

## celery

by celery, 26-Nov-10 02:04 AM GMT

I've just returned from a week-long jaunt around central and southern Florida where I managed to squeeze in a couple of butterfly expeditions between the endless rounds of shopping and sight-seeing. The weather was absolutely perfect – sunny, 75 degrees, and low-humidity.

Many butterflies remain on the wing all year round and I was lucky enough to get to see around 40 species – of which I have reasonable photos of about 33. I'll be posting some of these in the next few weeks – several beautiful swallowtails, exotic longwings, stately brushfoots, tiny hairstreaks and blues, and lots of enigmatic hard-to-identify skippers.

I'd certainly recommend this destination for anyone wanting to grab some butterfly watching opportunities during our long, drab, prematurely snowy wintertime. I'd be happy to share my knowledge of the best spots to see particular species for anybody who's planning a similar vacation.

cheers, celery 😊

## Re: celery

by celery, 02-Dec-10 12:39 AM GMT

So here goes... here's a kind of episodic diary/'loose' trip report (it was a very *loose* trip 😊) for my 9 day holiday in Florida (13th–22nd Nov. 2010).

My partner Tara and I arrived late in the evening on Saturday 13th and by the time we'd cleared the two-hour queue for immigration, driven up the interstate 30 miles from Miami to Pompano Beach, and then located our rather faded original 1950s beachside motel it was time to go to sleep...

Still adjusting to the 5-hour time difference we were up before 6am the next morning. A stroll along the beach and amongst the power-walkers and early-morning joggers we encountered our first butterflies. Fast flying sulphurs (I can't be more specific at this point) and gulf fritillaries. Unfortunately – no camera. Breakfast and then on the walk back to our hotel we came across a large patch of grass surrounding a run-down swimming pool left open to the sidewalk and not 20 yards from the beach... and it was absolutely teeming with insect life.

A quick nip back to collect our cameras and we spent half an hour chasing monarchs, orange-banded and cloudless sulphurs, and the showy orange gulf fritillaries before settling into the grass to see the smaller species dashing from each tiny mallow flower to the next.

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White Checkered-Skipper / Common Checkered-Skipper *Pyrgus albescens* / *communis*

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Barred Yellow *Eurema दौरa*

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Mallow Scrub-Hairstreak *Strymon istapa*

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Ocala Skipper *Panoquina ocala*

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Gulf Fritillary *Agraulis vanillae*

Species seen: 1. White (or common – they're indistinguishable except by dissection) Checkered-Skipper. 2. Gulf Fritillary. 3. Monarch. 4. Barred Yellow. 5. Mallow Scrub-Hairstreak. 6. Ocala Skipper. 7. Cloudless Sulphur. 8. Orange-Barred Sulphur. 9. Unidentified (and unfortunately not photographed) 'orange' skippers.

**Re: celery**

by Padfield, 02-Dec-10 05:16 AM GMT

Wonderful to see these now, in the depths of winter!

Is that hairstreak what my book calls the columella hairstreak, *S. columella*? I really look forward to more pictures – any chance you can add the Latin names as well as the common?

Guy

## Re: celery

by Lee Hurrell, 02-Dec-10 06:39 AM GMT

Lovely photos 😊

As Guy says, nice to see some new butterflies in our current sub-zero freeze.

It really is fascinating to see how evolution has treated species that obviously had common ancestors to some of our own. I was reading the other day the Europe and America used to be one continent millions of years ago and you can see traces of some of our own species on some of those pictured.

I also look forward to some more pictures!

Cheers

Lee

## Re: celery

by celery, 02-Dec-10 09:47 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments 😊

I'll try to add a caption to each photograph with the common *and* latin names.

Guy, the latin name for Mallow Scrub-Hairstreak is *Strymon istapa* so it looks like it's a different species.

The others pictured so far were:

White Checkered-Skipper (*Pyrgus albescens*) / Common Checkered-Skipper (*Pyrgus communis*)

Barred Yellow (*Eurema दौरा*)

Ocala Skipper (*Panoquina ocala*)

Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*).

Lots more to come – I'll try and get the second part up tomorrow.

## Re: celery

by Charles Nicol, 02-Dec-10 07:37 PM GMT

Very enjoyable pics !! Did you see any moths as well ?

