

TOM RENICK COUNTY PARK, ORMOND-BY-THE-SEA

THE BEGINNINGS OF A LONG TERM SERIES OF SEA WATCHES JANUARY, 2016

My name is Harry Robinson and I live in DeLand. I state this as many of you will not know me. For some 30 years in England I spent my free time watching and counting sea birds. When I came here I did do a series of sea watches at Canaveral National Seashore but there was nothing systematic about them. For the last 18 years I have been monitoring bird populations at Lake Apopka and from January 1st this year I have added Tom Renick Park, so I am returning to my roots. For the last five years I have carried out a static sea watch at that park as part of the Halifax River Audubons Christmas Bird Count that data is included in the spreadsheet that I have prepared; copies of this spreadsheet can be obtained from me at [<sirharrydeland@gmail.com>](mailto:sirharrydeland@gmail.com)

(The spreadsheet is available on the Halifax River Audubon Website - <http://www.halifaxriveras.org/seawatching/index>)

I intend where possible to carry out these sea watches on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday mornings from say 15 minutes before sunrise for a minimum period of five hours a day. You are all welcome to join me but I do have to ask that where possible you bring a telescope, this is one situation where sharing a telescope does not work. Each month I will provide a summary of what I saw during the month. As this is the beginning of the survey I will not always be able to put everything into perspective.

Now to the birds there were single Red-throated Loons on the 8th and ninth with two on the 29th, Common Loons were seen on most days. There was a Horned Grebe on the 9th with two on the 31st. Northern Gannets peaked at 940 on the 1st and Brown Pelicans at 743 on the 8th. There was a male Redhead on the sea on the 24th. Greater Scaup peaked at 16 on the 8th whilst Lesser Scaup peaked at 1300 on the 31st. Single Surf Scoters were identified on the 17th and 21st with a White-winged Scoter on the 10th. Black Scoters peaked at 1760 on the 9th but numbers have been falling all month. There were three Buffleheads on the 2nd with one on the 8th and four on the 14th. A Common Goldeneye flew south along the shore line on the 24th. Red-breasted Merganser also flew to the south on most days with peak counts of 33 on the 2nd and 30 on the 10th.

A Peregrine Falcon on the 8th took a Forster's Tern and took it to a condo's roof to feed. One thing that has surprised me is that Willets have been moving to the north all month; the highest count was that of 29 on the 4th. Red Knot have been present all month but the 350 that I saw on the 28th were so much higher than the 60 - 80 that I normally saw. Next came the Jaegers they were seen on most days. There were up to four a day Pomarines with a total of 29 for the month. Parasitics peaked at 53 on the 17th with 215 for the month. I expected quite large numbers of gulls but not the 7,550 Laughing Gulls seen on the 22nd, the 870 Ring-billed Gulls on the 4th and the 1135 Herring Gulls on the 22nd. There was a first-winter Franklin's Gull on the 2nd with single Glaucous Gulls on the 9th and 27th. For the terns Royal peaked at 429 on the 29th and Forster's at 144 also on the 29th. There was a very high count of 385 Black Skimmers on the 23rd.

Now to what may be the bird of the year. At 8.23 am on the 23rd an adult winter-plumage BLACK GUILLEMOT flew to the south. This is a species that should never be seen in Florida. I am still hoping that it will be relocated.

I have also been looking out the back across A1A and along with other things saw 28 American White Pelicans, 46 Wood Storks, 63 Black Vultures, 24 Turkey Vultures and 380 Lesser Scaup all on the 29th (the 1300 Lesser Scaup on the 31st were out the back). Finally there was a White-winged Dove on the 30th I am not sure of its status at this location.

The list for this park (including the Christmas Bird Counts) stands at 103 and 82 of these were seen this month. Please consider joining me.

Harry Robinson

January, 2016