



# ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## Florida

### Winter Birding

*10<sup>th</sup> December to 17<sup>th</sup> December 2023 (8 days)*



Florida Scrub Jay by Carlos Sanchez

*Together, both climate and geography isolate Florida from the rest of the country. Because of its geographically unique position, Florida is a crossroads between the temperate north and the sultry Caribbean south. Indeed, about a dozen bird species of West Indian origin reach the northern limits of their range here. Many of these West Indian species live nowhere else in the United States. Furthermore,*

due to its southerly position and proximity to the Gulf Stream, the southeast corner of the Sunshine State hosts an incredible assortment of warblers, vireos, flycatchers, raptors and shorebirds -- up to twenty-five warbler species and ten flycatcher species have been recorded in a single winter season! It is also the best time of year to catch up with some Florida specialties which are much more difficult on normal spring itineraries like Short-tailed Hawk. Indeed, the excellence of winter birding in South Florida is one of North America's secrets, as it is the time when avian diversity peaks in the region.

On this tour, we cover the southern third of the state in search of the many specialty birds and winter visitors on offer. We begin by exploring Miami, a city with a decidedly Caribbean flair, in search of several ABA-countable exotics such as Spot-breasted Oriole, White-winged Parakeet and Red-whiskered Bulbul, as well as a wide variety of winter residents such as Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Summer Tanager, and a score of warblers. A little further north, a series of well-planned wetlands are home to all of the Florida wetland specialties: Wood Stork, Purple Gallinule, Limpkin, Sora, and more. We also explore nearby oak scrub for Florida's only endemic bird, the Florida Scrub Jay. On the last leg of our journey, we explore bald cypress forests, pinelands and mudflats in southwestern Florida for charismatic waders such as Piping and Snowy Plovers and memorable woodland species such as Brown-headed Nuthatch and Red-headed Woodpecker.

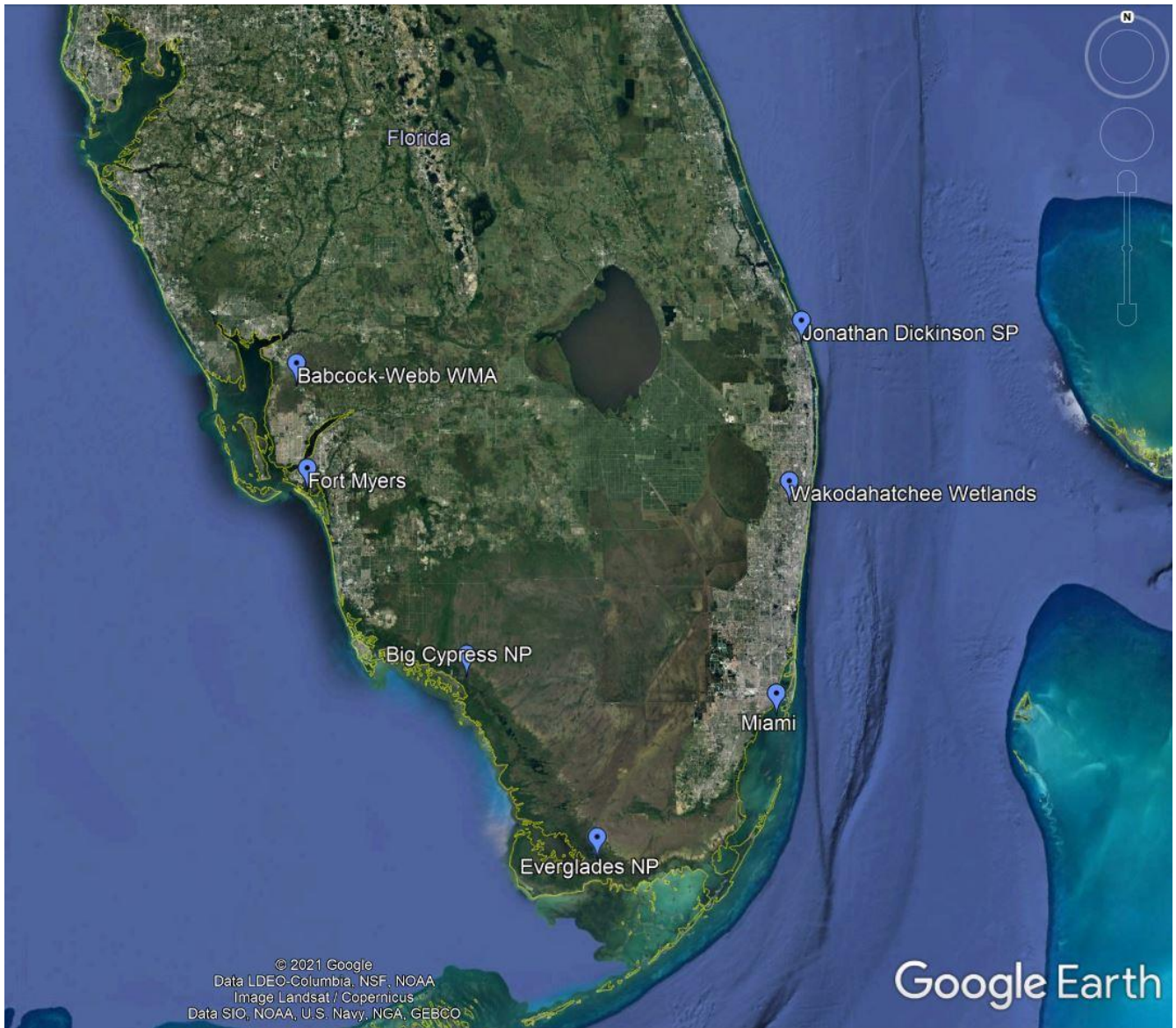
### THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

