. Most birds were still in winterplumage, but some of them had some reddish-brown feathers (scapulars) and black marks on breast and belly.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* All records: 8 at Fort de Soto (Mullet Key) 20 Mar, 3 at Wakulla Beach 21 Mar, 1 at Hickory Mound (Scanlon) 22 Mar, 200 at Black Point (Merritt Island) 23 Mar, 80 at Ohio Key 26 and 27 Mar, 40 at Lake Edna (Grassy Key) 27 Mar. Clearly not as far moulted as Western.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* Single record: 27 Mar at Ohio Key.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* Recorded on eight days, altogether over 6000 birds. Largest concentrations: 5000 + 170 at Merritt Island 23 Mar, 700 at Hickory Mound (Scanlon) 22 Mar, 200 at Flamingo 17 Mar, where we also counted 1000 *Calidris* sp which probably was this species.

Short-billed Dowitcher (+ sp) *Limnodromus griseus* (+ *gri//sco*) Part of the birds had moulted rather far into summer plumage and were thus identifiable, but most were still in winter plumage. Largest concentrations (per 500): 1500 (sp.) at Flamingo 17 Mar, 1000 at Ding Darling (Sanibel Island) 19 Mar, 700 at Merritt Island 23 Mar and 750 at Ohio Key 26 Mar.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* 1 at St. Marks 21 Mar and 30 at Lake Woodruff 23 Mar.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* Probably the most common gull species of the trip. Large numbers and different ages seen almost daily, for instance 500 at Flamingo 17 Mar. This species was, however, not recorded inland (24 - 25 Mar).

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* 1 adult winter plumaged and 3 first-winters at the bridge to Merritt Island 23 Mar, 1 first winter 27 Mar at Ohio Key.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* Almost as common as Laughing Gull, for instance 150 at Pine Island 20 Mar, 110 at Fort de Soto (Mullet Key) 23 Mar, 150 at Merritt Island 23 Mar.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* 1 + 4 at Merritt Island 23 Mar.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* Small numbers recorded on most days that we spent near the beaches.

Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* All records: 5 at Snake Bight (Everglades) 18 Mar, 1 at Sanibel Island 19 Mar and 9 at Black Point (Merritt Island) 23 Mar.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* Recorded on as many days as Royal, but the flocks were clearly larger. Largest concentrations: 25 at Nine Mile Pond (Everglades) and 45 at Flamingo (Everglades) 17 Mar, 60 at Black Point (Merritt Island) 23 Mar.

Royal Tern *Sterna maxima* Mostly seen along the shore in 1-25 bird flocks.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandwicensis* All records: 3 at Sanibel Island bridge 19 Mar, 1 at Pine Island 20 Mar, 1 at Ohio Key 26 and 27 Mar.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* The most common tern of the trip. 15 - 30 birds seen at most sites. Most of these were still in winter plumage.

Least Tern *Sterna antillarum* Single record: 1 summer plumaged sitting among the shorebirds at Ohio Key 27 Mar. This was one of the first of the spring in Florida.

Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger* All records: 25 at Flamingo 17 Mar, 1 at Snake Bight (Everglades) 18 Mar, 370 at Black Point (Merritt Island) 23 Mar.

Rock Dove *Columba livia* Typical species of towns and cities.

White-crowned Pigeon *Columba leucocephala* All records: 1 at Nine Mile Pond 17 Mar, 1 between Flamingo and Snake Bight Trail and 1 between Snake Bight Trail and the main gate to Everglades 18 Mar. 1 at Tavernier 26 Mar, 2 at Upper Matecumbe Key 27 Mar, 3 between

Anhinga Trail and Rowdy Bend Trail 28 Mar.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica* All records: 13 in Florida City 16 Mar and nn 17 Mar, 15 28 Mar and 20 29 Mar at Costello Hammock.

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* Seen daily singly or in small groups.

Common Ground-Dove *Columbina passerina* Recorded on seven days, 1 - 4 bird flocks, mostly just flying past and disappearing. Also seen on telegraph lines or on the ground, mostly near the roads.

Mangrove Cuckoo *Coccyzus minor* Two cuckooing, one of which we also saw and photographed at Rowdy Bend Trail (Everglades) 28 Mar.

Smooth-billed Ani *Grotophaga ani* Single record at Eco Pond (Everglades) 18 Mar.

Eastern Screech-owl *Otus asio* One bird seen 18 Mar on Loop Road sitting in a hole in an old electricity pole which had been left standing. The hole was probably made by a Pileated Woodpecker. The owl was possibly breeding.

Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus* Only records after dusk 23 Mar at Merritt Island. First we had two birds sitting on the telegraph line at the gate to the space center and then one bird at Black Point.

Burrowing Owl *Athene cunicularia* 2 19 Mar and 6 birds 25 Mar on wasteland = unused parcels at Cape Coral (Ft Meyers).

