

Birds of the Elling O. Eide Preserve in the FALL

Jessie Merkel, Sarasota Audubon Society, Jose Soto-Shoender, Matthew Wells



Photo by Pam Koepf

Jessie Merkel

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INTRODUCTION

To begin my report on bird populations at the Elling O. Eide center, I have inserted an excerpt from the website describing the property history;

“The earliest evidence of human activity on what is now the Elling Eide Center property can be found in shell middens along the bay. This is where resources from the bay were processed by Native Americans who inhabited the region. There are two archaeological sites that have been identified on the property, “Indianola,” a shell midden recorded in 1976 along the bayfront to the west of the Everett Barney Lagoon, and the “Indianola Scatter Site,” which was recorded in 2010. Native people continued to live in the area around Sarasota until the Seminole Wars (1816-1858) and the Armed Occupation Act of 1842 effectively removed them from Sarasota and its environs and opened the area to private ownership. Development of the wider Sarasota area accelerated in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Everett Hosmer Barney was the first person to own in any continuous way what now constitutes the Elling Eide Center’s property. Everett Barney died in 1916 and his estate was sold to Helen Brooks Smith in late 1920. In the 1920s, Florida was in the middle of a land boom and Smith sought to develop the expansive grounds into a residential community she named “Indianola.” Smith served food and sold gasoline, fruits, fish, and oysters from “The Club House,” the rechristened name of the Barney estate. However, no more than a dozen parties bought land in Indianola and as the land boom came to an end, Smith decided to sell the property. On May 11, 1935, Oliver Luther Mitchell bought the approximately 100-acre property for \$12,317.67. Mitchell, a widowed Chicago medical doctor, moved south seeking relief from the severe asthma attacks he suffered during cold, northern winters. He traveled throughout Florida with his son, Oliver Luther Mitchell Jr., before selecting Indianola. In fall 1936, Dr. Mitchell’s daughter, Dr. Grace Bush Eide, a medical doctor who had also studied law, moved to the property with her husband, Dr. Iver Eide, and their son, Elling Oliver Eide. Two agricultural operations are evident from 1948 aerial photographs of the property: a citrus grove located to the southeast between the water tower and pump house, and a stable. Mitchell’s larger grove to the north is also

visible. Elling would later describe life at Indianola as “bohemian.” He often fished and collected oysters, scallops, and clams from Little Sarasota Bay and his family had animals such as a horse, chickens, roosters, peacocks, opossums, gopher tortoises, dogs, and cats. Upon his return from teaching at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, he planted hundreds of exotic fruiting and flowering plants. Elling also had deep expertise in horticulture and he planted hundreds of plants and trees from around the world. Many of these were rare and unusual and produced either showy flowers or edible fruits”

<https://ellingoeide.org/property-history/>

The preserve is closed to the public. They host scholars in the guesthouses and events for their members in the academic center. They also have arboretum tours around the property. I gained access to the preserve by being accepted as an intern to perform a bird survey on the property.

This study presents an inventory of bird species gathered from our field survey across the property of Elling O. Eide preserve. Each prominent location recorded characterizes various habitat types, including fields, forests, bush, and the shoreline. The results compiled below in *Table 1* indicate significant habitat relationships. This study intends to provide a methodology for any future bird surveys on the preserve, increase the understanding of the preserve’s avifaunal community, and aid in forest conservation and management programs protecting the bird communities in light of continuous anthropogenic disturbances.

Surveying bird communities expands our understanding of birds and their relationships with habitats, humans, and each other. Noting the various characteristics of birds helps study how their populations are changing and for what reason. Surveys document populations over a certain period and provide a snapshot of the survey location. This information can be used to build off of more surveys, which creates a timeline of data, as well as comparing and contrasting other surveyed areas.

Bird communities are essential to study for several reasons. They are vital for the ecosystem; without them, there would be much less biodiversity. Birds are responsible for many environmental tasks, including pollinating, population control, pest control, and providing predators with prey. Tracking bird populations helps distinguish shifts in ecosystems. Birds are indicators of the health of an environment.

