

## **TOM RENICK COUNTY PARK BIRDS HURRICANE MILTON AND THE FOLLOWING DAYS (October 10 to October 14, 2024).**

The Hurricane crossed Florida from west to east on the night of the 9<sup>th</sup> and the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup>. There was a curfew on the 10<sup>th</sup> to 8.00 am and I started a sea watch soon after. The sea was magnificent but birds were few and far between. Saw three Peregrine Falcons and a Purple Sandpiper. So, I crossed to the river to see what was going on there. Flying to the north I saw flock after flock of adult Sooty Terns 148 in all. With them were 33 Bridled Terns (did not note their ages). There were also single Wilson's and Leach's Storm-Petrels. In the cover by the fishing pier there was a Blue-winged Warbler (new species for the park) and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Wind gradually falling but may have averaged out at NE 47 m.p.h.

In contrast on the 11<sup>th</sup> the birds were found over the sea There were 12 Sooty & 1 Bridled Tern along with a Brown Noddy. There was a Cory's Shearwater, a Common Tern, 3 Parasitic Jaegers, 2 Lesser Black-backed Gulls and a Black-legged Kittiwake. There was also a minor rarity called a Southern Giant Petrel.... Wind was now down to NNE 18.

Now there follows the systematic list. An adult dark morph Southern Giant Petrel flew to the south on the 11<sup>th</sup>. There was also a Cory's Shearwater on the 11<sup>th</sup>. There was an Audubon's Shearwater on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Single Wilson's & Leach's Storm-Petrels were seen on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Brown Pelicans peaked at 239 on the 12<sup>th</sup>. There were 2 American Bitterns on the 13<sup>th</sup> (joint high count) with one on the 14<sup>th</sup>. There was a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron on the 13<sup>th</sup>. There were eight Glossy Ibis on the 12<sup>th</sup> with a Roseate Spoonbill on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> there were 15 Blue-winged Teal, 3 Northern Shoveler and 3 Bufflehead. There were ten Lesser Scaup on the 12<sup>th</sup> with 15 on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

There were single Northern Harriers on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. There were single Sharp-shinned Hawks on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> with five on the 14<sup>th</sup>. There were four Red-shouldered Hawks on the 14<sup>th</sup> with three Broad-winged Hawks on the 12<sup>th</sup>, There was a Red-tailed Hawk on the 13<sup>th</sup> with two on the 14<sup>th</sup>. The male American Kestrel was in the area each day. There were four Merlin on the 12<sup>th</sup> with two on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. There were three Peregrine Falcons on the 10<sup>th</sup> with four on the 11<sup>th</sup>, three on the 12<sup>th</sup> and two on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

There were two American Golden-Plovers on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Willets peaked at 85 on the 12<sup>th</sup>. There was a Spotted Sandpiper on the 12<sup>th</sup>. There was also a Purple Sandpiper on the 10<sup>th</sup> it flew to the north with a Ruddy Turnstone.

There was a Pomarine Jaeger on the 12<sup>th</sup> with three Parasitic Jaegers on the 11<sup>th</sup>. There were 18 Herring Gulls on the 11<sup>th</sup>. On that date there were also two Lesser Black-backed Gulls. There was a first-winter Black-legged Kittiwake on the 11<sup>th</sup> (Sabine's Gull was missing). There were two Caspian Terns on the 10<sup>th</sup> with two more on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Royal Terns peaked at 91 on the

11<sup>th</sup>. There was a Common Tern on the 11<sup>th</sup> with eight on the 12<sup>th</sup>. There were 33 Bridled Terns on the 10<sup>th</sup> (a new high count) along with one on the 11<sup>th</sup>. There were 148 adult Sooty Terns on the 10<sup>th</sup> (new high count) with 12 on the 11<sup>th</sup> and one on the 13<sup>th</sup>. There was also a Brown Noddy on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

There was a Barred Owl on the 14<sup>th</sup>. There were three Ruby-throated Hummingbirds on the 13<sup>th</sup> (a joint high count). There were two Belted Kingfishers on the 13<sup>th</sup>. There was a Northern Flicker on the 13<sup>th</sup>. There was an Eastern Wood-Pewee on the 11<sup>th</sup>. There was a Western Kingbird on the 12<sup>th</sup>. There were three Eastern Kingbirds on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Loggerhead Shrikes peaked at four on the 13<sup>th</sup>. For the vireos there were single White-eyed, Blue-headed and Red-eyed on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

There were three Cave Swallows on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Two to eight Barn Swallows seen daily. There were four Tufted Titmouse on the 13<sup>th</sup> a joint high count. There was a House Wren on the 14<sup>th</sup>. There was a Gray-cheeked Thrush on the 13<sup>th</sup>. There were three Swainson's and one Hermit Thrush also on the 13<sup>th</sup>. There was a Gray Catbird on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

There was a Blue-winged Warbler on the 10<sup>th</sup> a new species for the park. There was a Yellow-throated Warbler on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Palm Warblers were seen from the 12<sup>th</sup>. There were two American Redstarts on the 13<sup>th</sup> with one on the 14<sup>th</sup>. There were two Common Yellowthroats on the 11<sup>th</sup> with singles on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. There was a Rose-breasted Grosbeak on the 10<sup>th</sup>. There was a Dickcissel on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Finally, there were five House Finch on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

<b>STATS:</b>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>
Wind	NE 47	NE 18	NNE 10	N 5	NW 4
Hours	6	10	9	8	8
Best days	12th with 866 birds				
	13 with 67 species				

## SOOTY TERNS

It is normal for this species to have left central Florida by October so just how could such a heavy passage occur? There is one significant fact there were NO juveniles. According to Stevenson & Anderson whilst the juveniles travel to Africa the adults only travel south to the southern Gulf of Mexico and to the Caribbean Sea. It therefore seems likely that Hurricane Milton picked up many of these terns on their wintering grounds and either pushed them ahead of the storm or inside the eye wall. On reaching the Gulf coast of Florida some at least crossed

the state to the Intracoastal Waterway. This waterway was calm compared to the ocean and they turned into wind and travelled to the north. I do not know what they did when they got to the Flagler ditch, none came back south.

## **SOUTHERN GIANT PETREL**

At about 9.30 am on the 11<sup>th</sup> at the park I spotted this huge Albatross size seabird. It was clearly not an Albatross but it was of a similar size. It traveled slowly to the south at perhaps a quarter mile range. There were two very striking features. The wings were very long and thin with a marked bend at the carpal joint. The outer wing also dipped back. For most of the time the wings were held stiff as it glided to the south. It gave an infrequent very quick wing beat. The other feature was the plumage. This bird was a very pale gray/brown all the upperparts (wings, tail, mantle etc.) were this color. The only exception was the head which was white. The gray/brown did not go up onto the crown. During those wing beats I was able to get a glimpse of the underwing there was a whitish area down the wing not sure of its position the views were so quick. All the time this bird was flying across the wind with its head away from me so I never saw the beak let alone the color of the tip of the lower mandible. I also had the feeling that the underparts were slightly paler.

Harry Robinson