Barred Owl *Strix varia* 17 Mar in Mahogany Hammock (Everglades) we had one adult sitting over a stream. We were also shown a nest rather high up with two chicks. One at dusk on Loop Road 18 Mar.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris* 22 Mar at Hickory Mound (Scanlon) and 23 Mar at Lake Woodruff we had brief views as they flew past. 28 Mar at Anhinga Trail (Everglades) we had superb views of a bird cleaning itself for about 10 minutes.

Belted Kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon* Recorded on all days but two, though numbers were low. The Kingfisher seemed rather shy and we didn't get a single photograph. Altogether 55 birds, max at Hickory Mound 7 birds 22 Mar and 5 birds at Ding Darling 19 Mar.

Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* 2 birds on a telegraph pole and in trees on the evening of 24 Mar at La Belle in a small park.

Red-bellied Woodpecker *Melanerpes carolinus* The most common woodpecker of the trip. Several birds seen daily.

Downy Woodpecker *Picoides pubescens* 2 pairs at St. Marks 21 Mar, 1 at New Port (St. Marks) and 1 at Scanlon 22 Mar.



Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus* A female in Flamingo 17 Mar, 1 at Myakka 20 Mar. 3 at the hunting area and 1 at Blackpoint 23 Mar (Merritt Island), these birds were all in area totally devoid of trees. 1 between Lorida and Kissimmee 24 Mar and 1 near La Belle 25 Mar.

Pileated Woodpecker *Dryocopus pileatus* Small numbers recorded on eight days, mostly just flying past, much like Black Woodpecker in Finland. 1 at St Marks 21 Mar building nest.

Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe* Recorded on three days: 1 + 2 between Florida City and Everglades 17 Mar, 1 at Ft. Meyers and 1 at St. Marks 21 Mar.

Great Crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus crinitus* 2 records: Loop Road 18 Mar when it was almost dark. 20 Mar at Myakka River State Park.

Cassin's Kingbird *Tyrannus vociferans* We spontaneously found the first Cassin's Kingbird of Florida 25 Mar at Loxahatchee. The bird had been present since December. It sat in some trees only 20 yards from a Gray Kingbird, so comparison was possible.

Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus* 4 records: At Anhinga Trail 16 and 17 Mar. 22 Mar at Hickory Mound (Scanlon) and 28 Mar at Everglades Visitor Center.

Gray Kingbird *Tyrannus dominicensis* Only record 25 Mar at Loxahatchee. See Cassin's.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus forficatus* All records: 2 flying past at Flamingo (Everglades) 18 Mar, 3 at Ft. Meyers 19 Mar and 1 at Rowell's Marina (Key Largo) 26 Mar.

Purple Martin *Progne subis* Different numbers recorded on nine days. We photographed it at nestingboxes at the crossing between Palm Drive and Tower Road at Florida City.

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor* Seen almost daily, sometimes in rather large flocks, for instance 200 between 16 Mar Florida City and Everglades.

Cave Swallow *Hirundo fulva* 3 at Cutler Ridge (Miami) 29 Mar.

Blue Jay *Cyanocitta cristata* Perhaps a rather shy species as we only saw it on six days.

Scrub Jay *Aphelocoma coerulescens* Easy to see at Lake Kissimmee 24 Mar (we had 5 there). 2 seen between Lorida and Kissimmee River and 1 at Venus 24 Mar.

American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos* We managed to identify this species on voice on several days.

Fish Crow *Corvus ossifragus* A little less common than the former. Recorded especially near the shore. Call clearly Jackdaw-like.

Carolina Chickadee *Parus carolinensis* Only records: 1 at New Port (St. Marks) 21 and 22 Mar.

Tufted Titmouse *Parus bicolor* 2 at St. Marks 21 Mar and 1 at New Port (St. Marks) 22 Mar.

Brown-headed Nuthatch *Sitta pusilla* 2 at New Port (St. Marks) 21 Mar.

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* 20 at Royal Palm Tennis Court (Miami) 28 Mar.

Carolina Wren *Thryothorus ludovicianus* 3 at Myakka River State Park 20 Mar and 3 at St. Marks 21 Mar.

House Wren *Troglodytes aedon* 2 records: 20 Mar at Myakka River State Park and 22 Mar at Hickory Mound (Scanlon).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula* 1 at Myakka River State Park 20 Mar, 20 at New Port (St. Marks) 21 Mar, 1 at Paynes Prairie State Reserve 22 Mar, also recorded 24 Mar.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *Polioptila caerulea* Male on Loop Road 18 Mar, male at Bailey Tract (Sanibel Island) 19 Mar, 3 at Myakka River State Park 20 Mar. 3 at New Port (St. Marks), two of which were building a nest. 22 Mar 1 at New Port.

Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis* A single bird sitting on telegraph wire at Ocala near Astor 22 Mar.

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* 1 at Gumbo Limbo Trail (Everglades) 16 Mar.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius* Very scarce because of the exceptional winter. We had 3 birds only, 1 at St. Marks 21 Mar and 2 at Lake Woodruff 23 Mar.

Gray Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis* Rather common, but leading a hidden life. Thus we only recorded the species on six days.

