



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Florida

Spring Migration & Specialities

21st April to 1st May 2023 (10 days)



Florida Scrub Jay by Dubi Shapiro

Florida is unique among the 50 states with its geology, geography, flora, and fauna offering a fascinating mix of north and south, with a flavour of the Caribbean, and a major flyway for Neotropical migrants. This short and relaxed tour combs through Southern Florida's highlights with visits to the world-famous Everglades, the beautiful Keys, the central pine barrens and the remote Dry Tortugas. The Everglades are a one-of-kind natural wonder among southern Florida's many wild treasures and the Keys offer

spectacular beaches, plus unique hardwood hammocks home to numerous bird specialties. We will also spend a day in the Dry Tortugas amidst spectacular seabirds and we will witness the heartbeat of Spring migration here. Even within the greater Miami area nature still survives and thrives among burgeoning development and we will visit local migrant hotspots and seek some of the ABA countable exotic species (always a fun and interesting venture).

Southern Florida harbours a large number of bird specialties, species that are absent or difficult to find in other parts of the ABA area, including Magnificent Frigatebird, Masked Booby, Sooty Tern, Brown Noddy, 'Great White' Heron, Short-tailed Hawk, Snail and Swallow-tailed Kites, Purple Gallinule, Limpkin, Mangrove Cuckoo, Antillean Nighthawk, White-crowned Pigeon, Florida Scrub Jay, Grey Kingbird, Black-whiskered Vireo, 'Golden' Yellow Warbler, and 'Cape Sable' Seaside Sparrow.

During this tour we will stand excellent chances of seeing all south Florida specialties plus a wide variety of neotropical migrants with excellent photo opportunities of the myriad water birds and shorebirds. The warm, tropical climate of the region also supports populations of many exotic and feral species, some of which are countable on the ABA list, including Grey-headed Swamphen, Monk, White-winged and Nanday Parakeets, Red-whiskered Bulbul, Common Myna and Spot-breasted Oriole. We will spend some time adding these to our list and it is always fun to see what else is flying around the Miami area. With luck one or two strays from the Caribbean could be present and we will make a special effort to find these, rare possibilities could include La Sagra's Flycatcher, Bahama Mockingbird, Thick-billed Vireo, Bananaquit and Western Spindalis, but these species are only sporadically present.

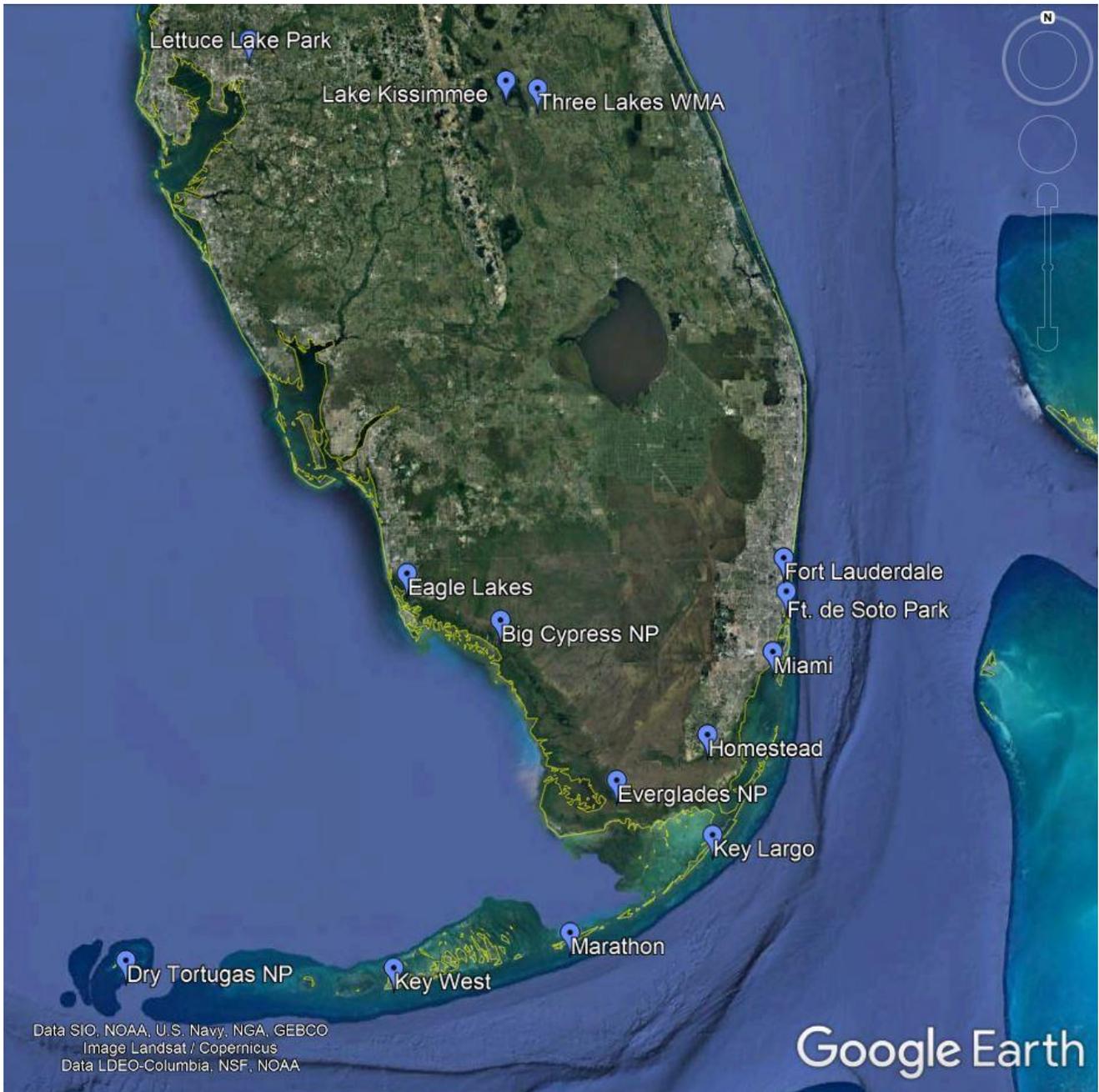
THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