Charles

## Re: celery

by celery, 02-Dec-10 08:59 PM GMT

Moths? Oddly, no.

I disturbed a few micro moths in the undergrowth trying to get a closer view of some of the butterflies and Tara took a very dark and blurry shot of a large grey-ish, brown-ish moth in Fairchild Tropical Gardens (more of which later) – but other than that the trip was distinctly moth-free 😞

I have to say that I didn't go looking much after sundown though – all I saw really were the interiors of a decent collection of cinema auditoriums, restaurants and bars. 😊

## Re: celery

by celery, 02-Dec-10 10:02 PM GMT

In the afternoon of the 14th we visited 'Butterfly World' a few miles further south on the outskirts of Fort Lauderdale. It's an 'attraction' featuring 3 large butterfly-filled aviaries, an insect specimen museum, hummingbirds, lorikeets, a collection of passion flowers, gardens, a plant sales area and cafe.

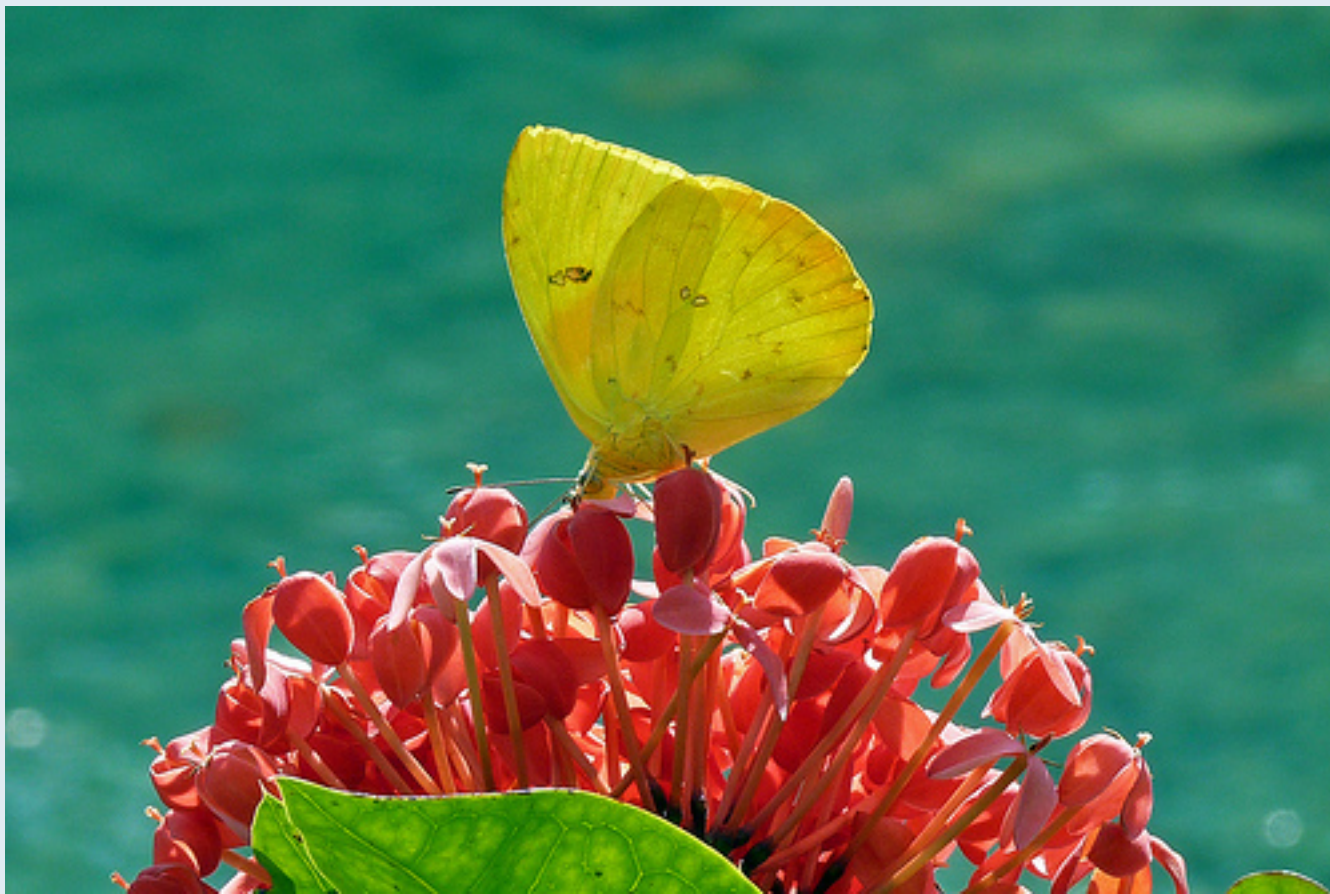
The aviaries contained upwards of fifty species of mainly tropical butterflies; blue morpho, owl butterfly, great egg fly, and the like – all confined and in such quantities as to make photography very easy. Whilst it was fascinating to see these species (and I did take a lot of photos) I won't be dwelling on these 'captive' sightings.

