

NOTES

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**ASIATIC MARBLED MURRELET: FIRST SPRING
RECORD IN NORTH AMERICA**

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In the afternoon of 16 March 1994, Tim Harris saw an unfamiliar bird in the boat basin at Cedar Key, Levy County, Florida. He identified it as a *Brachyramphus* murrelet on the basis of the white scapulars. He reported his find to me that evening, and I notified several birders. The next day by 0700 hours, John Hintermister, Dale Henderson, Rex Rowan, and I were at the bridge over the channel that connected the boat basin to the Gulf of Mexico. The murrelet soon came into the channel, where it dove repeatedly. At times it was no farther than 5 m from us. The bird was white ventrally and deep brown dorsally with white scapulars and white patches on the sides of the rump. The dark brown cap came to just below the eye and extended almost straight down the side of the neck. Small white crescents were visible above and below the eyes as were a pair of whitish patches on the nape. The white feathers on the neck and breast above the water line were tipped with brown, as if the bird were starting to molt into alternate plumage.

The murrelet was photographed, videotaped, and seen by numerous observers regularly through 28 March. Late that day in a corner of the boat basin, the bird appeared "lethargic" (*vide* Dale Henderson). It was not seen subsequently.

The bird was identified as a Marbled Murrelet and referred to the Asian subspecies, *Brachyramphus marmoratus perdix*, based on the entirely dark hind neck and the white crescents above and below the eye. Also, the white patches on the nape were similar to those on a Marbled Murrelet seen in October 1993 on the St. Lawrence River and referred to *B. m. perdix* (Ridout 1994, Sibley 1993). Recently, Erickson et al. (1995) examined specimens of Marbled Murrelets, including eight *perdix*, at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley (MVZ). Three characteristics exhibited by all MVZ *perdix* were an entirely dark hindneck, a narrow band of black below the eye, and limited black on the sides of the breast. The Cedar Key specimen showed these field marks, although in dark brown instead of black. Only two MVZ *perdix*, but none of the North American subspecies, *marmoratus*, had pale nape patches.

Sealy et al. (1982, 1991) examined and measured 10 specimens of Marbled Murrelet from interior and eastern North America, which had been found from November 1979 to December 1986. All fit the criteria for the Asiatic subspecies, *perdix*. Three sight records were included in the summary (Sealy et al., 1991) of interior and eastern North America for a total of 13 records through October 1989. Subsequently, a sight record of a Marbled Murrelet in Iowa in December of 1991 (Dinsmore 1993), the St. Lawrence River sighting in October 1993, and a specimen (UCF#2081, Stevenson and Anderson 1994) salvaged on Mullet Key, Pinellas County, Florida, on 4 December 1993, increased the records to 16. The Cedar Key bird is the 17th record for North America. All previous records for *perdix* in North America occurred in late July through early September and late October through December. The Cedar Key murrelet is the first spring record for North America, the third record for Florida, and the first observation of a live bird for Florida. The first Florida record was a specimen found recently dead on Honeymoon Island, Pinellas County, during the 1986 Christmas Bird Count (Hoffman and Woolfenden 1988), and



Figure 1. Asiatic Marbled Murrelet at Cedar Key, Levy Co., Florida, 17 March 1994.

the second was the Mullet Key specimen. The locales where the three Florida Marbled Murrelets were found, all on islands in the Gulf of Mexico, are within 175 km of each other.

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