

BirdWalk Newsletter

Magnolia Plantation and Gardens 9.18.2016

Conducted by Perry Nugent

Written by Jayne J Matney

Recent photos that have been coming in to me from members inspired my next conversation. Duckweed. Duckweed is that small aquatic plant that drifts and floats on top of the swamp waters here. Many people mistake it for algae because from a distance it looks like a green film on top of the water as algae may look in stagnant water systems. But if you examine it closely-and when there are no alligators in the waters where you are, so be careful- you can see



that this plant is similar to a miniature lily pad leaf on the surface of the water and stringy stem and root under the water hanging down, which can cause difficulty for boat propellers. The plant is high in protein. Therefore, it is a primary food source for our resident and migrating ducks, geese, American Coots, and Common Moorhen. The dabbling ducks place their beaks on the surface of the water where the leaves are floating, and chew this duckweed as



they travel the surface of ponds and swamp waters. Magnolia Plantation has an abundance of this duckweed which leads to a healthy environment for the ducks to winter, raise young, and flourish. The migrating ducks and coots use it to store up energy for their long flights ahead. There have been a few times where I have had the pleasure of watching parent moorhen carefully feeding their fuzzy young with pickings of

duckweed in order to encourage their feeding on this plant in future days. Animals such as alligators, turtles, snakes use this “duckweed film” as camouflage and dragonflies, damsel flies and other insects use it for breeding “grounds”. So contrary to some beliefs or misconceptions, duckweed is our friend and beneficial to our bird friends!



Thank you Jo Frkovich for these charming duckweed photos!



White Ibis (above) and Little Blue Heron (right) Jo Frkovich

Ibis, both the white and the glossy, are still here probing the mud for “delectable”. Again, the Wood Duck are the highest in numbers with 125 individuals. The Blue-winged Teal numbers are increasing (12 this week), 2 Pied-billed Grebe were sighted as well. Other well-established, avian species here are the Anhinga, Great Blue Heron, Great Heron, Little Blue Heron, Yellow-crowned Night Heron. A wading bird that we don’t regularly see, the Spotted Sandpiper,

was also spotted (a little birding humor there). One American Coot graced them with its presence. 4 Red-shouldered Hawk and 1 Red Tailed Hawk were a delight to see. The soaring, circling Black Vulture and Turkey Vulture were present back near the house and cross dike. The Gulls that were sighted were the Laughing Gull and Ring-billed Gull.



Anhinga Sisters?

By Jo Frkovich

Looking at the Woodpecker Family sightings: the Red-bellied, Downy, and Pileated were all accounted for this day.

2 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were seen darting about. The Passerines included: Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, White-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Northern Mockingbird, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, and Common Grackle.



Wood Ducks!



Little Grebe!

By Perry Nugent