Outside, in the gardens, many plants attractive to the local butterfly population are grown and it's from here that the next batch of photos are taken.



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Monarch *Danaus plexippus*



Orange-Barred Sulphur *Phoebis philea*



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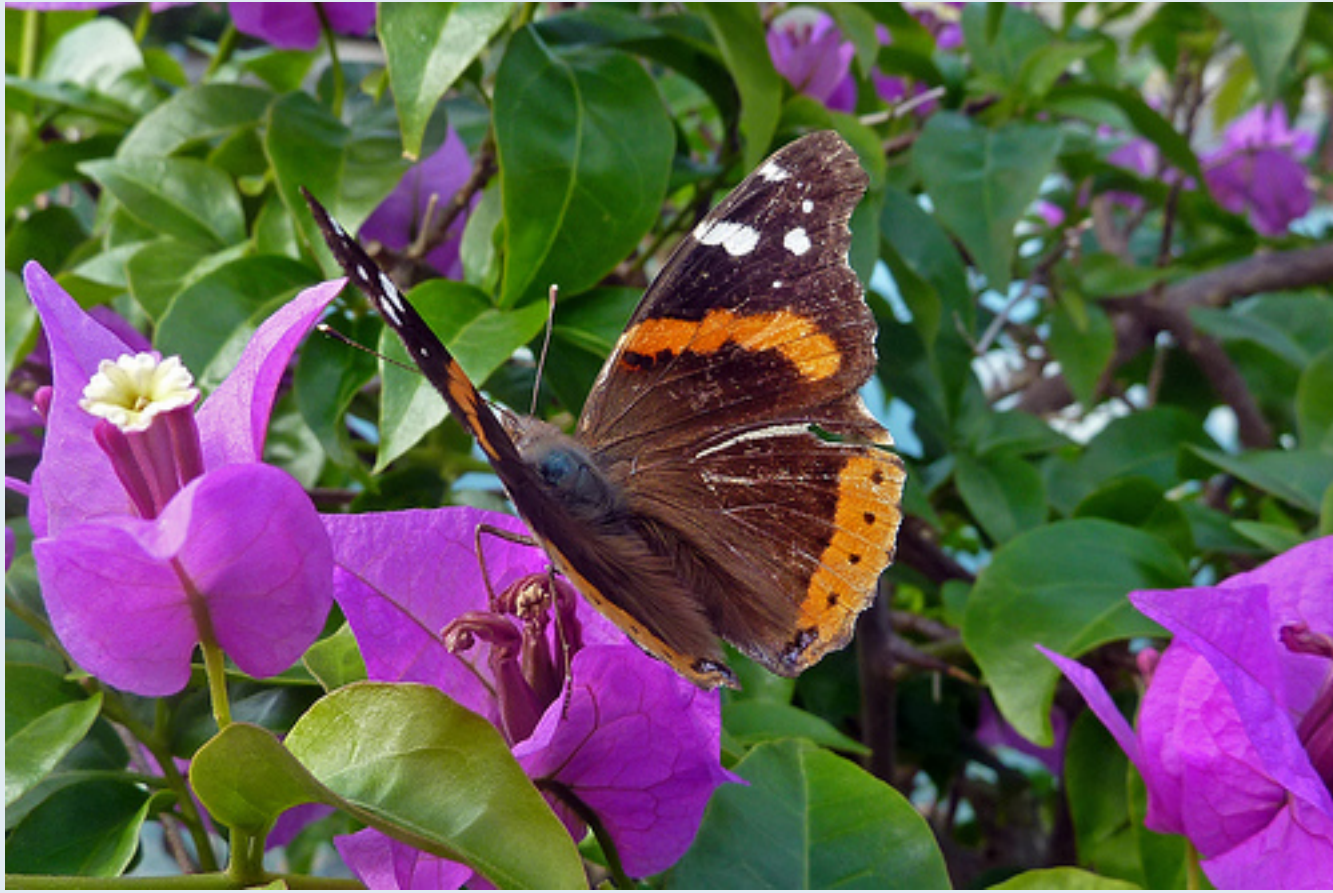
Cloudless Sulphur *Phoebis sennae*





