

Casey Key and 2 miles of the Venice beach and never encountered such a gathering of knots before. The largest number of knots ever seen by us previously was a flock of 300 on 4 November 1977 at the north end of Casey Key.

We checked 28 Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) around the Gulf coast of the United States for 1973-1977 including 14 in Florida. About half of these Counts do not usually record Red Knots, and only in Florida from St. Petersburg south are knots recorded consistently. The greatest concentrations occur from St. Petersburg to Sanibel-Captiva with a maximum of 1221 in 1976 for the six CBCs of this area. Previous high counts of Red Knots for Florida Gulf Coast CBCs include 3000 at Sarasota on 1 January 1964 and 4245 at St. Petersburg on 20 December 1969. Thus, our estimate of 6500 + Red Knots for 6 miles of beach on Casey Key is far greater than any previous CBC record in Florida or the rest of the United States, and is similar to the maximum counts gathered by the ISS in 1976. Aerial surveys in July 1976 of James and Hudson bays, a major gathering place for Red Knots, tallied over 7300, and the sum of maximum counts of Red Knots along the Atlantic coast during the 1976 fall migration from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to south Florida was 7641 (Morrison, R. I. G., and B. A. Harrington 1979, *Trans. N. Amer. Wild. Nat. Resc. Conf.* 44: 498-507)

Most Red Knots appear to winter in the southern part of South America (Argentina, Tierra del Fuego) (Morrison and Harrington 1979) and in winter they are casual on the Atlantic coast of the United States and uncommon on the Pacific coast (Forbush 1925, *Birds of Massachusetts and other New England states*).—STANLEY STEDMAN AND ANNETTE F. STEDMAN, *Seagrape Point, 1156 Casey Key Road, Nokomis, Florida 33555*.

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An early record of the Band-tailed Gull in Florida.—In early September 1968 two teen-aged boys found a bird that proved to be a Pacific South American Band-tailed Gull (*Larus belcheri*) in extremely weakened condition in Escambia County, Florida, near the intersection of U.S. 29 and alternate U.S. 90, about 8 miles north of Pensacola. Thinking the bird might have escaped from a nearby zoo, the Swamparium, they took it to the owner, Edward Nowak, Jr., of Cantonment. The bird, which had not escaped from there, responded well to treatment and soon recovered. It is still on display at the Swamparium at this writing (August 1979).

Early attempts to identify the bird were made difficult by the similarity between its breeding (alternate) plumage and the subadult plumage of the Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*), and it remained in that plumage until September 1970, at which time Goodnight noted patches of dark feathers on the head. Since that year it has developed the dark hood of the non-breeding (basic) plumage each fall (Nowak pers. comm.), losing the red spot on the bill. Kingsbery has seen the bird with the pure white head of the breeding plumage as early as 5 February 1977. In 1979, at least 50% of the head was dark by 18 August, but the red bill-spot was still present. Thus the seasonal occurrence of each plumage seems to have been essentially adjusted to the conditions of the Northern Hemisphere.

Until recently, available photographs of this gull showed only its breeding plumage—superficially similar, except for the tail band and bill pattern, to that of *L. fuscus*—but in October 1977 Stephen Stedman obtained monochromes (Fig. 1) that were identified by Eugene Eisenmann, American Museum of Natural History, as those of a Band-tailed Gull, *Larus b. belcheri*. The Atlantic form, *L. b. atlanticus* (Olrog 1967), probably a distinct species (Olrog's Gull, *L. atlanticus*; Devillers 1977), has a streaked rather than hooded head in basic plumage. Eisenmann suggested that appropriate measurements also be made in case some population intermediate between these two is found later. These measurements were made by Robert and Lucy Duncan, with the help of Nowak. The Duncans made the following notations: wing arc, 375 mm; exposed culmen, 49.5 mm. These measurements are within the known dimensions for *L. b. belcheri*, but too low for the larger *atlanticus*; the respective minima for females of *atlanticus* are 416 and 49.3 mm (Devillers 1977). The brownish black mantle, light gray underwing coverts, and more extensive black tail band, as well as the hood in non-breeding dress, also indicate nominate *belcheri*.

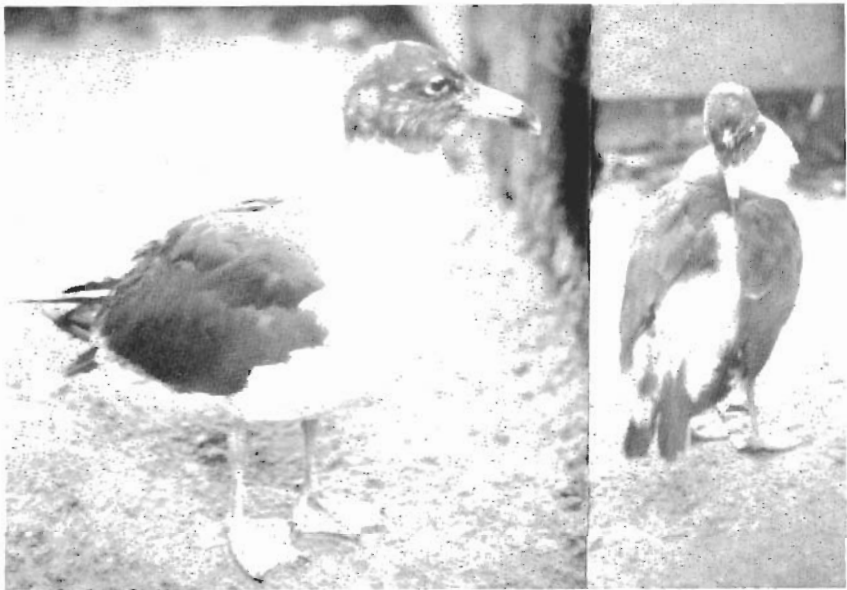


Fig. 1. Captive Band-tailed Gull, *Larus b. belcheri*, photographed in October 1977 at a zoo near Pensacola, Florida, by Stephen Stedman.

