

Audubon Park Bird Counts, February, 2014

Most of the month was cold and miserable even if it did warm up towards the end of the month. It would be so nice to have a long spell of dry and sunny weather. One effect of the poor weather was a high number of species; in all 104 species were seen during the month and this compares very well with the 100 species seen from mid-October to the end of December!

Some species at the impoundments are very territorial and they will chase away any strays that dare approach. The Sandhill Cranes will start calling as soon as they hear others even if they are safely in their own marsh. The egrets and herons do not tolerate any others of their kind although with the exception of the Great Blue Heron they will happily mix with other species. The Cattle Egrets prefer to be with others of their kind. In contrast both ibis species will feed together. These differing behaviors dictate just how many I see of each species.

These birds all seem to know me as they do not now even bother to look up when I walk by them. It does not seem to matter what I am wearing. On the 4th a flock of twelve Wild Turkeys spent two hours wandering around the impoundments. Exceptionally there were two adult males who spent some time circling each other whilst ruffling their feathers. At the end of that time I was walking around the back of the impoundments and I came upon this flock. They were up against the fence but they did not seem that disturbed even though I was only some 20 yards from them. I decided to turn around as I did not want to panic them.

So what did I see during the month? On the 2nd there was an Eastern Whip-poor-will, 1216 Ring-billed Gulls (these flew to the south) and 50 American Goldfinches. The 4th produced a Yellow-throated Warbler and a White-crowned Sparrow. On the 11th a flock of 40 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks flew to the south-east (there were 46 on the 15th and 50 on the 17th). Also on the 11th a party of seven American White Pelicans was seen twice. Eli had a Roseate Spoonbill there on the 12th. To my surprise there was a Florida Scrub-Jay on the 13th. To me a Crested Caracara was an even bigger surprise on the 15th although I now hear that there is a pair at Osteen. This is a strange place, a Solitary Sandpiper flew overhead on the 17th with a Black-crowned Night-Heron flying to the south before it was light on the 20th. On that date there were the first (two) Northern Parula; two Eastern Whip-poor-wills also were heard singing. On the 22nd there was the first Chuck-will's-widow so the spring migration has started. Also on the 22nd there was a Brown-headed Nuthatch a species I had expected to see sooner. On the 24th there were more migrants as there was a Louisiana Waterthrush at the marsh and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird in trees by the impoundments. Also on that day I heard a singing Bachman's Sparrow, I hope it stays (it was still there on the 26th).

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