

**FIRST RECORD OF WHITE-THROATED SWIFT  
(*Aeronautes saxatalis*) FOR FLORIDA**

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The White-throated Swift (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) is a common breeder throughout rocky hilly and mountainous country in western North America (Ryan and Collins 2000). Its breeding distribution reaches as far north as southern British Columbia, and as far east as the Black Hills in South Dakota. The northern populations of the nominate subspecies are migratory, while populations from the southwestern United States (southern parts of Texas and New Mexico, and central Arizona and California) south through interior Mexico are resident. Another subspecies (*A. s. nigrior*) is resident in southern Mexico south to Honduras (Ryan and Collins 2000). Although it would seem that a highly aerial and migratory bird would be a good candidate for vagrancy, there are few records of White-throated Swift east of its normal range (AOU 1998, Ryan and Collins 2000). The species has not previously been known from the entire southeastern portion of the continent.

On 9 April 2009, a weak swift was found on a balcony of a condominium tower by Clive Beattie at Navarre Beach (Santa Rosa Co.) in Florida's western Panhandle. Beattie took the bird to the Wildlife Sanctuary of Northwest Florida in Pensacola, where DK identified it as a White-throated Swift, which, when confirmed, made it the first record for Florida. Over the next few days, Lucy Duncan photographed the bird (Fig. 1) and took a few measurements. The swift rapidly gained weight and stayed in a flight enclosure while rehabilitating. On 26 May 2009, DK brought the bird to Innerarity Point in extreme western Florida (Escambia Co.) and released it back to the wild. It circled three times to increasing heights, flew from sight, and was not relocated. The Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee (FOSRC) accepted this record (FOSRC #09-729). A sight report of a White-throated Swift in Volusia Co. Florida in May 1996 was not accepted by the FOSRC (#06-364; Bowman 2000).



**Figure 1. White-throated Swift, photographed 14 April 2009 at Wildlife Sanctuary of Northwest Florida. Photograph by Lucy Duncan.**

This was a medium-sized swift (weight = 28 g on 14 April), with dark brownish-black upperparts, and white (anteriorly) and black (posteriorly) underparts (Fig. 1). The white on the posterior part of the flanks extended dorsally to form white patches on either side of the black rump. The black secondaries had narrow white edges on the tips of the outer webs, with the inner secondaries having increasingly more white, and the broadest white tips on the tertials (not including the all black shortest tertial). The tail was black and moderately forked (ca. 12 mm). The white of the throat narrowed posteriorly to a point on the black belly, where the black of the flanks was broadest. The undertail coverts were brownish black, with some paler tips. The anterior portion of the black flanks was spotted white. The lores, face, and forehead were grizzled buffy white. The belly was not visible in the photographs.

The remiges and rectrices were uniformly moderately worn. The combination of the moderate abraded outer primaries, extent of white in the longest tertials, and moderate tail fork, indicates that this was likely a second-year male (Pyle 1996).

The black-and-white pattern (grizzled face, white throat and central stripe down underparts, and white posterior flank patches) is

unique to the White-throated Swift (Chantler and Driessens 1995). White-tipped Swift (*A. montivagus*) of the Andes is somewhat similar in coloration, but is much smaller, lacks the intrusion of white down the central underparts and the grizzled face, and males have white tail tips (Chantler and Driessens 1995). The Antillean Palm-Swift (*Tachornis phoenicobia*) of the Greater Antilles is more extensively dark below and the rump is almost wholly white (Chantler and Driessens 1995); there is a 1972 record of this species from the Florida Keys (Robertson and Woolfenden 1992). Both species in the Neotropical genus *Panyptila* have a similar black and white pattern, but one species (*P. sanctihieronymi*) is larger and the other species is smaller (*P. cayennensis*) than the bird in question; both species have long, very forked tails, more contrasting black-and-white plumage, and darker faces (Chantler and Driessens 1995).

Interestingly, this is the second species of swift whose first Florida record occurred on a condominium tower on Florida's Panhandle. On 25 January 1981, a White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*) was found dead on a condominium tower balcony at Perdido Key, which was a first record for Florida (Hardy and Clench 1982). That specimen (UF 20620) was identified as the subspecies from Mexico (*S. z. mexicanus*).

White-throated Swifts regularly migrate through the western fringe of the Plains States. Records from farther east are scarce, and include a specimen taken in Michigan (August 1926 in Hillsdale, Michigan, UMMZ 61955; Barber 1927), a sight report from Ohio (2 April 2006 at the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, B. Whan in litt.), a specimen from Arkansas (4 May 1935 in Hot Springs, Garland Co.; USNM 335155), and a specimen from Missouri (7 November 1988 from Cape Girardeau; Robbins and Easterla 1991). In Texas, the species breeds in the trans-Pecos region of west Texas, but is considered rare to casual on the Edwards Plateau, the western Panhandle, and in central coastal Texas (Lockwood and Freeman 2004). There is a sight report from the Dominican Republic (AOU 1998).

Surprisingly, the two other swifts of western North America, Vaux's Swift (*Chaetura vauxi*) and Black Swift (*Cypseolides niger*), have been recorded more frequently in southeastern North America than White-throated Swift, even though both species are less common and more localized, have more restricted distributions in western North America, and are more difficult to identify (AOU 1998; Bull and Collins 1993, Lowther and Collins 2002). Florida has two accepted records of Vaux's Swift (Anderson 1996, Bowman 2000) and a few other sight reports and records that were likely this species (Stevenson and Anderson 1994, Greenlaw and Kratter 2007); the species is nearly annual in Louisiana (J. V. Remsen in litt.). Alabama had its second report of Black Swift in the spring of 2009 (pending acceptance by the Ala-

bama Bird Records Committee: ABRC). The first report, from Fort Morgan (Baldwin Co.) on 11 April 2007, was accepted by the ABRC (S. McConnell in litt.). However, Black Swifts also breed in the Greater Antilles (AOU 1998, Lowther and Collins 2002), and these populations may have been the source of the Alabama birds. Mason and Steffee (1966) reported seeing 15 swifts that they considered to be Black Swifts at the Dry Tortugas of Florida during Hurricane Alma on 8-9 June 1966. If this identification was correct, these birds probably came from the Greater Antilles (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). Black Swift is still considered unverified (Robertson and Woolfenden 1992) or hypothetical (Stevenson and Anderson 1994) in the state.

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