

**November 19, 2016 Bird Walk
Eastern Okaloosa County
Led by Carole Goodyear**

The itinerary for this trip is never a literal "walk" at a single location; it is a series of "hops" to several different habitats in eastern Okaloosa County. At this season we often get a good lesson on the effect of weather fronts, and the species diversity always depends on which birds have (or have not!) arrived for the winter.

On November 19, the arrival of a cold front timed itself perfectly for the beginning of the walk. The wind kicked in as our group of 14 people gathered and within an hour it was a consistent 20 mph from the NNW. The blustery morning kept many birds hidden and quiet. Even normally abundant Yellow-rumped Warblers were scarce. In addition, aquatic habitats have been affected by this fall's drought, with all or parts of several area ponds completely dry. This has changed species assemblages and can yield surprises, such as.....

Snipe! At our first stop at a large retention pond along the Spence Parkway, three snipe could be seen in a single scope view, sitting in a row in open view in the middle of the dry pond bed. We also had good views here of several Killdeer and a Red-tailed Hawk.

Other highlights of the morning were: At Camp Timpoochee we found a large, active ground-feeding flock of Pine Warblers, Chipping Sparrows, and bluebirds, with one Palm Warbler among them. At the Lakeshore Drive retention pond, we had views of Ring-necked Ducks, a kestrel, and immature and adult Bald Eagles. In Raintree, we found a group of three flickers. At White Point Recreation Area, we were treated to a near-shore feeding frenzy of Common loons, Double-crested Cormorants, and diving Brown Pelicans. Also, a Black-bellied Plover stalked the shoreline.