STUDY AREA

The Elling O. Eide preserve is located on Little Sarasota Bay. Across the bay are Siesta Key and Turtle Beach. The preserve is on the other side of the fence of the Bayonne Park. On the other side of the preserve is Pelican Cove. There are three docks on the property, two leading into the bay. A lagoon on the property named the Everett Barney Lagoon has the third dock. The property is 72 acres and has two greenhouses, two guesthouses, one Chinese library, and a few other homes scattered throughout.

There are several trails throughout the forest sections of the preserve. The trails follow the direction of the shoreline, go along the Bayonne fenceline, and connect to the roads leading toward the Chinese library. I've provided a map of the trails used during the survey in *Figure 1*.



Figure 1

METHODS

Each birding session lasted three to four hours on Wednesday at 8 am sharp. The Sarasota Audubon Society volunteers and I would meet in front of the academic center and set out on our route. The route taken each session is provided in Figure 1. Each session usually consisted of 3-5 birders ranging in expertise and occasionally a golf cart. Each birder arrived with their own pair of binoculars to better see the birds, and sometimes a birder would bring their spotting scope so we could see the birds hanging out on the sandbar of the bay. A scope is a telescope for spotting birds that are too far for binoculars to see

We report our findings to the eBird app because it provides a session route and the number of individuals of each species spotted or heard. The information we recorded each session was on the abundance of each bird species we saw on that specific outing and any photos we took of the species we were reporting. The routes we took each time were based on how accessible the trails were that day. The hurricanes we experienced, both Ian and the remnants of Nicole, tore apart some parts of the property. Sometimes we could not access specific docks or the trails near Bayonne so we would survey the other, more accessible areas more thoroughly.

Other apps that proved especially useful were Merlin Bird ID and iNaturalist.

The information we collected on eBird can also be shared with anyone else on eBird and is used for more extensive studies in the community. The data collected can be easily accessed and compiled to present.

RESULTS

A total of 76 species were recorded from 12 sessions over a period of 78 days beginning September 13th till November 30th 2022.

SPECIES	ABUNDANCE	HABITAT	IUCN STATUS	RESIDENCY	*ROLE	**ORIGIN
Ducks						
Wood Duck <i>Aix sponsa</i>	Abundant	Wetlands	LC	Year Round	Omnivores	Native

Loons						
Common Loon <i>Gavia immer</i>	Rare	Lakes and Ponds	LC	Winter Resident	Piscivorous	Native
Frigatebirds						
Magnificent Frigatebird <i>Fregata magnificens</i>	Rare	Ocean, Shoreline	LC	Breeding Season Resident	Piscivorous	Native
Gulls, Terns and Skimmers						
Laughing Gull <i>Leucophaeus atricilla</i>	Abundant	Shoreline	LC	Year Round	Omnivores	Native
Royal Tern <i>Thalasseus maximus</i>	Common	Shoreline	LC	Year Round	Piscivorous	Native
Sandwich Tern <i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	Rare	Shoreline	LC	Year Round	Piscivorous	Native
Forster's Tern <i>Sterna forsteri</i>	Abundant	Shoreline	LC	Winter Resident	Piscivorous	Native
Anhingas						
Anhinga <i>Anhinga anhinga</i>	Abundant	Shoreline	LC	Year Round	Piscivorous	Native
Cormorants						
Double-Crested Cormorant <i>Nannopterum auritum</i>	Abundant	Shoreline, Inland	LC	Year Round or Migratory	Piscivorous	
Pelicans						
American Pelican <i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>	Abundant	Shoreline	LC	Winter Resident	Piscivorous	Native
Brown Pelican <i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	Abundant	Shoreline	LC	Year Round	Piscivorous	Native, Imperiled
Hérons, Egrets and Bitterns						
Great Blue Heron <i>Ardea herodias</i>	Abundant	Shoreline		Year Round	Piscivorous, Omnivorous	Native
Great Egret <i>Ardea alba</i>	Common	Shoreline	LC	Year Round	Piscivorous, Omnivorous	Native
Snowy Egret <i>Egretta thula</i>	Abundant	Shoreline	LC	Year Round	Piscivorous	Native
Little Blue Heron <i>Egretta caerulea</i>	Abundant	Shoreline	LC	Year Round	Piscivorous	Native

