

FLORIDA: SOUTH FLORIDA SPECIALTIES AND THE DRY TORTUGAS

Saturday May 1 to Sunday May 9 2010

Guided by Gary Rosenberg

Price \$2300

Short tour run weekend to weekend that concentrates on south Florida specialties. Visits Three Lakes Wildlife Area for Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Brown-headed Nuthatch. Everglades National Park. Florida Keys to Key West. Day trip to Fort Jefferson and Dry Tortugas National Park. South Florida specialties include White-crowned Pigeon, Mangrove Cuckoo, Gray Kingbird, Black-whiskered Vireo, Florida Scrub-Jay, and at the Dry Tortugas, Sooty Tern and Brown Noddy. Chance for rarities such as Black Noddy and Western Spindalis. Florida exotics including Red-whiskered Bulbul and Spot-breasted Oriole. Excellent photographic opportunities at Wakodahatchee.

Birding South Florida in Spring is always fun. Resident birds will be in full swing nesting, and it's always a treat getting up close and personal views of egrets, herons, and Anhingas in their full breeding plumes, usually feeding young at this season. In early May migration is still occurring, in fact this is the best time of year for rarities from the Bahamas, and late migrants such as Connecticut Warbler. Our short tour from Saturday to the following Sunday begins and ends in Fort Lauderdale, and concentrates first on specialties found in the marshes and Everglades. We then move north to just south of Orlando to Three Lakes Wildlife Area where we will search for pine woods birds. Returning south we will visit Everglades National Park before heading down into the Florida Keys, where there are several specialties to look for, and will serve as our base for our day trip to Fort Jefferson and the Dry Tortugas National Park.

Just north of Fort Lauderdale we visit both Wakodahatchee and Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. Both these venues are wonderful for close studies (and photography) of all the egrets and herons, including crowd favorites such as Purple Gallinule, Limpkin and Snail Kite. Working north we'll stop for Crested Caracaras, Sandhill Cranes, and Florida Scrub-Jay, as we head toward our main destination, the Three Lakes Wildlife Area. Here we will have an entire afternoon and full morning to search for all the pine specialties, including Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Pine Warbler, Bachman's Sparrow, and the "White-eyed" form of Eastern Towhee. We'll return back south, spending a night near the entrance to Everglades National Park, where we'll likely see the Cape Sable form of Seaside Sparrow. It is then down to the Florida Keys for a three night stay at Key West. The Keys are unique in North America, and hold a number of specialties mainly restricted to mangroves, including Mangrove Cuckoo, White-crowned Pigeon, Gray Kingbird, and Black-whiskered Vireo. Migration will still be in full swing, and we should see a variety of warblers and thrushes, including a chance for Connecticut Warbler. Perhaps the highlight of the trip will be a day trip out to the Dry

Tortugas and Fort Jefferson. We are certain to see the Tortugas specialties, including Sooty Tern, Brown Noddy, Magnificent Frigatebird, and Masked Booby, with an excellent chance for rarer species such as Brown Booby, or even a Black Noddy. Early May also seems to be a good time of year for rarities such as Western Spindalis or LaSagra's Flycatcher, and the various parks in Key West are the best places to find such birds. We'll finish the trip with some stops in the Miami area in search of exotics such as Red-whiskered Bulbul and Spot-breasted Oriole.

Day by Day Itinerary

Day 1: The tour begins at 6:00 pm in Fort Lauderdale with an introductory meeting, followed by dinner. Participants should arrive in Fort Lauderdale in the afternoon, and should plan on being at the meeting. Night in Fort Lauderdale.

Hotel: Days Inn

Day 2: We begin our Florida tour by first checking to see if the Smooth-billed Anis are still present near the Fort Lauderdale Airport. This species has declined in recent years, and are almost totally gone, but a small group still is hanging on near the airport. If they are around, we will go look for them. Afterwards, we'll head north toward West Palm Beach and bird a very nice water bird area known as Wakodahatchee. The birding here is excellent, and we will have the opportunity to see and photograph most of the egrets and herons, and specialties such as Purple Gallinule and Least Bittern. There are usually lots of Anhinga nests, and we'll likely see fun birds such as Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Osprey, Purple Martins, and lots of Boat-tailed Grackles. In the afternoon we'll visit Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, located in the Everglades just to the west. This refuge is excellent for seeing Limpkin, and there often are a couple of Snail Kites also present. Other nice birds will include the Florida race of Red-shouldered Hawk, and Pileated Woodpecker. Of course there will also be all the water birds as well! Night at Boynton Beach.

