NOTES

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A LESSER SANDHILL CRANE IN FLORIDA

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In addition to the resident Florida Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis pratensis*), Florida over-winters the majority of the migratory, Great Lakes population of the Greater Sandhill Crane (*G. c. tabida*). This population, which summers primarily from eastern Minnesota through Wisconsin, and Michigan, to western Ontario, migrates along a narrow corridor west of the Appalachian Mountains (Nesbitt and Williams 1979).

In north-central Florida, over the past 15 years some 300 Florida and 800 Greater Sandhill Cranes have been captured and banded with an individually unique combination of a numbered aluminum and various colored plastic leg bands (Nesbitt et al. in press). Color marked individuals were routinely monitored to generate estimates of annual survival and productivity, as well as information on dispersal, pair formation, etc. Daily between 7 and 18 March 1991, an unusually small Sandhill Crane was seen associating with a flock (varying from seven to 11 individuals) of cranes that contained marked individuals of both the Florida and Greater subspecies. A 25x telescope was used to observe the bird for extended periods, often at close range (<200 m), on Kanapaha Prairie in southwest Alachua County.

The crane was still in juvenile plumage (Lewis 1979) when observed in March, as were most (≥70%) of the other cranes in the flock. Though cranes are about their full height when they fledge they continue to increase in weight throughout their first year. The bird was half the size of the others in the flock. When standing side-by-side the back of the small bird came up to the horizontal, mid-wing level of the others. The bill length was about half that of the other cranes and appeared proportionally shorter. Primaries, both the vane and shaft were dark, almost black.

Based on the crane's body size, bill size, and color of its primary wing feathers, I identified it as a Lesser Sandhill Crane (*G. c. canadensis*). This subspecies is "much the smallest" of the six Sandhill Cranes subspecies (Walkinshaw 1973: 79). Its primaries are darker than the Canadian Sandhill Crane (*G. c. rowani*) (Walkinshaw 1965) or either of the two Florida-occurring races (Walkinshaw 1949). Bill length, among these four subspecies, is proportionally shortest in the Lesser (see also Pogson and Lindstedt 1991). The proportion of exposed culmen to the cube root of weight (cube root of weight, is representative of overall body size for comparison with a linear measurement [Amadon 1943]) for Greaters, Floridas, Canadians, and Lessers is: 100.00, 96.24, 87.99, and 74.69, respectively (weights and measurements were taken from Walkinshaw 1973, Aldrich 1979, and Nesbitt et al. in prep.).

Lesser Sandhill Cranes breed from Siberia, across northern Alaska, and throughout western Arctic Canada. They winter from central California, south to northern Baja, California, east to southeastern Texas and northeastern Mexico (AOU 1957). The traditional migration routes for Lesser Sandhill Cranes are from the mid-continent west. There are only scattered records of Lessers east of the Mississippi River. A Little Brown Crane (formerly the accepted common name for *G. c. canadensis*) was taken on 14 October 1889 in Rhode Island (Brewster 1890), and another 21 October 1890 in South Carolina (Wayne

1891, 1894). The subspecies was reported from Prince Edward Island on 22 September and 23 October 1905 (Bent 1926: 240). One of the 126 Lesser Sandhill Cranes banded and color marked as chicks on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Alaska (Boise 1979) was sighted the fall after banding in western Mississippi, another during the spring in Wisconsin. Lesser Sandhill Crane bones have been found in kitchen-middens and archeological sites in Illinois and Ohio (Baker 1937, Wetmore 1943). I am not aware of any previous records of a Lesser Sandhill Crane from Florida.

Normally, juvenile cranes remain with their parents until they are 10-11 months old. In migratory cranes separation can begin before northward spring migration or in route (Alonso et al. 1984, Drewien 1973). During staging for fall migration, when flocks consisting of several thousand individuals develop, premature separation of juveniles could occur if they became confused and disoriented among these flocks. Premature separation could have also occurred as a consequence of the death or injury of either or both parents.

Premature separation and misoriented dispersal is the most reasonable explanation for the appearance of a Lesser Sandhill Crane in Florida, some 1200 km east of the closest wintering location. It is possible the bird found its way to Florida from Texas, though, if separation had occurred during fall migration, the paths of the Lesser and that of the eastern Greater Sandhill Cranes would have been just 500 km apart when they passed through south-central Canada or the north-central United States. Boise (1979) also speculated a fall separation and joining with eastern Greaters as explanation for the occurrence of the color-banded Lesser in Mississippi.

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FIRST FLORIDA SPECIMENS OF THE SHINY COWBIRD

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Since about 1900, the Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*) has been spreading northwestward from the southern Lesser Antilles at an accelerating rate (Bond 1976, Post and Wiley 1977, Cruz et al. 1989). It was first identified in North America in 1985, when a male was sighted at Lower Matecumbe Key, Monroe County, Florida (Smith and Sprunt 1987). Three Males were photographed at Islamorada, Monroe County, Florida in 1986, to provide the first material documentation of the species' occurrence in North America (Smith and Sprunt 1987). The first North American specimen, a juvenile male, was obtained on 28 July 1989 at Sullivan's Island, Charleston County, South Carolina (Hutcheson and Post 1990).

On 25 July 1991 during 1800-1830 hours, I obtained one adult (after second-year) male and one sub-adult (second-year) male Shiny Cowbird near the western limits of the City of Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, Florida. The cowbirds were in a mixed-species roost composed of about 170 Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*), 50 Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*), and 30 Boat-tailed Grackles (*Quiscalus major*). The birds were roosting over water in a small (15 m X 50 m) cattail (*Typha* spp.) marsh. The Shiny Cowbirds did not associate with each other, nor did they approach closer than 1 m to any of the other roosting birds. Both specimens were prepared as standard study skins with detached, flattened wings. The adult male Shiny Cowbird (Charleston Museum No. 1991.37.04) weighed 46.5 g. It was very fat (fat class = 5; Helms and Drury 1960). The wing chord and tail measured 95 mm and 70 mm, respectively. Its testes were enlarged (left = 7.3 mm X 4.5 mm; right = 5.0 mm X 5.0 mm). Its skull was fully ossified (pneumatized). The sub-adult male (ChM No. 1991.37.05) was also very fat, and weighed 48.0 g. Its wing chord and tail were 93 mm and 68 mm, respectively. Its testes were enlarged (left = 5.0 mm X 4.0 mm; right = 4.0 mm X 3.5 mm). The skull of the juvenile was 50% pneumatized. The stomachs of both individuals were full of millet (*Panicum miliaceum*) seeds, which measured about 1.5 mm in diameter. The stomach contents were saved. Neither bird was molting.

Based on comparisons with a series in the Charleston Museum, I determined that both individuals are of the subspecies *M. b. minimus*. These specimens appear to constitute the eighth and ninth for North America, as previously four were collected in South Carolina (Hutcheson and Post 1990; Post, unpubl.), one in Texas (G. W. Lasley, in litt.), one in Oklahoma (Grzybowski and Fazio 1991) and one in North Carolina (R. C. Laybourne, Smithsonian Institution, in litt.)