

NOTES

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SECOND INLAND RECORD OF BLACK-CAPPED PETREL IN FLORIDA

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The Black-capped Petrel (*Pterodroma hasitata*) is rare to uncommon off the Atlantic coast of Florida, primarily in the Gulf Stream, where it regularly ranges north to North Carolina and irregularly to Maine (AOU 1998). Only a few thousand breeding pairs occur in the world with the highest known density occurring in Haiti where the species continues to suffer population stress due to human exploitation for food and predation by introduced predators (del Hoyo et al. 1992). Except for two inland occurrences, all reports of this species in Florida are from the Atlantic Ocean including the Florida Straits.

The inland occurrence of any procellariid species in Florida is accidental and the first occurrence for any species was a Black-capped Petrel (TTRS 6) found dead at the base of the WCTV tower at Tall Timbers Research Station north of Tallahassee, Leon County, on 11 September 1964 (Crawford 1981). This specimen appears highly likely to have originated in the Atlantic Ocean since Hurricane Dora made landfall on the east coast of Florida and crossed the state through Leon County just before the specimen was found.

The second inland procellariid occurrence was on 28 February 2001, in Lake County, when a live Black-capped Petrel was delivered to the Animal Clinic of Leesburg veterinary facility. The facility does not maintain records of donation, observation, or treatment of wild birds, and the identity of the person or persons originally finding the petrel is unknown. On 2 March 2001, the veterinarian discharged the bird to the care of Donna Morris (pers. comm.), a licensed wildlife rehabilitator in Lady Lake.

Clinic personnel told Ms. Morris that the bird was found in a harbor on the western shore of Lake Griffin adjacent to a residential development. Lake Griffin is a large freshwater lake in Lake and Marion counties. Its easternmost point is approximately 99.8 km due west of the Atlantic Ocean. Lake Griffin shares a hydrological basin with several other large lakes including Lake Apopka. Initially, Ms. Morris found the bird to be active and alert. However, it required force-feeding and its health declined rapidly. It died on 5 March 2001. No necropsy was performed.

The specimen was donated to the University of Central Florida, Orlando, where it was prepared as a round study skin (UCF 2350, Fig. 1) by Bruce H. Anderson. Anderson's notes on the specimen tag state that it is a male. Its right and left testes measured 3 mm × 1.5 mm and 4 mm × 3 mm respectively, indicating that the bird was not in breeding condition. The freshly thawed specimen weighed 264.2 g. There was no subcutaneous fat and the muscle was dehydrated. The plumage shows little wear except for the upper greater-secondary wing-coverts that are quite worn. There is no indication of molt.

Data were obtained from the National Data Buoy Center for two data stations, 20 and 120 nautical miles east of Cape Canaveral (NDBC, 2001). A non-scientific analysis of wind speed and direction for February 2001 shows no high winds with a sustained easterly component, suggesting that the bird arrived in Lake County independently of any apparent meteorological event. All inland reports for this species from Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia are associated with storm systems (pers. comm. Charles Finley, Lex Glover, Harry LeGrand, Charlotte Friend, Edward S. Brinkley).

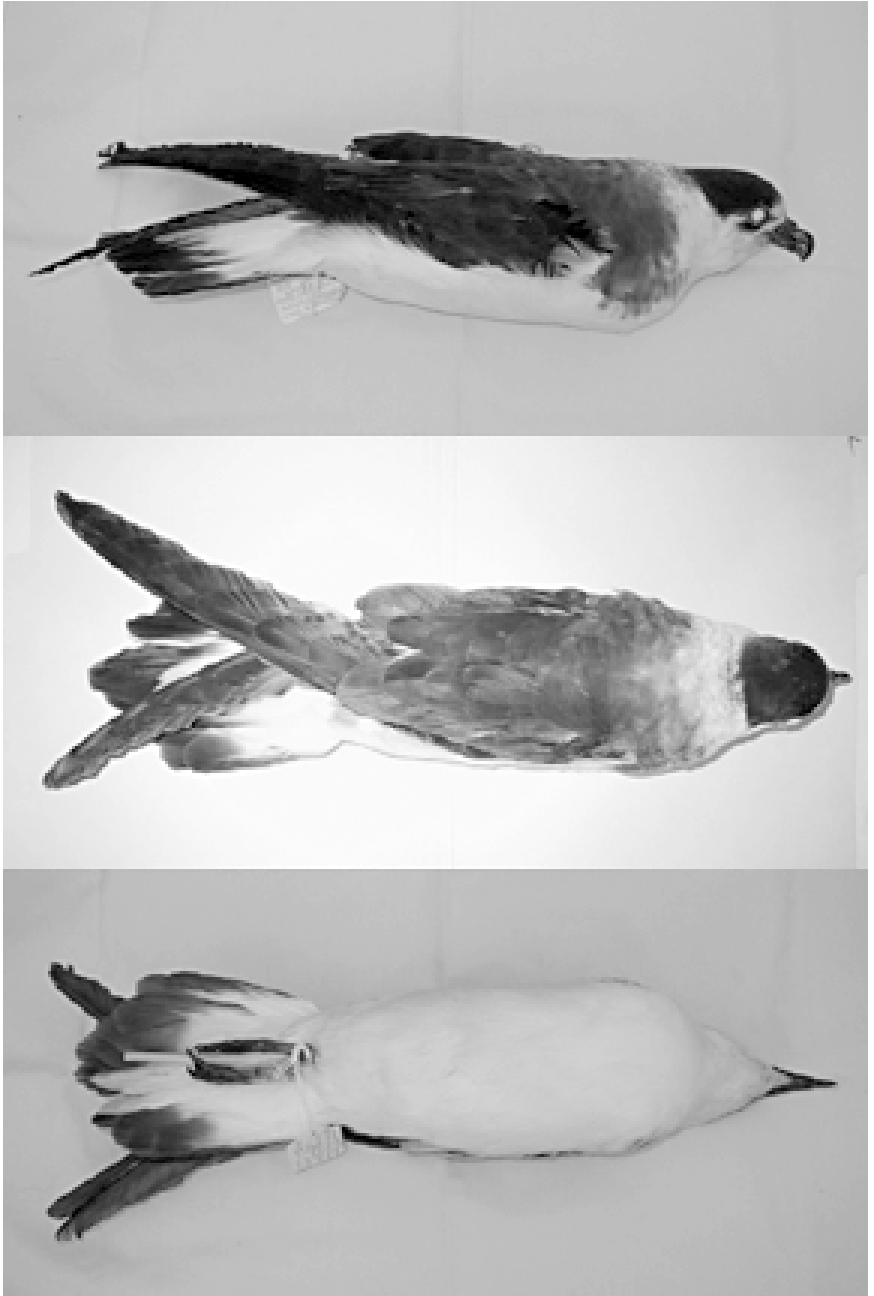


Figure 1. Study skin of male Black-capped Petrel (UCF # 2350), salvaged from a bird that died in captivity after it was found live at Lake Griffin, Lake County, Florida, on 28 Feb. 2001.

One specimen at the American Museum of Natural History, New York, taken at Indian River Inlet, St. Lucie Co., is labeled "winter 1846-47." The Lake County specimen is the first report in Florida documented from December-February. Aside from the above-mentioned specimens, there are two others from the Florida's Atlantic coast and approximately 15 sight reports offshore in the Atlantic Ocean, including the Florida Straits, from April-October (Stevenson and Anderson 1994; Pranty 1994, 1998).

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