Day 3: This morning we will head north toward south of the Orlando area to visit an area for pine woods specialties. We'll start along the coast at Jonathan Dickinson State Park where we'll look for Florida Scrub-Jay. Heading inland we'll drive secondary roads north past Lake Okeechobee, where we'll see open country species such as Sandhill Crane and Crested Caracara. Our destination is the Three Lakes Wildlife Area south of Kissimmee. This area is excellent for pine species, and we'll search specifically for Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Pine Warbler, Bachman's Sparrow, and the "White-eyed" form of Eastern Towhee. The birding is nice up here, and we'll have the opportunity to see other great birds such as Swallow-tailed Kite, Barred Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, and others. We'll stay here into the late afternoon maximizing our search for the woodpecker. Night in Kissimmee.

Day 4: This morning is flexible. If we have not seen Red-cockaded Woodpecker yet, we'll depart pre-dawn and return to Three Lakes to be in place when the birds exit their roost hole. Alternatively we may bird our way south along the west side of Lake

Kissimmee in search for Short-tailed Hawk – which is very difficult this time of year. The middle part of the day will be traveling south to Florida City, where we will arrive in the mid-afternoon. In the late afternoon, we'll bird the north part of Everglades National Park, in particular looking for the Cape Sable subspecies of Seaside Sparrow. Time permitting, we'll venture deeper into the park to a slough where Roseate Spoonbill and Wood Storks should be nesting. We'll end the day along the Anhinga Trail at the north end of the park, another great spot for egrets herons, and nesting Anhingas. Night in Florida City.

Day 5: This morning we will head south into the Keys. Our first stop should produce the "mangrove" form of the Yellow Warbler – known as Golden Warbler, which is potentially a separate species. Crossing onto upper Key Largo, we'll make several stops in search of Mangrove Cuckoo, which is a rare nesting species here. We have had good luck with this species here, but if we miss it on Key Largo, we'll have other opportunities later in the trip. We'll work our way south during the day, stopping at a couple of parks and other locations looking for late migrants, and some of the "Keys" specialties, including White-crowned Pigeon, Gray Kingbird, and Black-whiskered Vireo. At Marathon, we'll stop and look for nesting Roseate Terns, and we should arrive in Key West in the late afternoon. Key West is always fun to bird, as the local parks and botanical gardens are excellent places to look for migrants, including the possibility for Connecticut Warbler, which passes through the Keys in early May. We also have the chance of a rarity, as May is one of the better months to look for Western Spindalis and Bahama Mockingbird. We'll have three nights at Key West, which should afford us plenty of time. Night in Key West.

Day 6: Today we'll spend the entire day visiting the Dry Tortugas National Park and Fort Jefferson, taking the National Park shuttle to the islands. This allows us to visit the famous birding location, yet not have to suffer through sleeping on a rocking boat. We believe a day trip to Fort Jefferson allows us enough time to see the sights, and have plenty of time to bird the fort. The Dry Tortugas are famous for nesting terns, in particular Brown Noddy and Sooty Tern – and we will see thousands of each. We'll also see Magnificent Frigatebirds, which also nest on the island, and almost certainly see Masked Booby. May is also a good time of year for there to be a Brown Booby or two hanging around, and most trips are successful in finding a black Noddy (but it is not a guarantee). Depending upon the weather, there should be a nice selection of migrant warblers and thrushes, and May is a good time of year for a vagrant. We spend until about 2:30 or 3:00 at the fort, and then return to Key West. In the evening after dinner, we'll look for Antillean Nighthawk. Night at Key West.

Day 7: We'll have the entire day to bird locally around Key West. This will give us the flexibility to search for Mangrove Cuckoo, if we still have not seen one, and to bird the several parks around Key West in search of migrants and rarities. It will be nice to have this time to leisurely poke around, and perhaps check places that usually don't get checked often, and just maybe turn up our own rarity! In the evening, if we were unsuccessful with Antillean Nighthawk the night before, we'll venture north to the Marathon Airport, where there usually are a few present in May. Night in Key West.