Green Heron <i>Butorides virescens</i>	Uncommon	Shoreline	LC	Year Round	Piscivorous	Native
Yellow-Crowned Night Heron <i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>	Common	Shoreline	LC	Year Round	Piscivorous	Native
Ibises and Spoonbills						
White Ibis <i>Eudocimus albus</i>	Common	Shoreline	LC	Year Round	Omnivorous	Native
Roseate Spoonbill <i>Platalea ajaja</i>	Rare	Shoreline	LC	Year Round	Muscivorous	Native
New World Vultures						
Black Vulture <i>Coragyps atratus</i>	Abundant	Inland	LC	Year Round	Carnivorous	Native
Turkey Vulture <i>Cathartes aura</i>	Abundant	Forest, Inland	LC	Year Round and Migratory	Carnivorous	Native
Osprey						
Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Abundant	Shoreline, Inland	LC	Year Round	Piscivorous	Native
Hawks and Eagles						
Bald Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Abundant	Shoreline, Forest	LC	Breeding, Migratory and Year Round	Carnivorous, Omnivorous	Native
Cooper's Hawk <i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	Uncommon	Forest	LC	Year Round	Avivorous, Carnivorous	Native
Red-Shouldered Hawk <i>Buteo lineatus</i>	Uncommon	Forest	LC	Year Round	Carnivorous, Omnivorous	Native
Red-Tailed Hawk <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	Rare	Forest	LC	Year Round	Avivorous, Carnivorous, Omnivorous	Native
Owls						
Great Horned Owl <i>Bubo virginianus</i>	Rare	Forest	LC	Year Round	Carnivorous, Avivorous	Native
Plovers						
Black-bellied Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Common	Shoreline	LC	Winter Resident	Muscivorous	Native
Sandpipers and Allies						
Spotted Sandpiper <i>Actitis macularius</i>	Abundant	Shoreline	LC	Winter Resident	Carnivorous	Native
Willet	Common	Shoreline	LC	Winter	Muscivorous	Native

<i>Tringa semipalmata</i>				Resident		
Doves						
Mourning Dove <i>Zenaida macroura</i>	Abundant	Inland	LC	Year Round	Granivorous	Native
Swifts						
Chimney Swift <i>Chaetura pelagica</i>	Rare	Inland	VU	Breeding Resident	Insectivorous	Native
Hummingbirds						
Ruby-Throated Hummingbird <i>Archilochus colubris</i>	Common	Inland	LC	Year Round and Winter Resident	Nectivorous	Native
Kingfishers						
Belted Kingfisher <i>Megaceryle alcyon</i>	Common	Shoreline	LC	Fall and Winter Resident	Piscivorous	Native
Woodpeckers						
Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker <i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>	Uncommon	Forest	LC	Winter Resident	Muscivorous, Insectivorous, Frugivorous	Native
Red-Bellied Woodpecker <i>Melanerpes carolinus</i>	Abundant	Forest, Inland	LC	Year Round	Insectivorous, Granivorous, Frugivorous	Native
Downy Woodpecker <i>Dryobates pubescens</i>	Abundant	Forest, Inland	LC	Year Round	Insectivorous, Granivorous, Frugivorous	Native
Northern Flicker <i>Colaptes auratus</i>	Rare	Forest, Inland	LC	Migratory or Year Round	Insectivorous, Granivorous, Frugivorous	Native
Pileated Woodpecker <i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>	Abundant	Forest, Inland	LC	Year Round	Insectivorous, Granivorous, Frugivorous	Native
Parrots						
Nanday Parakeet <i>Aratinga nenday</i>	Rare	Forest, Inland	LC	Year Round	Granivorous	Nonnative
Tyrant Flycatchers						
Eastern Wood Pewee <i>Contopus virens</i>	Rare	Forest	LC	Migratory	Insectivorous	Native
Eastern Phoebe <i>Sayornis phoebe</i>	Common	Forest, Inland, Brush	LC	Winter Resident	Insectivorous	Native