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Long-Tailed Skipper *Urbanus proteus*



Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*



Ruddy Daggerwing *Marpesia petreus*



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Monk Skipper *Asbolis capucinus*

Other species we saw were:

Zebra Heliconian, Ocala Skipper, Large Orange Sulphur (too fast to photograph), and tiny blues in the hedges (most likely Cassius Blues and Red-Banded Hairstreaks).

The red admiral was the only species we saw during the trip that is also a U.K resident. I should also mention that as well as being a commercial venture Butterfly World also does scientific-research into all-things butterfly-related and is partnering the University of Florida in a project to re-introduce the 'extinct' species Shaus' Swallowtail (*Papilio aristodemus*) to its former habitat just south of Miami. So it's not all about making money 😊

### Re: celery

by Charles Nicol, 03-Dec-10 10:36 PM GMT

All of the second batch of pics are delightful , but the Daggerwing is amazing !! A beautiful colour & elegant shape.

Charles



### Re: celery

by celery, 03-Dec-10 11:43 PM GMT

Thanks Charles 😊

I was pondering your question about moths again and I remembered I'd taken this rather blurry shot (it was moving like the clappers) of a caterpillar at Corkscrew Swamp.



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I asked one of the rangers if she knew what it was, and she said it was 'probably just a common moth' – and to be careful as someone has reported seeing the highly-poisonous Saddleback caterpillar in the same area the week before. Unfortunately I never did see one... but I've snaffled this picture of the critter in question from Wikipedia to illustrate what I missed out on...





Saddleback Caterpillar *sibine stimulea* not my photograph

### Re: celery

by Charles Nicol, 04-Dec-10 10:47 PM GMT

It looks like something from a coral reef !!

Charles



### Re: celery

by celery, 06-Dec-10 05:58 AM GMT

After a long evening journey up the coast we arrived in Cocoa Beach our 'base-camp' for the next two days.

Monday 15th November. A morning walk along the beach brought nothing more than a few passing sulphurs and gulf fritillaries and a long-distance view of a single common buckeye in the scrub beside the beach. We did call in at a beachwear shop where Tara managed to buy socks and a new pair of 'soft' sandals, and at a chemist to buy plasters, bandages and ointment to sooth her sore and bleeding feet – the consequence of not 'breaking-in' her new walking trainers before we set off on holiday.

We also stocked-up on insect bite cream... and that was to prove quite fortuitous... as that afternoon we visited the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge – the reserve which overlays and surrounds Cape Canaveral and Kennedy Space Center – and the place was chock-a-block with mosquitoes.

Mosquitoes and butterflies in Florida often go hand in hand. The more of one, the more of the other. Indeed the spraying of insecticide to kill mosquitoes in the Keys has been blamed for the severely diminished quantites of many rare and unique butterfly species in that area. But despite the vast amount of bites we collected we didn't see that many butterflies that afternoon. Around the visitor center boardwalk we encountered a single red admiral and few zebra heliconians. On the Hammock Trails we had slightly more luck.

Pearl Crescents – one of the most familiar and widespread species across a big chunk of North America and its tropical cousin the Phaon Crescent skipped along a ride created for railway maintenance trucks; and in the dense shade of the hammocks numerous Carolina Satyrs skulked amongst the undergrowth.

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Carolina Satyr *Hermeuptychia sosybius*

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Pearl Crescent *Phyciodes tharos*

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Phaon Crescent *Phyciodes phaon*

On the drive back to the hotel as the sun was setting we had close-quarters encounters with an osprey and a bald eagle – both settled on stumps on the roadside of the causeway which connects Merritt Island to the mainland, as well as the usual white ibis, brown pelicans and egrets.

