

The 2016 Global Big Day—May 14<sup>th</sup>—was the biggest big day in all of birding history so far, with the most bird species seen in one day. The members of Cornell’s Team Sapsucker were by no means the only birders out there; others included well-seasoned birders, casual birders, avid birders, beginning birders, and young birders. The Northeast Florida Young Birders Club participated as well. Some of the Club’s members started their Big Day after eight o’clock in the morning; others started before six (okay, I’ll admit it, that was me). But whatever time we started, it certainly turned out to be a memorable day!

Huguenot Memorial Park was our first stop as a group. We birded with the Duval Audubon Society and had the pleasure of meeting and learning from their trip leader, Judy Jeffas, Joan and Richard Becker and other Audubon members. Of course, there was no lack of birds! Thousands of nesting Laughing Gulls screamed from the dunes. About a dozen Black Scoters snoozed and preened on the sand bars. A young Great Black-backed Gull eyed us suspiciously as we attempted to identify it. An unusual Pectoral Sandpiper showed up amidst some Dunlins. Even a gorgeous American Oystercatcher pair offered great views (although we never did see their chick). As the young birders club left for their next destination, the trip ended with a happy 33 species.



A cloud of Laughing Gulls



A Laughing Gull on watch duty

Spoonbill Pond (in Big Talbot Island) proved to be no less birdy, but without a scope, we had a little more difficulty seeing the birds on the opposite side of the pond. Nonetheless, we enjoyed watching Bonaparte’s Gulls, Black-necked Stilts, American White Pelicans, a Northern Shoveler, and the various sandpipers close enough to identify. (Pictures taken of the more distant birds revealed a Green-winged Teal and some Bobolinks, among others.) Across the road from the pond, a Painted Bunting, hidden from sight, taunted us with his sweet song. We tried finding him but were quickly deterred by a number of very large spider webs stretching across the path! Even so, we were not disappointed by the 36 species we saw and heard there.



American White Pelicans



Lesser Yellowlegs

Our final destination, as a group, was Kingsley Plantation. Although the birds had calmed down by that point, we did manage to see an unusual-looking juvenile Yellow-throated Warbler and heard a lot of Northern Parulas. It was there that we split paths—some of us to social obligations, others to a continued birding frenzy.

Although one of our members was unfortunately not able to join the rest of the club that day, she did go birding with her family. So here was each member's favorite bird of the day:

Mrs. Christina Dembiec: American Oystercatchers at Huguenot Memorial Park

Sofia Lee: Northern Parulas (fledglings chasing around a parent)

Samantha Jones: Mottled Duck ducklings at Spoonbill Pond

Marie Chappell: Least Bittern at Imeson Center



American Oystercatcher



Least Bittern



Mottled Ducks

Next stop in the ongoing birding adventure: Guana River WMA (Saturday, June 18<sup>th</sup>). Send us an email if you would like to join in—don't hesitate!

*Bird on!*