



What a Great Wildlife Week. Over 4,000 Wildlife Sightings! Special Thanks to All Who Participated!

By the Ponds & Preserves Committee

[Wildlife Window – January 2022]

During the week of November 13-20, 2021, the Ponds and Preserves committee hosted the inaugural **Rivendell Wildlife Week**. Wildlife Week had two components. The Rivendell Community agreed to conduct semi-annual community wildlife reports as one of the conditions of a grant we received to install aquatic plants in our ponds. These plants help control erosion, improve water quality and attract wildlife. An Audubon-guided Bird Walk held on Nov. 20 capped off this great nature week. Special thanks to **Alena Capek, Venice Audubon Society**, who led this enthusiastic team of Birders.



We asked residents to become **Nature Watchers** and help us observe and document sightings of the diverse wildlife that calls Rivendell home. We asked Nature Watchers to pay extra attention to the wildlife as they wander or drive around Rivendell and let us know what they saw. While these sightings do not provide a scientific count of each species, they do provide an indication of the diversity and numbers of animals in our community.

Many thanks to all 33 residents who participated in Wildlife Week. Between the **Nature Watchers** and the **Bird Walkers**, we captured sightings of over 4,000 wildlife friends covering over 80 different species. We plan to have a Wildlife Week each spring and fall to compare the sightings. Here's a brief breakdown of what residents saw this fall.

<u>Wildlife Type</u>	<u>Examples of Species</u>	<u># of Sightings</u>
Wading/Shoreline Birds	Hérons, Egrets, Ducks, Pelicans, Cranes, Ibis, Anhinga	1,530
Perching Birds	Warblers, Cardinals, Mockingbirds, Woodpeckers	402
Birds of Prey	Eagles, Ospreys, Vultures, Owl, Hawks	218
Crows & Grackles	Fish Crows, Common Grackles, Boat-tailed Grackles	1,144
Butterflies	Monarchs, Gulf Fritillary, White Peacocks	157
Amphibians	Green Frogs, Cuban Treefrogs	28
Reptiles	Alligators, Anoles, Turtles, Cooter, Snakes	467
Mammals	Deer, Bobcat, Rabbits, Squirrels, Opossums	347
Total:		4,293

Fun Facts About Our Wildlife

Let's keep our ponds healthy and vibrant for these beautiful creatures.

- **Wood Storks** are currently on the Federal "threatened" list (June 2014). Rivendell is fortunate to have so many visit our area, over 100 sightings were reported.
- **Florida Softshell Turtle & Gopher Tortoise.** Both species are protected by law and on the "endangered" list. In our community, both species were spotted!
- **Glossy Ibis** sightings were over 400, the most mentioned wildlife species sightings in the Wading/Shoreline Bird type. White Ibis were second, over 200.
- **Great Egret.** Luckily, these elegant wading birds are a frequent visitor and a dazzling sight in our ponds and wetlands. A USDA report notes that "*Pond banks without vegetation are less attractive to birds and will decrease the efficiency of wading bird feeding.*"



Many Nature Watchers commented on the positive experience of watching Rivendell's wildlife and how much it meant to live in such beautiful natural surroundings. Enjoy these photos of wildlife species that were sighted during this week along with residents' comments. All of the Nature Watchers said they want to participate in next spring's Wildlife Week! **Thanks again to all!**

“Nature Watcher” Residents’ Comments

- **John Greco** told us, “After spending a week really being mindful of all the creatures that pass through or reside here, I realize that the entirety of Rivendell is a nature preserve.”
- “Thank you for the opportunity to learn more about the wonderful creatures with whom we share an amazing neighborhood,” **Patti Bunce** said.
- **Edith Norby** expressed, “I liked that this exercise made me more than usual aware of who is sharing our beautiful nature with us.”
- From **Lori Appel**, “I feel very fortunate to live amongst such amazing wildlife. I would definitely do this in the spring.”
- “Our observations were a continuation of our appreciation of the Rivendell environment,” mentioned **David & Diane Tomer**.



- Board President, **Larry Dobias** said, “We are constantly walking through the community and observing nature and all it has to offer. The Wildlife Week, however, puts it in perspective because counting the numbers and variety of birds and animals provides a fantastic picture of how lucky we are in Rivendell.”
- Larry’s wife, **Nancy** remarked, “We enjoy watching the wildlife, I love taking their pictures, and we’re both interested in how the wildlife are benefiting from our LMZ and all the many pond plantings. Several of the pictures that I took show that the wildlife LOVE those shoreline plantings since that seems to be where the best food is being ‘served.’”

- “I typically take my morning coffee in the lanai facing the lake so every day I witness the comings and goings of various creatures. Right now there is a white ibis, the pond’s resident anhinga and two wood storks - all within 20’ of one another. They all seem to get along,” **Rich Hehemeyer** said. “Sure count me in for the spring.”
- “The wildlife count was fun and made me try to learn a bit more,” **Doris Hurban** said. “Yes, we’d do it again!”
- **Cathy Vernon** commented, “Very enjoyable to focus more closely for a week on the beautiful natural world all around us in Rivendell. As a



result, I now find myself instinctively looking up to try and identify anything flying overhead, even though the counting week is over.”

- “I enjoyed noticing the wildlife and trying to get pictures. I enjoyed this so much that I downloaded an app called iNaturalist so I can try to identify the wildlife I photograph with my cell phone.” **Tim Childers** said. “I will definitely volunteer for next time.”
- **Kevin Boggess** told us, “I would be happy to participate again in the spring. This was a great excuse to sit outside and appreciate the ponds and preserves we are lucky enough to have just outside our homes.”