Back at the hotel that night we dabbed our mosquito-bite wounds and decided to take a couple of days break from nature walks... lest our bodies became entirely drained of blood by the little critters...



## Re: celery

by celery, 07-Dec-10 11:19 PM GMT

Tuesday: Kennedy Space Center

Wednesday: In Orlando – so... Disney (where else?... at least the queues were tiny)

Thursday: long drive to Sanibel Island on Gulf Coast + beach for sunset

Friday: 10 mile walk on beach collecting seashells

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Saturday 20th November: Took a hike around the upper-half of Sanibel Island – the J.N Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Whilst most folk take the 'drive' – a crawl-along roadtrack hoping to get a glimpse of an alligator from inside your car – we took a stroll on the trails. Florida White Pelicans, Roseate Spoonbills, Cardinals and... yes... the obligatory alligator were seen, as well as these butterflies...

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White Peacock *Anartia jatrophae*

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Mangrove Buckeye *Junonia genoveva*

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Gulf Fritillary *Agraulis vanillae*

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Barred Yellow (winter form) *Eurema daira*

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Cassius Blue *Leptotes cassius*

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Mangrove Skipper *Phocides pigmalion*

Other species we saw were the ubiquitous monarchs and the cloudless and orange-barred sulphurs which zip-along 20 feet above your head. I think my favourite species of the entire trip was the mangrove skipper. It's very large for a skipper and its subtle lilac and palest blue markings, the purple sheen of its wings and its cute black-and-white striped face make a superbly-handsome beast.

Ps. No mosquitos – woohoo!

## Re: celery

by celery, 09-Dec-10 10:39 PM GMT

Sunday 21st November: Took a trip out to Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. A large range of natural habitats popular for sightings of mammals, reptiles, birds and insects. Other than butterflies we encountered American Alligators, Florida Soft-Shell Turtles, Barred Owls, Anhingas, Grey Catbirds, Pileated Woodpeckers, Wood Storks, Yellow-Crowned Night Herons, White Ibis, Little Blue Herons, Fishing Spiders, various frogs and fish, bees, wasps and dragonflies.

Outside the entrance in the planted native-species garden we saw the various sulphurs – Oranged-Barred, Large Orange and Cloudless – and managed (at last) a decent photo of Florida's state butterfly, the Zebra Heliconian.





Zebra Heliconian *Heliconius charithonia*

But it was once inside the sanctuary proper that the real treat awaited us. Sightings of a further eight species we hadn't encountered so far on the trip (and plenty of others we were happy to get a repeat viewing of.)

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Red-Banded Hairstreak *Calycopis cecrops*

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Queen *Danaus gilippus*

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Soldier *Danius eresimus*

flickr



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Common Buckeye *Junonia coenia*

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Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (female yellow form) *Papilio glaucus*



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Brazilian Skipper *Calpodus ethlius*

Other species were: Monarch, Phaon Crescent, Ruddy Daggerwing, Cassius Blue, Ocala Skipper, Hammock Skipper, Viceroy (which were numerous and I can't believe I didn't get a picture of) and a 'black' swallowtail (highly likely to have been the relatively common Palamedes Swallowtail, according to the ranger).

This was our last full day in Florida – but despite having to drive the full width of the state the next day we still found time to squeeze in one final butterfly 'hunt' – at what turned out to be another great destination, Fairchild Tropical Gardens, just south of Miami airport in Coral Gables...

### Re: celery

by Paul, 10-Dec-10 12:19 AM GMT

really impressive sightings and photos... particularly love the Hairstreaks. Well done 😊

### Re: celery

by Padfield, 10-Dec-10 04:00 AM GMT

I agree – fantastic to see these butterflies. I'm a big hairstreak fan too. That red-banded hairstreak is just glorious.

Guy

### Re: celery

by Paul Wetton, 10-Dec-10 05:58 PM GMT

Hi Celery

Some brilliant shots.

I visited Florida in may / June time a few years ago but didn't see as many butterflies as you although I was into birds more at the time.

Very impressive photos.

