

**FIRST RECORD OF SURF SCOTER (*Melanitta perspicillata*) FOR CUBA, AND NOTES ON AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY RECORD FOR JAMAICA**

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On 25 January 2015, Felix Medina Isa, a hunter and President of the Cerro Municipality hunting club, along with fellow hunters Nelson Ferrer, Javier de la Rosa, and Orlando Piñeira collected a Surf Scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*) from Presa Canasí reservoir (700 ha; 23° 07' 00" N, 81° 46' 00" W), Mayabeque province, Cuba. The bird, a young male in its first winter plumage (Fig. 1), is deposited in the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural de Cuba (MNHNC catalogue number 24.001419). This individual is the first specimen of this species for Cuba and possibly the second record for the West Indies.

Surf Scoter breeds and winters exclusively in North America. Breeding occurs in northern Canada and Alaska south through



**Figure 1. Male Surf Scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*; Museo Nacional de Historia Natural de Cuba catalogue number 24.001419) in first-winter plumage, shot by Felix Medina Isa on 25 January 2015 at Presa Canasí reservoir, Mayabeque province, Cuba**

Canada from northeastern British Columbia to eastern Quebec and southern Labrador (AOU 1998, Savard et al. 1998). Nonbreeders are rare summer visitors in Florida (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). Surf Scoters winter primarily along the eastern and western coasts of North America as far south as central Baja California on the Pacific coast, and to North Carolina on the Atlantic coast; wintering occurs less commonly south to Florida (AOU 1998, Savard et al. 1998). Individual wanderers have been recorded in many distant localities, including continental Europe (Amos 1991, AOU 1998, Savard et al. 1998).

In Florida, Surf Scoter is rare to uncommon along the panhandle and northern peninsula coasts, and occasional farther south in fall and winter (Robertson and Woolfenden 1992, Stevenson and Anderson 1994). Examining eBird (2015) reports, we found a minimum of 18 sightings (deleting probable duplicates among reports) for coastal Florida below 26° N latitude, 1983–2014. Most of those sightings were of individuals, but two birds were reported twice, three individuals once, and one group of 13 birds was observed. Reports included 1 from October, 10 from November, 4 in December, 1 from January, and 2 from May. We found no reports from the Bahamas or West Indies in eBird (2015) check-lists, nor did Savard et al. (1998) mention records south of Florida. The nearest report to Cuba we found was of a single Surf Scoter observed and photographed by William Nichols at Key West, Florida on 22 November 2012 (eBird Checklist S12132872).

An eighteenth century record of Surf Scoter in Jamaica was originated possibly by Dr. Anthony Robinson (d. 1768). Gosse (1847:408) listed Surf Scoter among waterfowl recorded from Jamaica, noting that the observation was furnished by his friend, “Dr. Chamb.” This was likely Richard Chamberlaine, who had earlier written (1842:20–21) that *Oidemia perspicillata*, “Black Duck or Surf Duck,” had been observed and illustrated by Robertson (Anthony Robinson), a surgeon and botanist who resided in Jamaica for 20 years. Robinson had compiled his studies and drawings of Jamaican natural history into five folio manuscript volumes, but died young and published none of his substantial materials. Robert Long (1729–1775) sorted the sketches, mounted them, added his comments, and transcribed and bound the loose sheets of description. Robinson’s 164 bird and more than 100 plant drawings and several manuscript volumes on Jamaican natural history are conserved in the National Library of Jamaica (NHMJ; Robinson ms., Levy 2010), and have yet to be published. We examined surviving manuscript notes and drawings, but failed to find information on Surf Scoter in Jamaica. We concluded that either Robinson did not produce an illustration of the duck, or the illustration is now missing (as is a drawing of “*Anas dominica*” [Masked Duck *Nomonyx dominicus*]). Chamberlaine (1842) noted that Surf Scoters

“are common in winter in Florida, and are in some years found not to be uncommon here [Jamaica]. Being worthless for the table they are not frequently seen in the market. . . . They have been shot in the marshes at Hunt’s Bay [17° 58' 44" N, 76° 50' 57" W; a part of Kingston Harbour] this season, and brought to the Kingston Markets.”

Chamberlaine’s (1842, 1843) report of Surf Scoter in Jamaica was repeated in several subsequent publications, without reference to origin (e.g., Albrecht 1862, March 1864, Sclater and Salvin 1876, Newton and Newton 1881, Scott 1891, Salvadori 1895, Sclater 1910). Although Cory (1885, 1886) questioned the record, he later (1888) included the scoter from Jamaica, based on Gosse (1847). Bangs and Kennard (1920) were more skeptical of the record, writing “Said to have occurred in Jamaica, but definite records seem to be wanting.” Sclater and Salvin (1876) suggested a specimen existed, writing “The Surf-scoter has been obtained in Jamaica, according to Gosse, only once”, though we found no specimen from there. Baird et al. (1884:99) included Jamaica, as well as “other West India islands?” in the scoter’s winter range, whereas Sharpe (1899:225) also included the West Indies in its winter range and Sclater and Salvin (1873) reported it from “Antill. (raro).” We suspect the broader inclusions of islands are only logical expansion of the Jamaica reports of Chamberlaine to other Antilles.

Savard et al. (1998) noted that migrating Surf Scoter occasionally inhabits freshwater habitats near the sea, similar to Canasí reservoir, but wintering populations usually live in shallow marine coastal waters in their normal winter range.

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