At least three subsequent records of the Band-tailed Gull in Florida have been published, not necessarily pertaining to three different individuals. Clark S. Olson (1976) and Brian J. Catley photographed an unfamiliar gull at Marco Island, Collier County, on 6 June 1970, the photograph later identified by George Watson and Richard L. Zusi as the species *L. belcheri*, with the white head of breeding plumage. A Band-tailed Gull photographed by Theodore Below on 11 November 1974 south of Naples at Cape Romano, about 15 miles north of Marco Island, retained the dark hood typical of non-breeding nominate *belcheri* (fide Eisenmann). Judging from photographs, the hood was lost by at least 16 January 1975, and the bird was seen in breeding plumage through at least 29 January by Below and Phillip Kahl and photographed by Mr. and Mrs. Gardner Stout on 28 January (Stevenson 1975). A Band-tailed Gull in breeding plumage reappeared near Naples in January 1976, was photographed by Mrs. Stout, and remained until at least 11 February (Stevenson 1976). At least one observer, Paul Sykes, suspected that *two* birds of this species were present during that period. No evidence has been presented indicating that any of these individuals may have escaped or been released, and no tropical depression can be associated with any of their first known observations. However, the species has been known to wander northward from its Peruvian breeding grounds as far as the Pacific Coast of Panama at least three times (Ridgely 1976), suggesting that Florida occurrences of wild birds are not entirely unlikely, although for nominate *belcheri* to make that journey would require crossing the isthmus, perhaps following the Panama Canal waterway.

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Ruddy Quail Dove again at Dry Tortugas.—About noon on 15 December 1977, a cold day with severe northwesterly squalls, Given found and photographed a large, reddish dove on the second tier of Fort Jefferson, Dry Tortugas, Monroe County, Florida. She saw the bird make a short flight to a more sheltered location but failed to find it in a thorough search the following day. The photographs readily identify the bird as a male Ruddy Quail Dove (*Geotrygon montana*), the dull color of the crown (brownish shading to gray on the forehead) suggesting that it had not attained full adult plumage. We thank Albert Schwartz of Miami for permitting Robertson to compare the photos with specimens in the Albert Schwartz Collection of West Indian birds. Copies of the set of two color prints have been deposited in bird record photo files at the South Florida Research Center and the Tall Timbers Research Station.

This record is the fifth report of the species from Florida and the second from Dry Tortugas. The previous occurrences were: Key West, 8 December 1888, specimen (Scott 1889); Key West, May 1923, captured alive (Hollister 1925); Tavernier, Key Largo, 13 February 1952, sight record (Sprunt 1954:238); and, Garden Key, Dry Tortugas, 13 May 1962, partial remains collected (Robertson and Mason 1965:135). Because the species exhibits strong sexual dimorphism of plumage (males rufous, females olive-brown), one can determine from published accounts that at least four of the five individuals so far found in Florida were males. (The brief description of the 1923 Key West record includes no information on this point.) As seems usual for Florida records of West Indian birds (Robertson and Kushlan 1974), none of the occurrences of the Ruddy Quail Dove can be attributed definitely to hurricane transport. All records followed hurricane seasons in which no tropical storms moved across the species' usual range and thence to Florida. Assuming that the present bird is most likely to have originated in western Cuba (100 mi S), one can speculate that the intense flow of air from the south which commonly precedes the arrival of strong cold fronts may account for its presence at Dry Tortugas.

For all Florida records of vagrant West Indian birds it is necessary to consider the possibility of escaped captives or accidental transport on boats. This is especially true for largely terrestrial, forest birds such as the Ruddy Quail Dove. Referring to the 1962 record at Dry Tortugas, Paulson commented (Paulson and Stevenson 1962:401), "The fact that there are now four records of this species in Florida is puzzling to those who know it as a non-migratory bird of dense tropical forest. Can these records all be attributed to human influence?" Complete assurance that a particular record represents natural vagrancy doubtless can never be achieved, but several lines of argument suggest that the Ruddy Quail Dove may not be as sedentary as is generally thought. French (1973:195) writes, "... some migration or dispersal evidently occurs, since I trapped a male on Soldado Rock on 1 October." Soldado Rock is a barren islet lying about 15 miles off the southwestern cape of Trinidad. It is also relevant that the Ruddy Quail Dove shows little geographical variation over an enormous range embracing the West Indies and humid areas virtually throughout the continental Neotropics. Griscom (1932:119) stated that its wide range without subspecific variation must indicate an unusual degree of genetic stability in an "ancient stock". It is equally arguable, however, that movement of birds between populations effectively cancels local variation. Much the same