#### THE ITINERARY

<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Arrive in Miami</b>
<b>Day 2</b>	<b>Miami area</b>
<b>Day 3</b>	<b>Everglade's National Park</b>
<b>Day 4</b>	<b>Miami to Palm Beach</b>
<b>Day 5</b>	<b>Jonathan Dickinson State Park and Palm Beach</b>
<b>Day 6</b>	<b>Babcock Webb WMA</b>
<b>Day 7</b>	<b>Fort Myers Beach to Miami</b>
<b>Day 8</b>	<b>Final departures</b>



TOUR ROUTE MAP...





THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Tropical Parula by Carlos Sanchez

**Day 1: Arrive in Miami.** After arriving at Miami International Airport, you will transfer you to our nearby hotel for the night.

**Day 2: Miami area.** The nearly tropical climate and exotic vegetation of the Miami-Ft. Lauderdale metropolitan area offers a unique landscape of opportunity for a myriad of introduced bird species from all over the world. We spend our first two days in Florida exploring this urban landscape in search of ABA-countable exotics such as Spot-breasted Oriole, Red-whiskered Bulbul and Common Myna. However, introduced species are only

a small fraction of the avifauna of Miami-Dade, a county which claims one of the longest bird lists east of the Mississippi River. The parks and preserves peppered throughout the city provide habitat for a wide array of both resident and wintering species that include Short-tailed Hawk, White-crowned Pigeon, Burrowing Owl, Ruby-throated Hummingbird and over twenty species of warbler. There is also an optional owling session for species such as Great Horned Owl, Eastern Screech Owl and Eastern Whip-poor-will.

**Day 3: Everglade’s National Park.** Published in 1947, Marjory Stoneman Douglas’s *The Everglades: River of Grass* highlighted the uniqueness of the Everglades. Lying at the southern tip of the state, the Everglades is a vast subtropical sawgrass prairie broken only by cypress domes, tropical hardwood hammocks, pinelands and mangrove swamps. There is nowhere else in the United States with such a decidedly tropical suite of habitats. We work along the length of the main park road that terminates in Flamingo, exploring and learning about these various habitats. American Crocodile and West Indian Manatee are possible at the marina in Flamingo.



