



# BirdWalk Newsletter

**1.1.2017**

Walk conducted  
by Perry Nugent

Newsletter written  
by Jayne Matney

Photo by Chuck Fuhrman  
Swamp Sparrow

**“I love the arrival of a new season- each one bringing with it its own emotion: spring is full of hope; summer is freedom; autumn is a colorful release, and winter brings an enchanting peace. It’s hard to pick which one I enjoy most- each time the new one arrives, I remember its beauty and forget the previous one whose qualities have started to dim.”**

**Giovanna Fletcher, *Christmas with Billy and Me***

**This sparrow picture inspired me to dive into a little bit of “sparrow research”. Sparrows remain busy with whatever needs to be done, whether it be nest building, feeding, breeding, rearing of young. According to [www.reference.com](http://www.reference.com), because of a sparrow’s size and nature, many proverbs and idioms have been associated with these small energetic creatures. “Busy hands and minds promote a happy life”, “Good things come in small packages”, “The loudest voice is not always the most powerful” are just a few of the quotes reflected in these birds. They have been used over the years as symbols of love, joy,**

wisdom, vigilance, and even death! Sparrows have been represented in hieroglyphics by ancient Egyptians, stories in the Bible, stories in mythology, and in writings of Chaucer and Shakespeare. Because they tend to stay in flocks, a lone sparrow has been known to represent loneliness or sorrow. They have also been used in folklore or legends to be “soul catchers” that take a person’s soul to heaven. In modern times, sparrows are showing up as popular tattoos.

In the military, amongst sailors especially, one sparrow on one side of the chest is tattooed prior to leaving port while the second is tattooed on the other side of the chest once the sailor returns. The first as a



White-throated Sparrow By Perry Nugent

symbol to catch the soul if lost at sea and the second as a completion of the pair showing undying love, bonding, and commitment.

Prisoners sometimes use a sparrow tattoo on the wrist to help them remember to “fly right”!

According to [Jennifer Stone](#) in “[The Meaning of Sparrows: Identification and Folklore](#)”, sparrows have an extra bone located in the tongue to help them with seeds. She also notes that if you want to encourage sparrow residents in your yard or on your land, build bird houses in clusters, since they are social birds.



Field Sparrow By Perry Nugent

Happy New Year to all the Bird Enthusiasts out there! Magnolia Plantation wishes you a fabulous 2017! This Sunday just happened to be January 1<sup>st</sup>, and it was a damp, grey morning as a storm front began to roll in. It got chillier as the morning progressed. There were three pairs of eyes on the walk looking for feathered friends. For them, it was a fairly quiet, calm morning (with the fog and the seemingly slow motion of the herons) if it weren’t for the chatter and activities of the passerines! Fifty-six species were located on the plantation.

Our one resident Yellow-crowned Night Heron is surprisingly calm and in breeding plumage already. Stacy Turner, our ecologist in charge of the Audubon Swamp Reclamation Project, believes that these birds are becoming more used to the activities in the swamp this past year and are acclimating enough to stick around and be comfortable in the area again. Also in the Audubon Swamp area were the White Ibis. It was certainly a good day for the duck watching! Eight types of duck were seen which included the Gadwall (70 individuals), American Wigeon (9), Blue-winged Teal (40), Green-winged Teal (50), Ring-necked Duck (1), Bufflehead (5 and all female), Hooded Merganser (1), and the Pied-billed Grebe (6). Most were seen at Ravenswood Pond except for the Hooded Merganser which was seen at the red bridge pond area. Last year, the plantation was able to watch a family of merganser there so we are hopeful to see more again this year in this location. The Pied-billed Grebe were seen at both the Ravenswood Pond and the cross dike pond. Our diving water birds, the cormorant and anhinga, were plentiful at the cross dike ponds as well. Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, and a young Little Blue Heron were spotted either in the Ravenswood or dike areas. American Coot with approximately 150 individuals strong, and Common Moorhen of 60 individuals make it much easier these days for the Bald Eagles, Northern Harrier, and Red-shouldered Hawks seen out on the plantation lately. This week, one Bald Eagle was seen in the usual tree overlooking the boat dock across the water and soon seen again flying by with harassing crows following. Likewise, the 3 Northern Harrier were all seen at the same time near the cross dike pond. The 4 Red-shouldered Hawk sightings were in various locations near the



“The Ibis Stretch”

Photo by Jo Frkovich

Audubon Swamp and Ravenswood area. This fits in with the usual side of the property for nesting.

Surprising for the watchers this week, only one Turkey Vulture was seen.

However, approximately 75 Ring-billed Gulls were seen as “flybys”.

Not so surprising but always a nice treat was the sound of a Barred Owl on this morning! Three types of Woodpeckers: Red-bellied, Downy, and Pileated were accounted for as well. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Northern Flicker made the count as they made their “marks”. Two types of Vireo were spotted- the White-eyed and the Blue-headed, while three types of warbler made the list:



The Yellow-rumped or “Butterbutt” Warbler

Photo by Marina Coppedge

The Yellow-rumped, which seemed to be everywhere, the Pine, and the Black-and-white. The birders got one good look at a Hermit Thrush and heard others along the way. Cedar Waxwing and a Gray Catbird were seen in the garden. The Ruby-crowned Kinglet were seen in various locations around the plantation grounds. 8 Eastern Phoebe were seen, but unlike last week, only 2 sparrow

types were seen this week- the Swamp Sparrow and the White-throated Sparrow. Many of the 15 Rusty Blackbirds were seen on the ground, and as you may know, this makes them much more difficult to see amongst the leaves. 20 Common Grackle were present along with an entire army of 1000 Red-winged Blackbirds! The Red-winged Blackbirds kept coming out of the cattails in waves of numbers. A late afternoon walk may render a birder to see how these birds tend to come in late in the day then seem to be “released” in the mornings. The usual birds of the area which rounded out the numbers were: Mourning Dove, Blue Jay, American and Fish Crow, Tree Swallow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, and the Northern Cardinal.



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“One of the Big Guys!”

Photo by Richard Hernandez