Day 8: We'll once again have the flexibility this morning to look for anything we might be missing around Key West. In the mid-morning we'll depart for the drive back to Fort Lauderdale. In the Miami area, we'll leave time to make a stop or two in search of a few "exotics," including Monk Parakeet, Common Myna, Red-whiskered Bulbul and Spot-breasted Oriole. We'll also make a stop in Cutler Ridge where a nesting colony of Cave Swallows still exists. We can also make one last try for Smooth-billed Ani, again if they are still present near the Fort Lauderdale Airport. We'll arrive back at our hotel in the late afternoon in time to clean up and have a nice farewell dinner. Night near the Fort Lauderdale Airport.

Day 9: The trip ends this morning at the Fort Lauderdale Airport. There are no birding activities planned for this morning.

Maximum size of group: The maximum group size for our Arizona tour is nine.

Tour Leader for your Florida Tour: Gary Rosenberg

Gary Rosenberg lives in Tucson, where he has designed and led about 300 birding tours to numerous areas in North, Central, and South America, during the past 25 years, in particular Florida. Gary once lived in South Florida, and visits the state several times each year. He has been birding since early childhood, studied Ornithology for a Master's degree at Louisiana State University, and is the author or co-author of numerous scientific and popular articles on bird identification and behavior. Gary is also a passionate photographer, and has had numerous bird photos published in magazines and books. He is currently the secretary of the Arizona Bird Committee, which evaluates rare bird reports within Arizona. His current areas of expertise, apart from Florida, include most areas in North America, in particular Arizona and Alaska, as well as Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador and Peru.

Pace of the tour: The pace of this tour is Easy to Moderate. Most of the birding will be done along roads, and level trails – there are no hills in Florida! On one morning we will have a very early start to reach the Red-coccyzied Woodpecker nest at dawn. The best birding in Arizona during May is the early mornings, so one should expect relatively early breakfasts (5:30 – 6:00). On at least a couple nights, there will be after-dinner owling/nightjaring excursions that may last until 9:00 – 10:00.

Tour Price: \$2300. The cost of the tour includes all accommodations, food, within-tour transportation, baggage handling (when needed), entrance fees, water during the day's tour activities, and guide services, as indicated by the itinerary. In general the hotels and lodges we use on the tours are nice and comfortable, and often the best-available in the more remote areas we visit. In the cities we stay in above average (but not necessarily the most expensive) hotels. Meals are typically taken in local restaurants near the hotels and lodges.

The following items are not included in the tour price: travel to and from the location the tour begins and ends, laundry, alcoholic beverages, phone calls, and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement \$600

Deposit policy: At the time of booking a tour, a \$300 deposit is required to secure a space on the tour. This deposit is refundable or transferable up until 120 days prior to the departure date of the tour. The deposit must be received within 14 days of booking, or the reserved space will be released. Up to the 120 day prior to departure date, a deposit may be transferred to another Avian Journeys tour without penalty. Between 119 and 90 days prior to tour departure, cancellation of a reservation will result in forfeit of 50% of the \$300 deposit. Cancellation of a reservation within 90 days of the tour departure date will result in forfeit of the deposit.

Tour Registration: To register for this Florida tour, please first contact Avian Journeys by email or phone to check on availability. Once we have confirmed that there is space on the tour, please fill out the registration form, which is available on the “Register for a tour” page, and mail it to Avian Journeys. It is very important that you read all the information in this document, and then make sure you sign and date the waiver at the end of the registration form. A \$300 deposit is necessary to secure a space on the trip. Full payment for the tour will be invoiced 100 days prior to the departure date, and must be received within 90 days of departure.

Cancellation policy: Cancellation by a tour participant greater than or equal to 90 days prior to the departure date will result in full refund of payments to Avian Journeys (minus 50% of the deposit if the cancellation occurs between 119 and 90 days prior to the tour departure). Cancellation by a tour participant within 90 days of a tour will result in a refund of amounts we are able to recover from our hotels and ground agents. Fixed cost amounts can not be refunded. In general, the amount we can potentially refund may be as low as 50% or 25% of the cost of the tour.