### Re: celery

by celery, 10-Dec-10 11:12 PM GMT

Thanks, once again, for all the positive comments 😊

Sadly, that's it for hairstreaks... Florida has around 20 to see, but many are only on the wing 'Spring to Fall' and lots are Panhandle and Northern Florida only. I missed a few 'easy' ones like the Gray Hairstreak, Fulvous Hairstreak and the Gray Ministreak – but that just means I might have to go back again 😊

Another thing to mention regarding Florida hairstreaks is that most of them are far smaller than their 'British' cousins. Most have wingspans or around 1 inch – and the individuals I photographed of both the Red-Banded Hairstreak and the Mallow Scrub-Hairstreak were smaller than that. Handily though, they don't hang around the tops of tall trees quite as much either – preferring undergrowth, hedges and uncultivated scrub.

My personal favourites are the skippers – of which Florida has between thirty and forty species (depending on which book you read). Although many are small, brown and similar looking you can usually identify them by paying close attention to the small details and to the habitat in which they are seen. But the real show-stoppers for me are the large skippers, like the Mangrove Skipper, the Long-Tailed Skipper and the Hammock Skipper (photo due in the next batch).

I should have the final batch of butterfly photos ready by tomorrow... but in the meantime here's a few small establishing shots of Florida in general, and of a couple of other critters we saw.





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## Re: celery

by celery, 13-Dec-10 11:56 PM GMT

Here's the, slightly belated – Xmas shopping 🙄 – last batch of photographs from my Florida trip. These are taken at Fairchild Tropical Gardens just south of Miami. We arrived mid-afternoon and since the place shut at 4:30 – and our flight was at eight – we forsook the guided tram ride around the grounds and wandered amongst the avenues of cultivated plants, lawned areas, strands of trees, palms and the groves of cycads instead.

You can't really do justice to the place in just a couple of hours, let alone the fact that the Matheson Hammock Park is literally just next door (they share the same car park) and that has large areas of a variety of natural south Florida habitats to explore.

One thing you can't miss at Fairchild are the lizards. Spectacular and enormous. As a taster – whilst driving down a road adjacent to the park searching for an entrance – we came across an iguana (about 2 feet long from nose to tail) in the median separating the two carriageways 🤪 Inside there were plenty more... orange with black heads and green legs, fat-bellied tongue-flicking lazy tree-dwellers, scaly dark brown with light blue underbellies... (these aren't technical terms, you know 😊)



*Atala Eumaeus atala*



Eufala Skipper *Lerodea eufala*

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Horace's Duskywing *Erynnis horatius*

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Hammock Skipper *Polygonus leo*

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Julia Heliconian *Dryas iulia*





Monarch *Danaus plexippus*

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Queen *Danaus eresimus*



Long-Tailed Skipper *Urbanus proteus* – with tail missing

Hairstreak fans will have, no doubt, noticed my deliberate mistake 😊 in saying that there were no more of them to come... as the Atala is, indeed, a hairstreak – albeit a very different looking one 😞 .

My most frustrating moment also came at Fairchild when an – otherwise unobserved – Dorantes Longtail perched delightfully right in front of me for several minutes whilst I wrestled with the camera trying desperately to get it to work. Then some other garden users wanted to squeeze past me on the path... and it was gone... ho hum.

Other species here were: Zebra Heliconian, Cassius Blue, White Peacock, Monk Skipper, Orange-Barred Sulphur, Cloudless Sulphur, Large Orange Sulphur, unidentified black swallowtail, unidentified yellow swallowtail and Barred Yellow. With a little more time I'm confident I'd have gotten more photographs of all of these and probably quite a few other species too.

A tall Bourgainvillea tree also harboured dozens of skippers, of several different sorts, buzzing around its blooms high up in the top branches... oh for a decent camera with a telephoto lens...

...I'll put that on my Xmas list 😊 ... and hopefully sometime I'll get a chance to return to see the other 70-odd species Florida has to offer. Thanks for reading. 😊😊

**Re: celery**

by Lee Hurrell, 14-Dec-10 12:52 AM GMT

Lovely report Celery, I've really enjoyed reading it and seeing the beautiful species of Florida.