FLORIDA ITINERARY

Day 1	Arrival in Miami
Day 2	Miami urban areas, Green Cay Wetlands and Loxahatchee
Day 3	Three Lakes WMA, Lake Kissimmee and Lettuce Lake Park
Day 4	Ft. de Soto Park
Day 5	Oscar Scherer SP, Eagle Lakes, Big Cypress and Tamiami Trail
Day 6	Everglades National Park and Homestead area
Day 7	Key Largo, Big Pine Key, Marathon, Key West
Day 8	Dry Tortugas
Day 9	Key West, Long Key, and Homestead area
Day 10	Final departure



TOUR MAP



THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Red-cockaded Woodpecker
by Dubi Shapiro

Day 1: Arrival in Miami. The tour starts at our Miami Airport Hotel at 15:30. After a chance to get acquainted, we'll head out for a few hours of easy birding in the Miami Springs neighbourhood just to the north of the hotel. This is a good location for Spot-breasted Oriole and we'll hope to find one or more to start the tour with one of the special birds of the Miami area. This can also be a good location for several of the parakeet species now established in South Florida and with luck we may find Monk, Yellow-chevroned and/or Mitred Parakeets as we search for the oriole.

Day 2: Miami urban areas. The parks and neighbourhoods around and within Miami host a surprising avifauna. While many native species like White-winged Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Mockingbird and Boat-tailed Grackle are common, a number of introduced and non-native species inhabit the city as well. This morning, we'll likely explore the Kendall area in hopes of finding the established (and countable) Egyptian Goose, Red-whiskered Bulbul, Mitred Parakeet, Scaly-breasted Munia and others.

Later we'll head north to enjoy a relaxed afternoon of birding at the Wakodahatchee and Green Cay Wetlands. Both locations feature boardwalk trail systems that allow

exceptionally close views of a variety of water and wading birds. A partial listing of species we should find at one or both locations include Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Mottled Duck, Wood Stork, Anhinga, Least Bittern, Great and Snowy Egrets; Little Blue and Tricolored Herons; White and Glossy Ibises; Gray-headed Swamphen, Black-necked Stilt and many others.

Day 3: Three Lakes WMA, Lake Kissimmee and Lettuce Lake Park. We will start early to look for the pine forest specialties like Bachman's Sparrow, Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Brown-headed Nuthatch. We will also see a wide variety of other species associated with this habitat, including Pine and Yellow-throated Warblers, Eastern Towhee, Northern Bobwhite and Pileated Woodpecker. On nearby Lake Kissimmee we will have our first chances to find Snail Kite and Limpkin whilst also adding Bald Eagle, Northern Crested Caracara, Sandhill Crane and possibly Wild Turkey. We will drive west to



Prothonotary Warbler by Owen Deutsch



Lettuce Lake Park to look for some breeding species that are rare further south like Prothonotary and Yellow-throated Warblers.



Pine Warbler by Dubi Shapiro

Day 4: Ft. de Soto Park. This small park on the Gulf side of Florida supports a wide variety of habitats that attract songbird and water bird migrants. The area can be alive with colourful warblers, tanagers, and buntings, plus many vireos and thrushes. The beachfront plays host to terns, gull, wading birds, and shorebirds. Some of the specialties we seek include Wilson’s Plover and Reddish Egret. We also stand good chances of seeing Nanday Parakeets, an exotic species that is now countable of the ABA list.

