

NOTES

Florida Field Naturalist 28(2):50-52, 2000.

THE CUBAN MARTIN IN FLORIDA

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The fifth and sixth editions of the American Ornithologists' Union [AOU] Check-list of North American Birds (1957, 1983) considered the Cuban Martin, *Progne cryptoleuca*, to be "casual" in southern Florida, mentioning records from Cape Florida, Key West, and Clearwater. The seventh edition (AOU 1998) omitted any mention of Florida in the distribution of *P. cryptoleuca*. The reason for this omission is unclear. Addition or removal of the United States to the distribution of a species is subject to a vote by the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature. There is no committee record that such a vote was taken relative to *Progne cryptoleuca*. It is likely that the line mentioning the casual occurrence of the species in Florida was accidentally dropped when the text of the sixth edition was revised for the seventh edition. Notice of that omission, brought to the committee's attention by Marshall Iliff via J. V. Remsen, has prompted this review of the status of the species in Florida and the United States.

Historical record.—Baird (*in* Baird, Cassin and Lawrence 1858:923) discussed a martin (*Progne* sp.) taken by Wurdemann at Cape Florida [Florida], 18 May 1858 (U.S. National Museum of Natural History [USNM] 10368). The specimen was different from any specimen of *Progne subis* (then called *purpurea*) available, and differed from *P. dominicensis* and *chalybea*, but Baird considered that it might be merely a peculiar plumage stage of *P. subis*. Baird (1865) "somewhat hesitatingly" referred that specimen to *P. cryptoleuca* when he named that species, giving its range as "Cuba, and Florida Keys (?)."

Ridgway (1877:459) included Cuba and southern Florida in the range of *P. cryptoleuca*, mentioning single immature males from Cape Florida and Clearwater, Florida. He later (Ridgway 1904) again cited these two Florida specimens, but gave no literature citation that referred to the Clearwater bird. That undated specimen, taken by Col. S. T. Walker, was entered into the USNM catalog (78046) in 1879; it was entered by generic name only but *subis* was added in pencil at some undetermined later time.

Scott (1889) believed that martins breeding on the Gulf coast of Florida as far north as Tarpon Springs were *P. cryptoleuca*. He sent four specimens from Tarpon Springs, one female and three males, to J. A. Allen at American Museum of Natural History who confirmed Scott's preliminary identifications of three *P. cryptoleuca* and one intermediate between that form and *P. subis*. Scott's (1892) listing of *Progne cryptoleuca* as a breeding migrant in the Caloosahatchie River region (as well as *P. subis*) apparently was based on this identification and has generally been overlooked or ignored.

Howell (1932) stated that martins breeding in southern Florida "all proved to be typical *subis*, and not *cryptoleuca* as it had been surmised they might be (cf. Scott, 1889a, p. 325)." There is no indication as to what "proof" Howell had, but Ridgway (1904:35) had previously treated the birds reported by Scott as *P. s. subis*. Howell (1932) listed only the Cape Florida and Clearwater birds from Florida as *cryptoleuca*.

Hellmayr (1935) added a specimen (Field Museum of Natural History [FMNH] 43147) from Key West to the Florida records of *P. cryptoleuca*. There seems to be no previous mention of that specimen in the literature. The specimen, an immature male, was

taken by L. W. Brownell on 9 May 1895. The specimen was at one time in the collection of Ned Hollister, who was an employee of the Bureau of Biological Survey in the early 1900s. On one of the labels there is an undated note "new form to be described by Mearns—Brewster" but the bird seems not to have been considered with *P. s. floridana*, which Mearns (1902) named.

Phillips (1986:9) considered *P. cryptoleuca* (as a subspecies of *P. dominicensis*) "casual" in southern Florida, but mentioned only the Cape Florida bird. He considered the Clearwater record an erroneous report; he wrote "worn *s. subis*" on the label of that USNM specimen. He did not mention the Key West specimen.

Robertson and Woolfenden (1992) continued to assign the individual birds from Cape Florida, Key West, and Clearwater to *P. cryptoleuca*. On the basis of a personal communication, they treated the Tarpon Springs birds as would Stevenson and Anderson (1994), treating three as *subis* and questioning the fourth. Stevenson and Anderson (1994), however, listed all these records in a paragraph following headings for *P. cryptoleuca*, *chalybea*, and *dominicensis*, and it is not clear, except for the historical record, to which taxon they are referred. Stevenson had examined the four Tarpon Springs specimens reported by Scott (1889) in the Natural History Museum (British Museum of Natural History 92.3.20.176-179) and "referred 3 (possibly all 4) to *subis*; specimen 177, a male, may be *cryptoleuca*."

Both Robertson and Wolfenden (1992) and Stevenson and Anderson (1994) pointed out that a sight report (Edscorn 1977) of a Cuban Martin (no scientific name) was in error.

Reevaluation.—The two specimens in USNM were, even for their time, very poorly made specimens. Both were under-stuffed, and one was (by 1999) badly stained with grease ventrally. It was difficult to compare them to fresher, better prepared specimens. Claudia Angle relaxed, degreased, washed, and remade these specimens to make an adequate comparison possible. Both specimens show the central dark shaft streaks on most of the ventral feathers, typical of first-year male *P. subis*, rather than the unstreaked white ventral feathers of young male *P. cryptoleuca*. Undertail coverts have large dark central patches rather than being nearly pure white. In my opinion, both of these specimens, from Cape Florida and Clearwater, represent *P. subis*, not *P. cryptoleuca*.

Pamela C. Rasmussen examined W. E. D. Scott's Tarpon Springs specimens in the Natural History Museum at my request. Three adult males (92.3.20.177-179) taken on 17 Apr. 1889 originally thought to be *P. cryptoleuca* were identified as *P. subis*; this series includes the specimen about which Stevenson was uncertain. An adult female taken on that same date, but not mentioned by Scott (1889) or Stevenson and Anderson (1994) was originally identified as *P. subis*. A juvenile female taken by Dickinson for Scott on 15 July 1887 (92.3.20.176) also was originally labeled as *P. cryptoleuca*. No material of *P. cryptoleuca* of the same age was available for comparison at the Natural History Museum, but the heavy shaft streaks on the whitish feathers of the underparts suggest *P. subis*.

At the request of J. V. Remsen, T. S. Schulenberg reexamined specimen 43147 at the Field Museum of Natural History and verified that it is *P. cryptoleuca*. On 8 September 1999, I had the opportunity (with Schulenberg) to compare the remade USNM specimens and the FMNH specimen with the series of *P. cryptoleuca* at the Field Museum. We agreed that only FMNH 43147 represents *P. cryptoleuca*. That specimen, then, is the only valid record of the occurrence of the Cuban Martin, *Progne cryptoleuca*, in Florida and the United States, where its occurrence should be considered accidental.

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