Cheers

Lee

**Re: celery**

by Padfield, 14-Dec-10 01:07 AM GMT

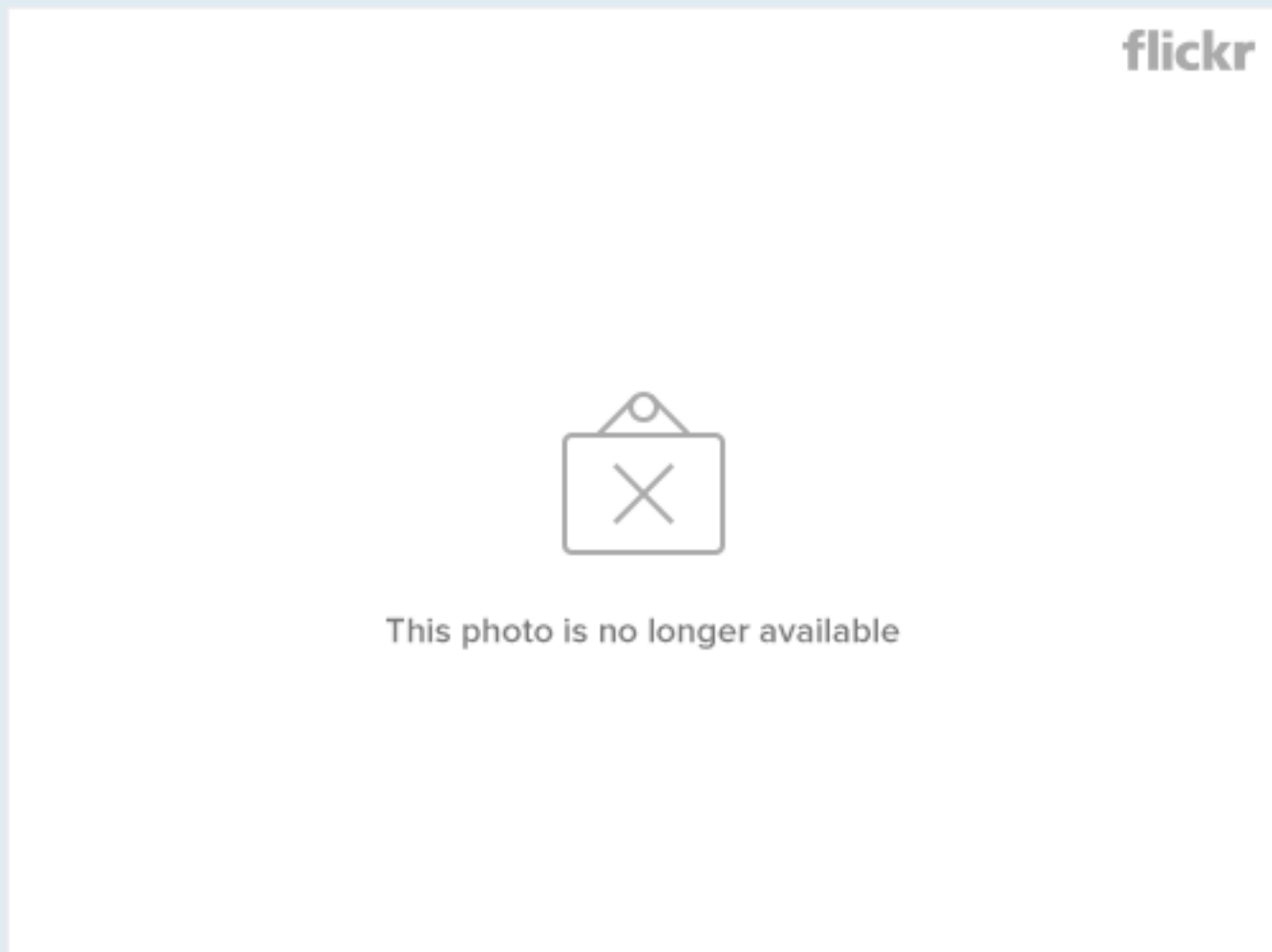
Seconded. I've really enjoyed these shots and commentary. It makes me think I must make a trip to the States before flying gets too expensive. I went once, when I was 14, and spent a happy week in a cranberry plantation photographing pearl-crescents and buckeyes with my old 35mm SLR. It seems a lifetime ago...