Mangrove Cuckoo by Carlos Sanchez

**Day 4: Miami to Palm Beach.** On this morning, we explore





White-crowned Pigeon by Carlos Sanchez

weedy fields in the agricultural outskirts of Miami for a totally different assortment of species, many of which are not usually associated with South Florida, such as White-tailed Kite, Brown-crested Flycatcher, and an eclectic mix of sparrows (Swamp, Grasshopper, Savannah, Clay-colored, and Lincoln's). The diminutive Common Ground Dove can often be seen foraging on the trails, while Indigo and Painted Bunting are often numerous in areas of richer growth.

After a delicious lunch in Miami, we head north to Green Cay and Wakodahatchee Wetlands, two artificially created wetlands that host nearly all of Florida's wetland

specialties: Black-bellied Whistling Duck, American Bittern, Least Bittern, Limpkin, Sora, Purple Gallinule and more. The rookeries at Wakodahatchee Wetlands should be very active at this time of year, providing excellent photographic opportunities of nesting herons, storks, anhingas and cormorants.

**Day 5: Jonathan Dickinson State Park and Palm Beach.** After an early breakfast, we spend time exploring Jonathan Dickinson State Park. The ancient sand dunes in this part of South Florida crest at Hobe Mountain, the highest elevation south of Lake Okeechobee at a little over 80 feet. Of ornithological interest, the oak-scrub vegetation in the surrounding area supports a healthy population of Florida Scrub Jay. Other birds in the park include Bachman's Sparrow (difficult in winter) and Red-headed Woodpecker.

Afterwards, we may spend some time exploring sites which hold species we may have yet to see, including Peaceful Waters Sanctuary and Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. We spend the afternoon driving to the Gulf coast for the night.

**Day 6: Babcock Webb WMA.** We spend time exploring the pineland savanna at Babcock-Webb WMA in the early morning for pineland specialties, particularly Red-cockaded Woodpecker. We



Reddish Egret by Carlos Sanchez







**Burrowing Owls by Carlos Sanchez**

also search for other regional specialties such as Brown-headed Nuthatch, Northern Bobwhite, and Pine Warbler. Afterwards, depending on the tides, we visit sites along the coast to watch shorebirds – birds such as Reddish Egret, Marbled Godwit, Red Knot, Black Skimmer, and more.

**Day 7: Fort Myers Beach to Miami.** It will be an early start – an early morning walk along San Carlos Point and Fort Myers Beach for an assortment of waders, gulls, terns, and seaducks. We make a special effort to see American Oystercatcher and Snowy Plover this morning, the latter a rare and declining breeding resident that we will not encounter elsewhere.



**King Rail by Carlos Sanchez**

In the afternoon, we journey westward along Tamiami Trail where the habitat quickly switches over to dense forests of bald cypress. Kirby Storter Boardwalk in Big Cypress National Preserve provides a convenient and picturesque rest stop along the way. Both Louisiana and Northern Waterthrush often winter side by side here.

As we near Miami, the forest opens up to sawgrass prairie. Areas north of the road regularly hold small numbers of Snail Kite, and we will make several stops along the way in an effort to get good views of one if we have yet to see one.



**Day 8: Final departures.** After some morning birding in the Miami area for any outstanding species, we head to Miami International Airport for departures. Please schedule flights for after 12:00PM.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:**

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

**This includes:**

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 8;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Extra activities mentioned in the itinerary;
- Reserve entrance fees; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services.)

**The tour fee does not include:**

- Visa fees;
- **ANY** flights (see above);
- Any additional beverages;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other 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 participants, 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/s 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.**

**Tippling:** As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc) 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.



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**ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:**

This tour **does not** include **ANY** airfares. The tour will depart from Miami International Airport (IATA: MIA). As day 1 has been set aside as an arrival day, you are free to arrive at any time. The tour will conclude at Miami International Airport (IATA: MIA) on day 8 by mid-day.

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 for this tour. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

