

AUDUBON PARK BIRD COUNTS – JUNE, 2014

What should be the slowest month of the year has come and gone, in all I saw 71 species which is a lot better than the 65 I thought possible. Perhaps I should aim for 85 species in July. In all I did 18 surveys during the month and I normally recorded between 45 and 48 species a day (there were 53 species on the 14th).

It was the Sandhill Cranes that caught my attention this month. The pair's singles chick was first visible on April 5th. On June 2nd the male started jumping up and down in front of the chick. On the 5th the chick did likewise but it actually took flight for 2–3 yards! Gradually with both parents leading it took longer and longer flights. I did not note the date but one day it took off across the impoundments catching its parents by surprise. They hurriedly took off in pursuit. It seems the chick has become a teenager. At the end of the month the young bird often led the parents including a trip to a nearby farm.

There is a rookery somewhere to the north of the park in Deltona and the commonest species would appear to be White Ibis and Little Blue Heron. The White Ibis left the rookery in the dark I suspect for the St. Johns River as they returned each morning as the sun rose over the horizon. The Little Blue Herons for the most part fed in the impoundments; their food of choice was the frogs. There had to be a lot of frogs as there were at times 25 of these herons hunting for them. Many of the herons and egrets had new high counts this month with nine Great Egrets on the 3rd, ten Snowy Egrets on the 17th, 42 Little Blue Herons on the 12th, eight Tricolored Herons on the 7th and four Green Herons on the 3rd. At the end of the month an adult Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was feeding in the early morning in one of the impoundments. Roseate Spoonbills were at last seen by me (Eli had seen them on at least two visits); there was a juvenile on the 2nd and an adult on the 9th.

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were seen daily with nine on the 15th. The pair of Wood Ducks had four tiny chicks on the 9th. There were also six Black-necked Stilts on the 7th with two on the 9th.

White-winged Doves were seen on three dates with three on the 30th. There was a Ruby-throated Hummingbird on the 14th so perhaps there was a local breeding pair. There was a Northern Rough-winged Swallow on the 21st with two on the 23rd. There was a Hairy Woodpecker on the western border on the 15th – a most unexpected visitor. Brown-headed Nuthatches were present on the 10th and 14th; the first was compliments of Vivienne Powis. A Gray Catbird was present on the 19th and 20th (a few non-breeding birds do seem to wander around central Florida). Likewise a male Summer Tanager on the 7th had to be from elsewhere.

Harry Robinson, West Volusia Audubon.