Day 5: Oscar Scherer SP, Eagle Lakes, Big Cypress and Tamiami Trail. We start in the Oscar Scherer SP in the morning to look for the resident Florida Scrub Jays, Florida’s only endemic. Then we will explore the Tamiami Trail along the Shark River Slough and the Shark River section of the Everglades National Park. We will especially look for Snail Kites, but a wide variety of waterbirds will provide endless photo opportunities. After a field lunch we continue during the afternoon and explore the Big Cypress region, where we can admire ancient bald cypress trees and look for Limpkins and Barred Owls. Wood Storks nest and roost in the area and we will take advantage of more excellent photographic opportunities.

Day 6: Everglades National Park and Homestead area. We will spend the entire day in the southern section of the Everglades National Park, slowly making our way to the Flamingo Visitor Centre, stopping in pine forest for Brown-headed Nuthatch, hardwood hammocks for migrants, and sawgrass prairie en route. In the latter habitat we will look for the threatened and distinct Cape Sable race of the Seaside Sparrow. In drier uplands we will look for the beautiful Painted Bunting and graceful Swallow-tailed Kites overhead. Possibilities new birds include the ‘Great White’ form of Great Blue Heron, Roseate Spoonbill, Wood Stork and Mangrove Cuckoo We will wander through unique woodland containing Gumbo Limbo trees looking for migrants and explored the various wetlands for egrets, herons, spoonbills, and Anhingas. If American Flamingos have been reported we may elect to walk the famous Snake Bight Trail, but this will depend on recent reports. Around the Flamingo Visitor centre we will look for



Painted Bunting by Owen Deutsch





Brown-headed Nuthatch by Dubi Shapiro

Black-whiskered Vireos and White-crowned Pigeons and carefully scrutinize the blackbird flocks to look for the rare Shiny Cowbird. Other wildlife could include the localized American Crocodile, many American Alligators, and threatened West Indian Manatee. A short night excursion could reveal Eastern Screech Owl and Chuck-will's-widow.

Day 7: Key Largo, Big Pine Key, Marathon, Key West. We will begin our birding in the beautiful Keys on Key Largo home to the elusive Mangrove Cuckoo, which will be top on our target list today. We will drive south birding en

route, stopping on Big Pine Key and in the Marathon area to look among many others for Roseate Tern, the 'Great White' form of Great Blue Heron, Grey Kingbird, White-crowned Pigeon, Black-whiskered Vireo, and a wide variety of migrants that use the keys as stepping stones on their way north. In the evening we will return to the Marathon area to look for the localized Antillean Nighthawk zigzagging through the sky above the Keys.

Day 8: Dry Tortugas. The Dry Tortugas are a true jewel within the US National Park's system, lying about 70 miles west of Key West, these small, sandy islets lie at the heart of large seabird colonies and provide critical stopover areas for thousands of neotropical migrants. We will do a day tour aboard the comfortable Yankee Freedom III, leaving Key West 7:00 am and returning by 17:00. We will have ample time (around 5 hours) in the Dry Tortugas in order to tour the impressive Fort Jefferson (the largest masonry structure in the Western Hemisphere) and of course look for the bounty of birds to be found here. We will concentrate on studying the thousands of Sooty Terns and Brown Noddies (looking carefully for possible Black Noddy). Magnificent Frigatebirds (here at their only nesting colony in the US) accentuate the blue sky on still wings and the screeching of nesting terns creates a constant din. Careful scrutiny of the seabirds may reveal Roseate Terns and we will see Masked and Brown Boobies en route. The rest of the time on the island we will spend looking for migrants with too many possibilities to list here, but one never knows what may



Mangrove Cuckoo by Dušan Brinkhuizen



show up. The stretches of open water between the Dry Tortugas and Key West are too shallow for true pelagic species, but we will scan the liquid blue carefully anyway in hopes of a stray shearwater or storm-petrel. After returning from our full day, we will relax in historic Key West.

Day 9: Key West, Long Key, and Homestead area. Today we'll casually work our way back to the Miami area with stops in the Keys to explore new locations and/or look for any of the region's specialties we are still seeking. Later we'll check into our hotel and enjoy a final dinner and checklist session together.

Day 10: Final departure. Our plans for our final morning together will be flexible. If any Caribbean rarities have been reported in the area in the past few days, we'll try our luck with that. If not, and there are still any of the Miami area exotics we are seeking, we'll be well positioned to give that a try before returning to the Miami International Airport in late morning for afternoon flights home. (Please schedule departure flights for 13:00 or later.)

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for these tours are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

The tour price includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 10;
- All accommodations;
- Ground transportation;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- Tips for local guides and services; and
- All guiding services.

...and excludes:

- Any airfares, taxes and visa costs;
- Any beverages;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.



c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tiping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, porters and restaurants) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS

This tour **does not** include ANY international airfares. The tour will commence from our Miami Airport hotel in the late afternoon (15:30) on day 1. The tour will conclude around mid-day on day 10 at Miami International Airport (IATA: MIA).

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS

Miami International Airport (IATA: MIA) is the main port of entry and exit for this tour. **Please DO NOT book your international flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

