



Friends of Deerfield Island Park

May 2021 Newsletter

Save the Date: Our next Board/Members Meeting will be on Friday, May 14 10:00 am

We will either Zoom or meet at Sullivan Park.

Watch your email for more details and Agenda.

Minutes of April meeting is now available on our website: [Click Here](#)



The new Park Shuttle has arrived and is in use by Park Staff.

"Probe: Gopher Tortoise Deaths Unreported"



This was the headline from an article published in the Sun Sentinel April 26, 2021.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has reported that many Gopher Tortoises (a vulnerable species threatened with extinction) have died as a result of a failure to oversee the program set up years ago to protect them. When developers build on existing Gopher Tortoise sites, they are required to pay for their relocation to approved Tortoise refuges. Many of these relocation refuge sites are under investigation by the FWC.

Thanks to the Broward County Department of Parks and Recreation, our little island is an approved gopher tortoise refuge (not a relocation site). With over 35 Gopher Tortoise residents, Deerfield Island Park is doing its small part to protect this threatened keystone species whose burrows provide a home for many many other animal species.

Sun Sentinel subscribers can read the entire article on-line. [Click here.](#)

Flora and Fauna



Stop, Look and Listen to the Mockingbird....

by Diana R. Lopez

As part of a series of monthly articles featuring flora and fauna that have been seen on Deerfield Island Park and its environs, what could be a more appropriate choice to launch this effort than an article about the state bird of Florida, the **northern mockingbird**? Local to our area and the only mockingbird commonly found in North America, it couldn't be more aptly named. Its scientific moniker, *Mimus polyglottos*, means the "many tongued thrush", and who among us hasn't marveled at its distinctive repertoire of songs?

Songs and Calls

True to its name, the northern mockingbird has a remarkable ability to mimic and imitate sounds. Its songs and calls are highly variable and have been known to include both *whistles* and *sirens*. While some of its sounds are undetectable to the human ear, it can imitate the vocalizations not only of a number of other birds, but also vocalizations of other animals such as frogs, crickets, cats, dogs, and incredibly, sounds produced by inanimate objects such as squeaky wheels and doors and even car alarms. Both male and female mockingbirds sing, but the male sings more frequently than the female, apparently to establish a territory, ward off any competitors and to attract a mate. Its song can last non-stop for over an hour and has often been known to sing well into the night.

Identifying Features and Diet

At first glance, feather coloring and markings of the northern mockingbird appear nondescript and unremarkable; however, when in flight, *flashes of parallel white bands of feathers* on both its long tail and wings are readily visible. Except for the fact that adult male mockingbirds tend to be larger, both genders are indistinguishable. The mockingbird is an **omnivore**, a species that eats both insects and fruit including spiders, small crustaceans and even small lizards.



Breeding, Nest Building, Incubation, Development and Lifespan

Once mockingbirds have paired off, the male and female jointly build their nest. Northern mockingbirds generally hatch from two to four broods a year and may remain monogamous for several years. Its clutch can consist of as many as six eggs, but usually three or four are laid. Their eggs vary in color from blue to green with reddish, brownish or purplish spots. Only the female incubates the clutch and the eggs can take anywhere from 10-13 days to hatch. Both male and female mockingbirds take turns feeding their young. The normal **lifespan** of the northern mockingbird *in the wild is up to eight (8) years*; however, *in captivity*, the northern mockingbird has been known to live *up to twenty (20) years*.

Intelligence

The northern mockingbird is known for its **intelligence**. It is a truly remarkable bird in that it is able to *identify, single out and target* individual humans, particularly those who have posed a threat to it or its young in the past. In addition, it is able to recognize its past breeding spots, and tends to return to those locations where it had its greatest success in previous years.

Protection

As recently as March 2020, the total number of species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, or MBTA, numbered 1,093, making this nongame bird one that has been strictly protected by both state and federal laws for over seventy years. Hopefully, and with continued national oversight and responsible stewardship, the unique and varied song patterns of our officially designated state bird, the northern mockingbird, will never

cease to amaze us and will continue to afford us immeasurable pleasure for endless years to come.



Friends of Deerfield Island Park (FODIP)

Formed in March 2015

We are dedicated to preserving and protecting our unique green island as a natural habitat for native plants and for the island's animal inhabitants. We have been approved by the IRS as a **501(c)(3)** non-profit organization for this purpose.

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