

# Kite Tales



Spring 2014 Volume 6 Issue 1

## May the Birds Be With You!

Every year birders flock to the Sunshine State to enjoy spring migration. Most visitors focus their efforts in April when migration is at its peak. However, do not underestimate the month of May...it can be just as worthwhile. South Florida can be spectacular during the first half of May; tropical breeders such as Mangrove Cuckoo and Black-whiskered Vireo are establishing territories while northern breeders such as Bay-breasted and Connecticut Warbler are just arriving.

In the Florida Panhandle, nesting season is in full swing and birding in this region is extremely worthwhile. Sought after species such as Swainson's Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler and Yellow-breasted Chat are fairly common if you know where to look.

Shorebird migration is hot during May; White-rumped Sandpipers and Wilson's Phalaropes can be found at Merritt Island and St. Marks National Wildlife Refuges.

In this issue of Kite Tales we will introduce four Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail (GFBWT) sites from around the state that offer fantastic birding in May. We showcase our subscribers' photographs in Experience the Trail and introduce a new feature called "Hot on the Trail", that highlights bird and wildlife sightings from the GFBWT. Be sure to check out the "Who needs a room?" ad, which provides information on how you can help support the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail.



Andy Wraithmell

White-rumped Sandpiper at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

*–Office of Public Access and Wildlife Viewing*



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## Featured Trail Sites

### Panhandle Section

#### ***Chipola Greenway: Hinson Conservation and Recreation Area***

Jackson County is building a reputation as a great wildlife viewing destination, and this new GFBWT site on the Chipola River is a prime reason why you should put the western Panhandle region on your to-do list. This 226-acre portion of the greenway south of Marianna has more than 5 miles of foot trails through upland mixed and floodplain forest, pines, open fields, karst (cave) areas and wetlands, plus a non-motorized boat launch with access to the picturesque, 51-mile Chipola River Paddling Trail. The outer perimeter trail (made up of four loops) is part of the Florida National Scenic Trail; connector trails in the interior can shorten your hike if needed. There are numerous opportunities to stop, wander and listen at pull-offs (including some magnificent, old pecan groves) along the unpaved, winding entrance road. At the parking area at the end of Gator Hole Road, you can walk along the river either on the East or South loop trails, or launch your canoe. The river is a good spot to look for Winter Wren during the chilly months of the year; check along the banks for the tiny, flighty brown bird with the loud, ringing voice. Also listen carefully for the songs of Acadian Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, and Kentucky and

Swainson's Warblers in spring/summer. Other birds found at this site are Northern Bobwhite, Eastern Wild Turkey, Broad-winged Hawk, Barred Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Eastern Towhee. Reptiles you may encounter include Green Anole, Little Brown Skink and Gulf Coast Box Turtle. Early morning and late afternoon are good times to see Red Fox and White-tailed Deer here. Note: the use of recordings to attract birds is prohibited at this location.

### West Section

#### ***Andrews Wildlife Management Area***

Andrews WMA's old-growth hardwoods, wetlands, uplands and open understory are good for many species of birds such as Little Blue Heron, Osprey, Osceola Wild Turkey, Prothonotary Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler and Eastern

Wood-Pewee. The Suwannee River Trail offers waterbirds, and there is an extensive system of roads passable to two-wheel-drive vehicles. Other scenic hiking trails provide access to more remote areas. Don't miss the wetland boardwalk (listen for owls, woodpeckers and frogs) on the Suwannee River Trail and the wildlife viewing blind off Fanning Road. Two observation towers located near Randall Road are great for photography. The WMA has many bat houses inhabited by Brazilian Free-tailed Bats; on warm days you may hear them chattering inside their boxes. The WMA is also home to Suwannee Bass, Gopher Frog, Suwannee River Cooter, Northern River Otter, Rafinesque's Big-eared Bat and Sherman's Fox Squirrel. Lucky visitors may see or at least hear a leaping Gulf Sturgeon splashing in the river. A dock allows boaters to access the WMA from the river.



