

**CORRECT DATA FOR FLORIDA'S FIRST TWO SPECIMENS OF
THICK-BILLED MURRE (*Uria lomvia*)**

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The 19th Report of the FOS Records Committee (Kratter 2010:159) added a specimen of Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*) from Brevard County and reviewed Florida's two previous specimens. The first was asserted to have been "from Martin Co., 6 December 1992" citing Robertson and Woolfenden (1992) and a previous Records Committee's Report (Bowman 2000). The other, newly "discovered" by Bill Pranty, was asserted to have been "found by Jack Hailman on 29 January 1999 on Jupiter Island, 5 mi. north of Jupiter Inlet" cited as being in Palm Beach County but at a locale that is actually well into Martin County. These locality statements are erroneous for both specimens, neither of which comes from Martin County, and the date of the second one is wrong by almost a year. Furthermore, the extant specimen tags on both birds also contain errors. Both specimens are in the collection at Archbold Biological Station, where I re-examined them on 12 January 2011 and photographed their tags. I here try to resolve the confusion.

THE 1992 BIRD (GEW SPECIMEN 5871, FOSRC FILE 00-419)

This bird was first reported by Julia Stutevoss, Ken Christensen, and Rebecca Elliott with a photograph by Christensen as "found injured on Hobe Sound Highway *Palm Beach*, Dec. 6" (West and Warner 1993:251-252, italics in the original). According to R. Elliott (pers. com.), Stutevoss found the bird on the beach and took it to the Treasure Coast Wildlife Hospital, which at that time was located in Hobe Sound (Martin County). Then-director Christensen phoned Elliott with the request that she identify the species, and those two cared for the bird until it died on 29 December.

The late Howard P. Langridge (1923-2004) learned of the bird while it was still alive, photographed it, and had the carcass given to Glen E. Woolfenden (1930-2007) for the collection at Archbold Biological Station. Their published report in *Florida Field Naturalist* repeated the history including the road cited as "Hobe Sound Highway" (Langridge and Woolfenden 1998a). Langridge's photograph was inadvertently omitted by the editor in the published report so the entire report was republished with the photograph in a subsequent issue (Langridge and Woolfenden 1998b). The specimen tag in Woolfenden's distinctive handwriting reads "coll. Julia Stutevoss" and "don. H.P. Langridge."

The locality data reported for this specimen are varied and confusing. Woolfenden's specimen tag reads "FL, Martin Co., Hobe Sound (Sandridge Ave.)." The record reported in (West and Warner 1993), the article by Langridge and Woolfenden (1998a, b) and Bowman's (2000) Committee report all read "Hobe Sound Highway, Palm Beach Co." whereas Kratter's (2010) subsequent Committee report reads "from Martin Co." All of these are erroneous or ambiguous. Sandridge Ave. is in a residential area in the middle of the town of Hobe Sound (which is not on the Atlantic coast) and may have been the home of Stutevoss. There is no such road as "Hobe Sound Highway," and insofar as I can determine no road by that name existed at the time the bird was found.

Fortunately, subsequent to finding the second specimen (below), I had questioned Woolfenden in person concerning the ambiguous locality of this first murre. He told me

that Langridge explained to him that the bird was found on Jupiter Island north of Jupiter Inlet “definitely in Palm Beach County.” The only north-south highway on the barrier beach island is called Beach Road, which today bears the designation CR 707 and at one time was SR A1A. Beach Road comes onto the island about 0.5 mi north of Jupiter Inlet and enters Martin County about 1.5 mi north of the Inlet. Therefore, the locality can be stated as Palm Beach County, about 1 mi north of Jupiter Inlet (approximately 26°57'49.2" N, 80°4'41.7" W).

THE 1999 BIRD (ABS SPECIMEN 1388, FOSRC FILE 09-719)

Both the date (29 January 1999) and locality (5 mi north of Jupiter Inlet) given by the Records Committee report (Kratzer 2010) are in error. On the date quoted, I was in Wisconsin. I moved permanently to Florida during the first half of November in 1999. As my field notes reveal, I found the dead murre washed up on the beach on the 29th of that month, and put it in my freezer at home. I subsequently brought the carcass to Archbold Biological Station and gave it to Woolfenden with a written label. He advised me not to bother publishing this record as he had recently published on the state's first specimen, but he would tell the Records Committee of the new specimen. Apparently that never happened as the Committee's report states that the specimen was “discovered” by Bill Pranty.

My original label has not been preserved. The prepared study skin bears a small tag apparently in Woolfenden's writing that provides the specimen number, an identification originally written as *Uria aalge* and changed to *U. lomvia*, and the correct date of “29 Nov 1999.” This tag was apparently attached to the carcass. The frozen specimen was prepared as a study skin at some unspecified later date by T. P. Gnoske, as given on a label of the Field Museum of Natural History (Chicago). This label also gives the correct date so the origin of the Records Committee's erroneous month is unresolved.

The Gnoske label is, however, the Records Committee's source of the locality error, which is given on the tag as “Florida: Palm Beach Co.; Jupiter Island, 5 mi N Jupiter Inlet.” Only the distance is wrong, as that would be in Martin County. In fact, I found the bird on the beach of Jupiter Inlet Colony a short distance north of the Inlet. Perhaps my now-lost label might have read “about 50 m” (i.e., meters) north of the Inlet and that was mistaken by Gnoske as 5.0 mi. In sum, the correct data for the second specimen are 29 November 1999, about 50 m north of Jupiter Inlet, Palm Beach County (approximately 26°56'42.8" N, 80°4'16.1" W).

Ironically, neither of the first two Florida specimens of Thick-billed Murre is actually from Martin County, but rather both come from Palm Beach County within a mile of one another and 7 yr apart almost to the day. The erroneous date and places corrected here serve to show how easily scientific data can be corrupted and how fragile facts are. If I were not still living a dozen years after the age my father died, and if I had not read the Records Committee's most recent report, the errors in it might never have been corrected.

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