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos* The species was seen every day and in all sorts of habitat singly or in small groups.

Brown Trasher *Toxostoma rufum* Recorded on five days only in small numbers. Because of its hiding habits it was easy to miss.

Logger-head Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus* On pylons like Great Grey Shrike. Recorded on most days, most common on road 721 where we counted 8 birds 24 Mar.

European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* Small numbers recorded daily.

White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus* Recorded on six days. Estimate about 20 birds (we had recorded 16 on 4 days). Some of the birds were already building nests.

Solitary Vireo *Vireo solitarius* Recorded on three days: 20 Mar at Myakka, 4 at St. Marks 21 Mar and an unnoted number on 24 Mar.

Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons* Only record in St. Marks 21 Mar.

Orange-crowned Warbler *Vermivora celata* This very Chiff-chaff like species was recorded only

once, 1 bird at St. Marks 21 Mar.

Northern Parula *Parula americana* Recorded on six days, altogether ~15 birds.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* Seen on most days (9). The birds were seen singly or in small groups, under 20 birds. Often the flocks were mixed, including other warblers.

Yellow-throated Warbler *Dendroica dominica* A pair seen at the Anhinga Trail (Everglades) 16 Mar and a male at St. Marks 21 Mar.

Pine Warbler *Dendroica pinus* A male at Venus 24 Mar was the only record.

Prairie Warbler *Dendroica discolor* Recorded on three days. 3 males at Ding Darling (Sanibel Island) 19 Mar, a male at Hickory Mound (Scanlon) 26 Mar and 2 males at Ohio Key 26 Mar. Some of the birds were singing. This species was much easier to find once we had learned the song.

Palm Warbler *Dendroica palmarum* Along with Yellow-rumped, this was the most common warbler. Were mostly seen lower down than Yellow-rumped (on the ground, in the fields) and wasn't seen in flocks as Yellow-rumped.

Black-and-White Warbler *Mniotilta varia* Seen twice. 2 at Snake Bight Trail (Everglades) 18 Mar and one at Myakka River State Park 20 Mar.

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus* One near the feeder at Costello Hammock (Miami) 29 Mar.

Northern Waterthrush *Seiurus novaboracensis* One at Eco Pond (Everglades) 18 Mar.

Louisiana Waterthrush *Seiurus motacilla* One at Snake Bight Trail (Everglades) 28 Mar.

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* Recorded on 4 days. 3 males at Eco Pond (Everglades) 18 Mar, one male at Loop Road 18 Mar, one male at St. Marks 21 Mar, 2 males at Hickory Mound (Scanlon) 22 Mar and 2 at Lake Woodruff 23 Mar.

Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis* Recorded daily in almost all habitats. A rather shy species which wasn't always seen, but the very conspicuous call 'tsik' was often heard.

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* Recorded in Costello Hammock (Miami) only. 3 males 28 Mar and 5 29 Mar.

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris* As above, 3 males and 7 females 28 Mar, 15 29 Mar.

Rufous-sided Towhee *Pipilo erythrophthalmus* Seen on five days. A male at Bailey Tract (Sanibel Island) 19 Mar, 5 + female at St. Marks 21 Mar, 2 pairs at Hickory Mound 22 Mar and 5 at Lake Kissimmee 24 Mar.

Chipping Sparrow *Spizella passerina* Three at St. Marks 21 Mar.

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis* Seen on six days, altogether 26 birds. Max 10 at Loxahatchee 25 Mar.

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia* Recorded twice. 10 at Hickory Mound 22 Mar and 1 at Lake Woodruff 23 Mar.

Swamp Sparrow *Melospiza georgiana* 1 at Eco Pond (Everglades) 18 Mar and 7 at Lake Woodruff 23 Mar.

Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus* Seen daily in flocks, which constituted of different aged birds, in almost all habitats.

Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna* Recorded on six days at farmland and fields, mostly 1 - 5 birds, but for instance 24 Mar on road 721 we had 10.

Boat-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus major* A noisy and conspicuous bird, which we saw almost daily.

Common Grackle *Quiscalus quiscula* Like the former, but perhaps less common.

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater* Two records: 30 birds among cows on road 721 24 Mar together with some Grackles. 12 birds near Venus 24 Mar on the telegraph wire. We thought this species would be very common, maybe we didn't just look for it in the right places.

Spot-breasted Oriole *Icterus pectoralis* 2 birds at Mrs Furchgot's in Miami 28 Mar.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Seen almost daily.

### **Escapees**

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* Seen on five days, especially near Florida City. Also recorded at Belle Glade.

Green Parrakeet *Aratinga holochlura* 1 at Sugar Loaf Key 26 Mar.

Monk Parrakeet *Myiopsitta monachus* 2 birds at Matheson Hammock 28 Mar.

Cockatiel *Nymphicus hollandicus* One flying past at Stock Island 26 Mar.

Parrot sp. *Amazona sp.* Flying past 28 Mar Mrs Furchgot's (Miami).

Indian Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa* 10 at Matheson Hammock (Miami) 28 Mar.