Andy Wraithmell

*Swainson's Warbler in Jackson County*

## East Section

### *Circle B Bar Reserve*

Located between Bartow, Lakeland and Winter Haven, Circle B Bar Reserve is among the best inland birding and wildlife viewing spots in Central Florida. This former cattle ranch plays a key role in the conservation efforts of the Upper Peace River/Lake Hancock watershed. Freshwater marsh, hardwood swamp, oak hammocks, ponds and lake habitats teem with impressive numbers of ducks including Black-bellied Whistling-, and Mottled; Fulvous Whistling-Ducks are sometimes recorded at the reserve as well. Other notable species include Glossy Ibis, King Rail, Roseate Spoonbill, Limpkin, Black-necked Stilt, and Sandhill Crane. Large numbers of American White Pelicans and Wood Storks occur at times. Search the oak woodlands for resident and migrant landbirds. Pastures (undergoing restoration) have Eastern Meadowlarks. Spicebush Swallowtail, Dainty Sulphur, Gray Ministreak, Horace's Duskywing and Clouded Skipper are some of the 45 butterfly species recorded here. This site has more than 5 miles of multi-use trails, and the 1.5-mile entrance road is great for car birding. Amenities include Polk's Nature Discovery Center, a covered observation platform on the lake, benches along the trails and picnic shelters. Trails near the nature center are paved and are wheelchair-friendly. Free tram tours and nature workshops are offered

throughout the year. For the event calendar and checklists for butterflies, birds and plants, see the website below.

## South Section

### *Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park*

This park's 2,500 acres encompass the largest remaining tracts of rockland hammock in the continental United States. A three-quarter mile paved walking/biking trail takes you into the accessible portion of the hammock, where you can find breeding populations of Black-whiskered Vireos, Mangrove Cuckoos and White-crowned Pigeons; warblers drip from the trees during migration. An additional four miles of paved trails, as well as off-trail possibilities, are accessible after obtaining a free backcountry permit (at neighboring John D. Pennekamp State Park). This beautiful park suffers only from lack of birder use. Rarities such as La Sagra's Flycatcher, Thick-billed Vireo and Zenaida Dove have been found here in the past; it is only a matter of time before the birding public documents these and other rarities again!



*Mangrove Cuckoo*

Tom Mast

## Experience the Trail



*Bobcat at Circle B Bar Reserve by Lynette Spence. "He seemed to be surveying the marsh and watching the sunrise."*



*Fiery Skipper by Danny Sauvageau*



*Purple Gallinule at Wakodahatchee Wetlands in Palm Beach County by Harry Beracha*

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*Richard and Joyce Leamon from Tennessee found this banded Snowy Plover at St. Joseph Peninsula State Park.*

*They had a "very enjoyable" trip to the Florida Panhandle in fall 2013.*



*A singing male Northern Parula was enjoyed by many at Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Preserve during the 2nd annual Nature Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival. Taken by Joe Colantonio*



*Katrina Batson captured this image of a Black Vulture taking a drink at Lake Kissimmee State Park.*

Have a picture to contribute to *Experience the Trail*? Send a high-resolution jpeg (1MB or larger) to [wildlifeviewing@MyFWC.com](mailto:wildlifeviewing@MyFWC.com) by July 31st 2014 for inclusion in our spring issue, and include where you took the picture and a short caption. Native Florida wildlife only please! We can feature up to six images per issue; all unused images will be kept on file for future issues.

**Help us keep  
Kite Tales  
aloft.**



Please consider sending a tax-deductible donation to the Wildlife Foundation of Florida on behalf of the Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail.

Please make checks (in U.S. funds only) to the Wildlife Foundation of Florida, with "GFBWT/Kite Tales" written in the memo section of your check. Please send to:

**Wildlife Foundation of Florida**  
**Attention: GFBT**  
P.O. Box 6181  
Tallahassee, FL 32314-6181

## Stay and Support!

The Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail (GFBWT) and the Wildlife Foundation of Florida are proud to announce a new partnership with InterContinental Hotel Groups.

Explore hotel options or book your stay at [WildlifeFoundationofFlorida.com/birding](http://WildlifeFoundationofFlorida.com/birding)\*, and 5% of your hotel fee will be donated to the Wildlife Foundation of Florida.

Money raised will support the GFBWT and wildlife conservation through stewardship and citizen-science volunteer projects such as the Southeastern American Kestrel Monitoring Project.