Guy

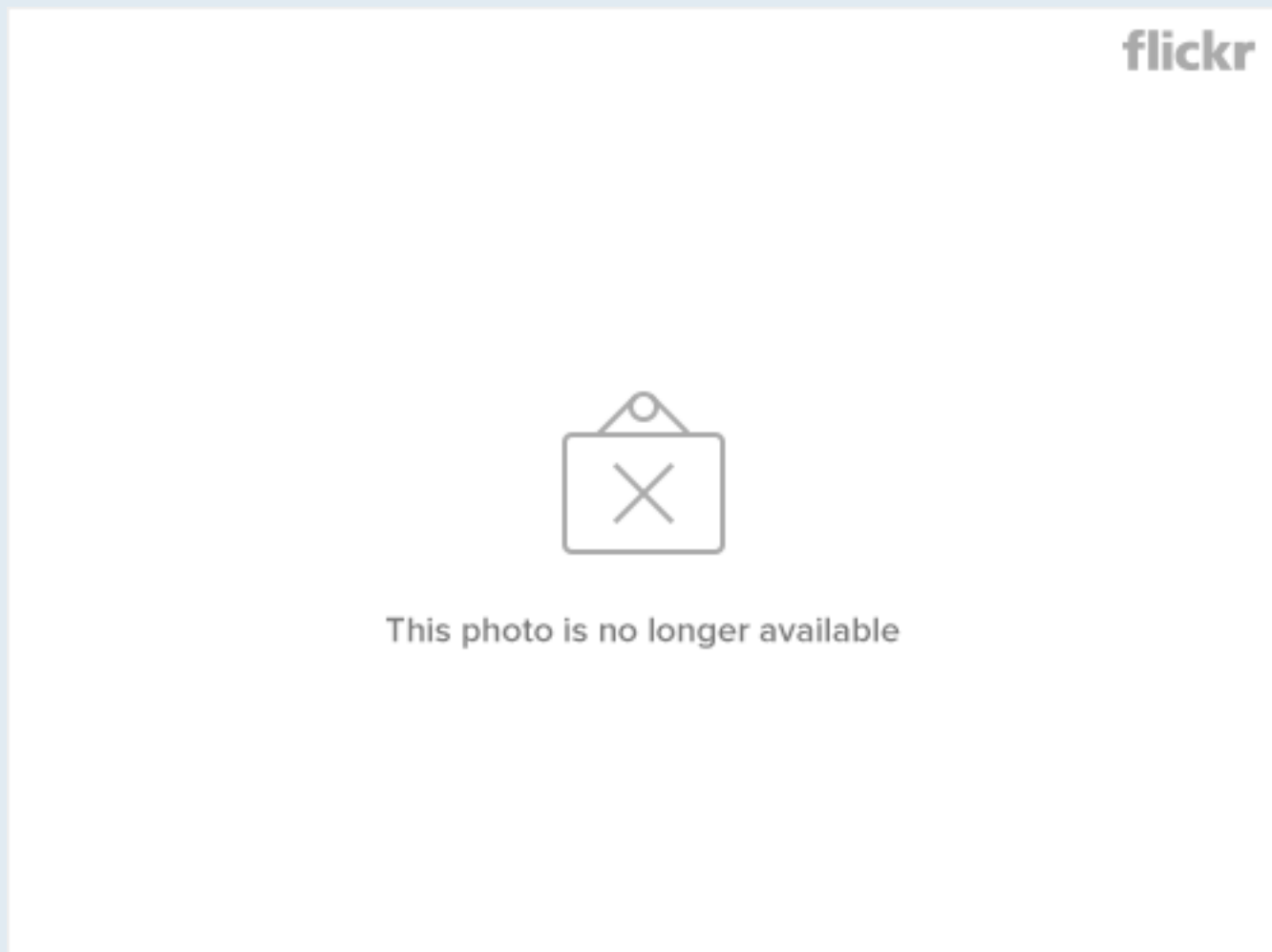
**Re: celery**

by celery, 16-Dec-10 01:38 AM GMT

No new species here... just a few alternate photographs from other locations, or of different individuals, or from previously unseen angles.



Barred Yellows (summer form)



Atala

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Eastern Tiger Swallowtail

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Cassius Blue

flickr



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Long-Tailed Skipper





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Hammock Skipper



Eufala Skipper



Mangrove Skipper

flickr



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Mangrove Buckeye

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Phaon Crescent

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Ocala Skipper

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Soldier

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Ruddy Daggerwings

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Queen

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White Peacock

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Zebra Heliconian

### Re: celery

by Lee Hurrell, 16-Dec-10 08:33 PM GMT

Some really lovely photos there Celery.

Florida is on my 'must visit one day list'.

NB - I didn't actually have a list, but I do now 😊

Cheers

Lee