

## EDITORIAL: FLORIDA'S NEXT STATE BIRD BOOK?

As a research fellow at Tall Timbers Research Station, beginning in June 1975, I have agreed to begin preparations for a new book on Florida birds. Everyone agrees that it is about time such a project was initiated. A lapse of 22 years occurred between Howell and Sprunt, and 21 years have passed since Sprunt's book was published. The time involvement necessary for an authentic work of this sort is sure to add several more years of waiting, but it is not too early to determine the right direction and solicit cooperation. In fact, I have already contacted a number of Florida ornithologists for their suggestions, and the response has been gratifying, but there can hardly be too much input. Any additional suggestions will be gratefully received.

None of the above comments should indicate that I have no ideas of my own about this book, though admittedly those that I have may change. My present thinking is that the book should present, as succinctly as seems feasible, information about the status of Florida species. Other information should be secondary in importance. Sources should include not only published records but any unpublished information pertinent to the purpose of the book. I hope that those in possession of such information will be willing to share it.

One other conviction of mine should be mentioned at the outset. As a general rule (with a few exceptions?) records of the most unusual nature should have the corroboration of collected specimens or recognizable photographs. Examples of such records are those of species never previously validated for Florida. It is customary to formulate a Hypothetical List for species reported, but not proven to occur, in a given state. One might expect that a Hypothetical List would dwindle as observers sought to confirm sight records. However, what happens is usually just the opposite. Whereas Howell's book listed 12 such species in Florida, Sprunt's included more than 30, even though some of Howell's species had since been removed from the list. My unpublished manuscript on Florida vertebrates now contains about 45 birds on the Hypothetical List. Aside from first state records, though, it can hardly be said that a single specimen of a bird far out of range makes subsequent sight records of the same species fully acceptable. And the fact that a species is common in summer does not mean that sight records in winter must be accepted. Nor should sight records in north Florida of species normally restricted to extreme south Florida be accepted without proof. Thus in many ways, with more and more amateurs reporting records, substantiation of unusual records becomes increasingly important.

Just as museum specimens of birds are valueless unless available to ornithologists, so are substantiating photographs (prints or slides). I have attempted to develop a file of photographs to support unusual records, but presently more photographs of value are lacking than are present. By duplicating the photographic evidence it can be made available to a central repository as well as to the photographer himself. I would be glad to discuss with anyone the value of such photographs in the hope of obtaining duplicates of those most needed. Credit would be given to the photographer in any case where the substantiation was referred to in a publication. — *Henry M. Stevenson, Tall Timbers Research Station, Route 1, Box 160, Tallahassee, Florida 32303.*