Trip insurance. At the time of payment for the tour, we highly recommend purchasing travel insurance. The following companies offer trip insurance, and/or emergency medical insurance: <http://www.travelinsured.com>, <http://www.accessamerica.com>, www.aaa.com. One never knows when personal illness, or an illness in the family is going to strike. Given that a cancellation by a participant within 90 days of departure might result in a loss of most, if not all of the cost of a tour, trip insurance is a good idea. Furthermore, insurance is recommended in case of an illness on a tour, and in a worse case scenario, the need for an emergency medical evacuation, which can be prohibitively expensive. Purchasing insurance is a personal choice, and Avian Journeys does not recommend one company over another.

Travel to Florida: The tour begins and ends in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. If you are flying in to Tucson, you should plan on arriving before 6:00 pm, the time of our introductory meeting on Day 1 Fort Lauderdale is served by all of the major air carriers.

We can advise you on your travel plans to Fort Lauderdale, but we suggest using one of the online travel booking sites, such as Orbitz or Travelocity. It is also easy to book flights online through all of the airline web sites.

Baggage suggestions: We suggest limiting your baggage as much as possible, and trying to bring one piece of luggage, and one carry-on (such as a small backpack). While we will have plenty of room in the van, traveling as light as possible makes everyone's life more simpler. Airlines are also starting to charge for additional luggage, so limiting yourself to one piece can be cost effective. Please note that the luggage should not weigh a ton. You should be prepared to be able to lift and/or carry your own luggage at hotels. Most hotels have luggage carts, and the leader will try and help you, but please don't expect the leader to be able to lift and carry over-heavy bags.

Climate in Florida: The weather in South Florida in May can vary. One should expect very warm days, and pleasant evenings, particularly in the Keys where it is likely to be a little breezy. Temperatures are usually in the 80's and the humidity is relatively high.

What to Bring

Clothing – Over the years we have discovered that “everyone” has their own tastes regarding clothes. We will suggest that you consider quick-drying pants and shirts, particularly if you plan on doing your own laundry. Many of the higher quality field cloths available from companies such as “Ex Officio” or “REI” also offer protection from UV rays, which is important in Florida. We also recommend clothes with “neutral” colors, such as browns, tans, and greens that blend with the natural environment, which is less threatening to forest and desert birds. Bright reds and pinks should please be avoided, although they do attract hummingbirds! Shorts are generally fine for an Florida tour, but we do occasional walk off the roads, and those wearing shorts need to be extra careful with occasional mosquitoes.

Footwear – Comfortable footwear is perhaps the most important item to consider, as we are on our feet most of the day, every day! We suggest lightweight hiking boots. Sneakers, and occasionally sandals (such as Tevas or Keens) are also fine most of the time, but again those not wearing hiking boots need to be extra careful when venturing off of roads or trails.

The following items are important:

- Binoculars
- Camera (optional)
- Hat (ESSENTIAL!)
- Lightweight Jacket
- Small Flashlight w/ replacement batteries
- Small LED Headlamp (useful when owling)
- Alarm Clock
- Insect Repellant

Sunscreen
Water Bottle
Small backpack
Ear Plugs (optional)

General health issues: Florida poses little health risks. The most important health issue is the sun and dehydration. Wearing a hat, putting on sunscreen, and drinking lots of water will insure a safer experience. Biting insects are typically not a major problem, although *mosquitoes* are sometimes a problem in the Everglades. Applying insect repellent should help in this situation. Poisonous snakes are present in the Everglades of Florida, especially “cotton-mouths”. They are rarely seen, but participants should be aware that they exist – we have never heard of a bird tour participant ever being bitten by a cotton-mouth!

Photography: Our leaders are typically very interested in photography, in particular “digiscoping”, and within the context of the tour, photography is encouraged. Certain sensible guidelines will be adhered to, such as not approaching a bird for photos until all in the group has had a satisfying look, and we will avoid unnecessary disturbance of a bird, particularly if it is nesting. At the end of the tour the leader will share his or her photo highlights, making them available on CD, or downloadable from a social network web site.

Field Guides. All books listed below are available from **Amazon.com**.

Kaufman, Kenn. 2000. *Birds of North America*. Houghton Mifflin, New York.

National Geographic Society. 2002. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Fourth Edition. National Geographic Society, Washington, DC.

Sibley, David Allen. 2000. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

Sibley, David Allen. 2003. *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

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refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect August 2009 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. Prior to acceptance on any tour, the participant must read and sign a liability waiver included in the registration form.