\*The IHG link will take you to the IHG reservation website to book your stay. By using our link to access the reservation site, your stay will be linked with the GFBWT.



## Get started with Planting a Refuge for Wildlife

Attracting wildlife to our yards by planning and planting for their needs is simple and satisfying. If we supply adequate food, water and shelter, we can increase the number and variety of species that visit our properties, improving our chances of observing them more closely while providing the habitat they need to survive.

First printed in the 1980s and now revised and updated, the 40-page *Planting a Refuge for Wildlife* booklet is designed to help a new generation of landowners attract, enjoy and conserve wildlife. The booklet will help you

- entice a variety of animals to your property
- evaluate your current landscape and create a habitat plan
- select the appropriate native plants
- design a bird, butterfly or pollinator garden
- add nest boxes, feeding stations and water features

Purchase your copy of *Planting a Refuge for Wildlife*

[MyFWC.com/viewing/habitat/refuge/](http://MyFWC.com/viewing/habitat/refuge/)

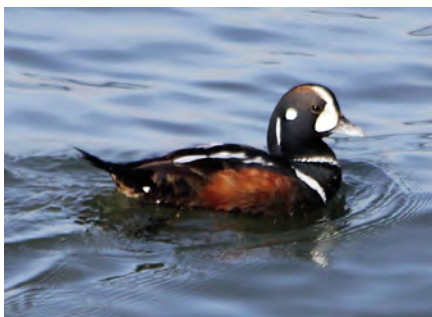


## What was “Hot” on the Trail? Winter 2013/14

This new feature takes a look at some of the rarer and more unusual birds that were spotted along the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail.

The winter of 2013/2014 will be remembered for three amazing species that graced Northeast Florida. Incredibly, a Snowy Owl (3rd state record) was found at Little Talbot Island State Park, and delighted visitors from all over the Southeastern United States.

A drake Harlequin Duck wintered at Ft. Clinch State Park, and amazingly a trio of Snow Buntings was present at Huguenot Memorial Park in Jacksonville. All three species were within 50 miles of each other, allowing birders to add this hat-trick of rarities to their life list. In addition to this assortment of incredibly rare snow birds, there were above average numbers of White-winged Scoters present at coastal sites from Jacksonville all the way around to Pensacola. This species is an annual visitor to Florida during the winter but only one or two birds are typically seen here and there. This last winter saw flocks of them at multiple sites.



*Harlequin Duck by Graham Williams*

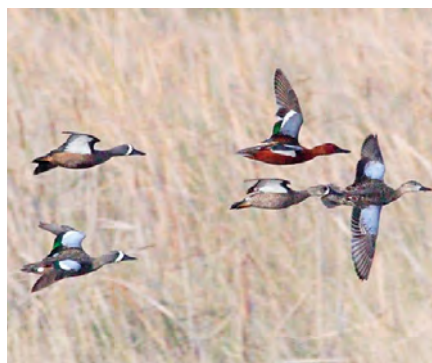


*Snowy Owl by Graham Williams - Graham used the digiscoping method to get a picture of the Snowy Owl. By employing this method, Graham was able to record this wonderful memory without disturbing the owl.*



*Snow Buntings by Andy Wraithmell*

A drake Cinnamon Teal was present at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. This beautiful duck is an annual visitor to the refuge. Look for large flocks of Blue-winged Teal on Stoney Bayou 2 and Headquarter's Pond as the Cinnamon likes to hang out with its close and more common relative.



*Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teal by Andy Wraithmell*

A La Sagra's Flycatcher wintered at Matheson Hammock in Miami-Dade County. This Caribbean species is an annual visitor to Southeast Florida and often attracts birders from all over the United States who need it for their life list.



*La Sagra's Flycatcher by Carlos Sanchez*

One of the rarest visitors we had on the GFBWT this winter was a Violet-green Swallow; it was observed feeding over the Coast Prairie Trail in Everglades National Park by out-of-state birders Sam Galick, Tom Johnson and Glen Davis. This discovery represents the first record of Violet-green Swallow in Florida; they are normally found in the Western United States. Congratulations on this wonderful find!



*Violet-green Swallow by Sam Galick*