Vireos						
Red-Eyed Vireo <i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	Uncommon	Forest, Brush, Inland	LC	Migratory	Insectivorous	Native
Blue-Headed Vireo <i>Vireo solitarius</i>	Common	Forest	LC	Winter Resident	Insectivorous	Native
Shrikes						
Loggerhead Shrike <i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	Rare	Forest	NT	Year Round	Carnivorous	Native
Crows, Jays and Magpies						
Blue Jay <i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	Abundant	Forest, Inland	LC	Year Round	Omnivorous	Native
American Crow <i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	Common	Forest, Inland	LC	Year Round	Omnivorous	Native
Fish Crow <i>Corvus ossifragus</i>	Abundant	Shoreline, Inland	LC	Year Round	Omnivorous	Native
Tits						
Tufted Titmouse <i>Baeolophus bicolor</i>	Abundant	Forest, Brush, Inland	LC	Year Round	Insectivorous, Granivorous	Native
Wrens						
House Wren <i>Troglodytes aedon</i>	Abundant	Forest, Inland	LC	Winter Resident	Insectivorous	Native
Carolina Wren <i>Thryothorus ludovicianus</i>	Abundant	Forest, Inland	LC	Year Round	Insectivorous	Native
Gnatcatchers						
Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher <i>Poliophtila caerulea</i>	Abundant	Forest, Brush, Inland	LC	Winter Resident and Year Round	Insectivorous	Native
Kinglets						
Ruby-crowned Kinglet <i>Corthylio calendula</i>	Uncommon	Forest	LC	Migratory	Insectivorous	Native
Mockingbirds and Thrashers						
Gray Catbird <i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>	Abundant	Forest, Inland	LC	Winter Resident	Frugivorous, Insectivorous	Native
Brown Thrasher <i>Toxostoma rufum</i>	Rare	Forest, Brush, Inland	LC	Year Round	Frugivorous, Insectivorous, Omnivorous	Native

Northern Mockingbird <i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	Abundant	Forest, Brush, Inland	LC	Year Round	Frugivorous, Insectivorous	Native
Troupials and Allies						
Red-Winged Blackbird <i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	Uncommon	Marshes, Brush	LC	Year Round, Migratory	Insectivorous	Native
Common Grackle <i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>	Abundant	Forest, Inland	NT	Year Round	Omnivorous	Native
Cardinals and Allies						
Scarlet Tanager <i>Piranga olivacea</i>	Uncommon	Forest, Brush, Inland	LC	Migratory	Insectivorous	Native
Summer Tanager <i>Piranga rubra</i>	Rare	Forest, Brush	LC	Migratory	Insectivorous	Native
Northern Cardinal <i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>	Abundant	Forest, Brush, Inland	LC	Year Round	Granivorous	Native
Rose-breasted Grosbeak <i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>	Rare	Forest, Inland	LC	Migratory	Insectivorous	Native
Buntings						
Indigo Bunting <i>Passerina cyanea</i>	Rare	Forest, Brush, Inland	LC	Winter Resident	Insectivorous	Native
Finches						
House Finch <i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>	Rare	Inland	LC	Year Round	Granivorous	Nonnative
New World Warblers						
Black-and-white Warbler <i>Mniotilta varia</i>	Abundant	Forest, Brush	LC	Winter Resident and Migratory	Insectivorous	Native
Orange-crowned Warbler <i>Leiothlypis celata</i>	Rare	Forest, Inland	LC	Winter Resident	Insectivorous	Native
Hooded Warbler <i>Setophaga citrina</i>	Rare	Forest, Brush	LC	Migratory	Insectivorous	Native
American Redstart <i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	Uncommon	Forest, Brush	LC	Migratory	Insectivorous	Native
Northern Parula <i>Setophaga americana</i>	Abundant	Forest	LC	Breeding Resident	Insectivorous	Native

