

Birding Florida's Space Coast Scrub-Jays, Snail Kites, & More

December 11-16, 2022

Itinerary

Day 1 – Sunday, Dec 11 – Arrival in Orlando

Participants may arrive anytime today. Those flying into Orlando can catch the shuttle from the airport to our hotel. Those choosing to drive may meet the group directly at the hotel. We will gather in the lobby at 6 PM for a quick meet and greet before heading to dinner. ***Night in Orlando***

Day 2 – Monday, Dec 12 – Lake Apopka

Our first big outing will be to Lake Apopka on the west side of Orlando. After checking out and breakfast, we head to the lake where we will slowly drive the driving loop. One of our target birds is the beautiful Fulvous Whistling-Duck and Lake Apopka is a pretty reliable spot for them. We will also look for the spectacular Gray-headed Swamphen, which is expanding its range north. Lake Apopka is a reliable spot for over-wintering landbirds and in previous winters have had Ash-throated and Vermilion Flycatchers, Yellow Warbler and more. Afterwards, we drive to east to Titusville, our base for the rest of the trip. ***Night in Titusville***

Day 3 – Tuesday, Dec 13 - Merritt Island and Canaveral National Seashore

After breakfast, we'll drive down to the wonderful Merritt Island NWR and slowly drive the 7 mile wildlife Drive. This short distance can take all morning as the waterfowl and wading birds can be very close, allowing for excellent photographic opportunities. American White Pelican, American Avocet, Reddish Egret; the list of good birds is extensive and we will have plenty of time to work our way through the waterfowl looking to Eurasian Wigeon or Cinnamon Teal – both of which are annual. After we have had our fill of waterfowl, we can walk a local woodland trail where Gray Catbird, Prairie Warbler and other passerines overwinter. We will also drive down the road into the National Seashore to find Florida's only endemic bird – the Florida Scrub-Jay. Often the sentinels are sitting atop shrubs along the roadside. ***Night in Titusville***

Day 4 – Wednesday, Dec 14 - Orlando Wetlands

These extensive wetlands are actually in the town of Christmas, FL and are the lungs of the Orlando Waste Water Treatment system. We can either walk or take a tram around the impoundments and the birds are often very close indeed. Barred Owls nest in the dead palms and Bald Eagles strafe the flocks of American Coot and Blue-winged Teal. Both American and Least Bittern are seen here in the winter and Sora and King Rail are more often heard than seen. Roseate Spoonbill, Limpkin, Glossy and White Ibis are very common and when they fly overhead, it's sometimes tough to know quite where to look. Smaller wintering birds are usually seen near the center and include Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Orange-crowned Warbler, Northern Parula and Painted Bunting. ***Night in Titusville***

Day 5 – Thursday, Dec 15 - Three Lakes WMA

After an early breakfast, we will head inland to the open pine-savannas of Central Florida. Overshadowed by the wetland birds, this quiet area of tall pines is good for Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch and other pine specialists. Northern Bobwhite and Wild Turkey are often seen or heard and we will keep a look out for Crested Caracara. Lunch will be down at Joe Overstreet Landing which is a great spot for Snail Kite and other wetland birds. ***Night in Titusville***

Day 6 – Friday, Dec 16 - Local birding and home

After an early breakfast, we will visit a few more local spots targeting any rarities that might be around or any birds we are missing before departing back home.

Due to weather conditions and the whims of the leader, this itinerary is subject to change.