

# Christmas Bird Watching Information For Your Bird Watcher Visitors – last updated 17 December 2014

Perhaps of interest, there are several interesting species of birds in the SRQ (Sarasota & Manatee Counties) area that your Christmas visitors might find of interest, even if they have only a minimal interest in birds. They are:

- a. The 50 to 60 **Indian peafowl (AKA peacocks and peahens)** that live on the northern end of Longboat Key. Some have been relocated to an area east of I-75 that is north of Clark Road and along Bee Ridge Road Extension (south end) and Coash Road.
- b. The 50 to 100 **black-hooded parakeets (correct name, Nanday Parakeet, now ABA countable)** that live very close to the Gulf of Mexico in Sarasota County; often seen on Siesta Key.
- c. The several hundred **monk parakeets** that live in northern Sarasota and Manatee Counties, in particular just south of Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport.
- d. Several extended families of **scrub jays**, some of which are fearless of humans, living at Oscar Sheer State Park north of Venice.
- e. Two or three **Indian house crows** (all black except for the upper neck and head that are gray) that live (or were living) on the north side of the Venice Inlet (these have not been seen for several years – there are reports in 2010 and 2011 of House Crows being seen at Shelby Gardens and in Palmetto, along the river (updated Dec. 2012).
- f. A thousand or more **black-bellied whistling ducks**, most of them live east of I-75 between Fruitville and Clark Roads (and a tiny bit south of Clark Road), in particular at the Celery Fields (south of Fruitville Road and east of I-75).
- g. Perhaps ten **fulvous whistling ducks** live with flocks of black-bellied whistling ducks (BBWDs), so look carefully at flocks of BBWDs for fulvous whistling ducks among them.
- h. Perhaps a dozen **crested caracaras** live along SR-72 between Myakka State Park and Arcadia. About half of the times that I drive this road in daylight I see one of them, occasionally two. Recently, I have occasionally seen a caracara at the intersection of SR-72 (aka Clark Road) and Bee Ridge Extension.

Viewing the caracaras might be combined with a trip to Arcadia where there are two things of interest to see, the rodeo (**Arcadia rodeo** held three times a year - <http://www.arcadiarodeo.com/> ) and the **Arcadia city cemetery** that holds the remains of 21 members of the **Royal Air Force** who died in Florida during W.W.II (look for the

Union Jack in the cemetery - there were RAF bases in Arcadia, Clewison, and Lakeland during WWII).

i. At least 38 **white-winged doves** that seem to live in the eastern part Manatee and Sarasota counties (a flock of 38 was seen near the east end of Bee Ridge Road on 12/17/05 - 9 were seen in the same location during the 12/16/06 CBC and since then). Look on the wires along Bee Ridge Road Extension running between the east end of Bee Ridge Road and Clark Road, but they are typically found only on the northern part of Bee Ridge Road Extension in particular near the Publix grocery store and along the front of the Heritage Oaks Golf & Country Club compound. The white-winged doves are fearful of humans (they are a game bird, hunted in Florida) and move when humans approach. They have been seen in groups of five and up to 30 only during December and January, likely a species mating time or similar directed behavior.

j. Several **limpkins, king rails** and **sora** are often seen at the Celery Fields. On Saturday, December 16, 2006 32 were counted in the CBC. Also, often seen during November to April at the Celery Fields are: **sedge wrens, grasshopper sparrows, and clay-colored sparrows**. The restoration efforts at the **Celery Fields** have created favorable breeding habitat for Least Bittern, Purple Gallinule, and Limpkin, three specialty species of interest to many birders. The Limpkins are resident and some of the Least Bitterns and Purple Gallinules seem to be spending the winter as well.

k. **Blue-crowned parakeets** have been seen at Gulf Drive and Manatee Avenue, Holmes Beach, on Ana Maria Island (in Manatee County) near the Publix and CVS parking lot.

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