Blackburnian Warbler <i>Setophaga fusca</i>	Rare	Forest, Brush	LC	Migratory	Insectivorous	Native
Chestnut-sided Warbler <i>Setophaga pensylvanica</i>	Rare	Forest, Brush	LC	Migratory	Insectivorous	Native
Black-throated Blue Warbler	Rare	Forest, Brush	LC	Migratory	Insectivorous	Native
Palm Warbler <i>Setophaga palmarum</i>	Abundant	Forest, Brush, Inland	LC	Winter Resident	Insectivorous	Native
Pine Warbler <i>Setophaga pinus</i>	Abundant	Forest, Brush, Inland	LC	Winter and Year Round Resident	Insectivorous	Native
Yellow-Rumped Warbler <i>Setophaga coronata</i>	Abundant	Forest	LC	Winter Resident	Insectivorous	Native
Yellow-Throated Warbler <i>Setophaga dominica</i>	Common	Forest, Brush	LC	Winter Resident	Insectivorous	Native
Prairie Warbler <i>Setophaga discolor</i>	Rare	Brush	LC	Winter Resident and Year Round	Insectivorous	Native
Black-throated Green Warbler <i>Setophaga virens</i>	Rare	Forest, Brush	LC	Migratory	Insectivorous	Native
Sparrows						
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	Rare	Inland	LC	Year Round	Omnivore	Nonnative
Chipping Sparrow <i>Spizella passerina</i>	Rare	Forest	LC	Migratory	Granivore	Native

Table 1

Abundance based on frequency identified on the preserve

***Origin based in North America. Statewide status according to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission*

DISCUSSION

This survey is the first official attempt at recording the bird species found on the Elling O. Eide preserve property. There are several eBird checklists from late 2018 till May 2019 from Nancy Edmondson during the first plant inventorying from the Marie Selby Botanical Garden surveyors. Therefore this survey is the most up-to-date report on the bird populations on the property.

Because this property hosts an array of habitats (shoreline, pond, forest, open fields, brush), many different species of birds have been observed here. The ecological services provided by the various species of birds across the property promotes ecological diversity and abundance. The variety of bird species helps care for each duty required of the ecosystem. The abundance of flowering and fruiting trees attracts frugivores, insectivores, and herbivores. The shoreline and coastal waters attract all the piscivores, carnivores, and omnivores. The forest and forest edges are teeming with all kinds of birds, especially granivores, muscivores, and avivorous raptors.

Below is a list of hotspots on the preserve:

- Any of the various pink floss-silk trees (*Ceiba speciosa*) are great for Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers as well as hummingbirds due to their bright pink blossoms and sweet sap.
- The sea grape tree (*Coccoloba uvifera*) on the trail near the lagoon as well as by Harold's house is great for frugivorous in the fall and insectivorous birds as well as insects.
- Any of the firebush shrubs (*Hamelia patens*) are brightly colored and lure in all kinds of nectivores including hummingbirds and insect pollinators.
- The laurel oak trees (*Quercus laurifolia*) attracted lots of grosbeak due to the insects.
- The strangler fig (*Ficus aurea*) is great for year long birding due to insects and berries. This species of fig provides shelter for birds as well.
- During the winter season, indigo buntings can be found eating seeds from the grasses behind the greenhouse.
- The gumbo limbo tree (*Bursera simaruba*) produces lots of berries for the frugivores.
- Earleaf greenbrier (*Smilax auriculata*) attracts insectivores.
- The abundance of snags on the preserve attracts ospreys for nesting at the top and for hanging out.
- All of the docks host various species of birds.
- The dock with the boat hosts pelicans and cormorants, as well as the occasional juvenile Little Blue Heron that has not molted its white feathers yet.
- The strip of beach on the left of the dock closest to Pelican Cove is a hotspot for wading birds.

-The end of the dock with the different mangroves is a great spot for crab-eating birds, like the Yellow-crowned Night Heron.

-The sandbar off the coast hosts teams of Laughing Gulls as well as the Terns and other shorebirds.

-The lagoon dock is home to four pairs of Wood Ducks.

The Bayonne property next door hosts a few Bald Eagle nests that are home to those raptors that return to the same nest every breeding season. Warbler migration time is from mid-August until the end of September.

As the surveys continue, I shall report more on migration patterns and changing habitats and species according to the seasons.

This data may serve as a basis for future avian surveys of the preserve and enhance the conservation and management of Little Sarasota Bay properties in the present. I recommend more ecological surveys in the Little Sarasota Bay area to account for all possible species and the increasing risk of local extinction, considering the booming rate of land conversion and deforestation due to the overdevelopment of Sarasota and neighboring counties.

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