

From: Alice Horst ahorst@comcast.net

Subject: [the-village-birders] Village Birders' overnight birding trip to St Marks Wildlife Management Refuge 1/10-1/11 2024

Date: January 12, 2024 at 12:10 PM

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AH

1/12/2024:

In spite of major storm warnings 13 birders met at St Marks National Wildlife Refuge for an incredible 2 days of birding. Mark Cudney, our leader, had scouted the area and knew the best birding spots due to tidal conditions.

We ended up, as a group, with 117 species for 2 days. Not every birder saw every bird but most of us saw most of them.

I saw an eBird post of a Short-eared Owl being seen in an adjacent area of the Refuge and asked if anyone was interested in "chasing" it.

It was only 20 minutes from our hotel!

So we drove to the reported Short-eared Owl spot and met the woman who had reported the bird two days earlier.

We were not even out of our cars when we observed the Owl flying low over the grassy field. We watched this magnificent bird in a beautiful sky for 20 minutes.

This was a "life" bird for several people.

Nelson's Sparrow, another very special bird, hard to see let alone to photograph.

Another of our favorites which we heard, ID'd as Virginia Rail, and then watched scampering in and out of grasses below the observation deck at Headquarters Pond.

Pinky, the long time resident American Flamingo, is no longer at St. Marks but we had a few pink birds: Roseate Spoonbills.

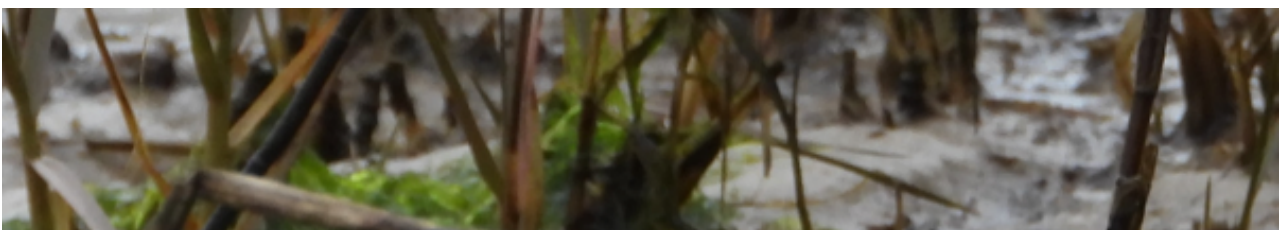
On the drive to/from St Marks some of us stopped in Gainesville for a rare duck, Common Goldeneye, and also in Tallahassee for a reported rare Couch's Kingbird.

Pictures below of our Short-eared Owl, Nelson's Sparrow - picture by Jan Mercer, and our birding group (-1)





Short-eared Owl: photo by Alice Horst





Nelson's Sparrow: photo by Jan Mercer





Group photo in front of lighthouse at St Marks WMR

Thank you everyone for coming on The Village Birders' trip and thank you Mark for leading.

Every day is a GREAT day to go birding!

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