

NOTES ON UNUSUAL AND RARE BIRDS OF ST. CROIX

CHARLES F. LECK

Department of Zoology
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903

During the past several years I have engaged in surveys of the birds of St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. The 82 square mile island is arid in the east (20 inches rain/year) but moderately wet (80 inches rain/year) in the higher northwest. There is a concomitant vegetation gradient, from cactus/*Acacia*/scrub to deciduous forest. The maximum elevation is 1165 ft. (Mt. Eagle). With each visit I tried to explore as much of the island as possible in my daily field work. Observation periods were: 28 July–5 August 1970; 12 August–25 August 1971; 22 December–5 January 1972, 18 June–25 July 1972; 21 December–3 January 1973, and 13 June–26 June 1973. These trips included ornithological collecting and research, and teaching with the West Indies Laboratory (Fairleigh-Dickinson University). All records are my own unless otherwise indicated. The nomenclature follows that of Bond (Birds of the West Indies, 2nd ed., Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1971).

Egretta thula. Snowy Egret. This species was formerly considered a rare resident of the Virgin Islands, but is now recorded regularly at salt-water lagoons throughout the year with a daily maximum of seven.

Nycticorax nycticorax. Black-crowned Night Heron. This rare resident is still reported as a nonbreeder by the caretaker of the Salt River Rookery (1972) at Sugar Bay, property of the Nature Conservancy.

Anas bahamensis. White-cheeked Pintail. This bird has been extirpated through much of its range by hunting. It was recorded in small numbers during both summer and winter (maximum of 23 on Buccaneer Pond, 1972).

Pandion haliaetus. Osprey. While usually a migrant, a summer pair was present in mangroves of the southwest coast during the entire summer of 1972. Interestingly, the birds were of the continental race, *P. h. carolinensis*.

Falco peregrinus. Peregrine Falcon. With almost no recent records, it is of interest that I saw one flying along the north coast near Christiansted on 5 January 1972.

Tringa solitaria. Solitary Sandpiper. One bird at West Pond provided an unusual winter record, 24 December 1972.

Calidris fuscicollis. White-rumped Sandpiper. Described as a rare migrant; one at Great Pond, 13 August 1971.

Micropalama himantopus. Stilt Sandpiper. While considered a rare migrant, this species was actually found to be a regular transient and winter resident with a daily maximum of 62 (late summer 1970 and 1971, winter 1971 and 1972).

Crocethia alba. Sanderling. Rare migrant; five observed at Grape Tree Beach (22 August 1971), with singles at West Pond (13 July 1972) and Lime-tree Bay (26 December 1972).

Gelochelidon nilotica. Gull-billed Tern. This tern was first reported from St. Croix in 1954. I recorded it regularly in August (1970 and 1971) and July (1972) from West Pond and Great Pond, with a daily maximum of seven.

Sterna dougallii. Roseate Tern. First record for St. Croix. One bird was found at a Least Tern colony on West Point, 13 July 1972 (searched for in 1973 but not recorded).

Thalasseus sandvicensis. Sandwich Tern. First record for St. Croix. A maximum of five were seen well with Royal Terns at West Pond in 1971 (13, 17, and 22 August).

Anous stolidus. Brown Noddy. First record for St. Croix. Seen well and photographed on a seawall near Fredericksted, May 1973, by Dr. Richard Philibosian.

Chaetura sp. Swifts sp. Small swifts were reported in December 1968 at Fredericksted by Mr. Kim Eckert. They were probably the accidental Short-tailed Swift (*Chaetura brachyura*) that occasionally appears in Puerto Rico and was once reported from St. Croix.

Hirundo rustica. Barn Swallow. The latest West Indian date for this winter resident was extended to 19 June (1973), with two birds near Fredericksted.

Protonotaria citrea. Prothonotary Warbler. This rare winter visitor may be more common than previously reported; two were found in mangroves on a December 1972 Christmas count.

Seiurus motacilla. Louisiana Waterthrush. A little-known migrant; one was observed at a fresh water pond on the early date of 20 August 1971.

Further notes: Two introduced species, the Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*) and the Spotted Dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*), have very small local populations that may soon expire. The "extirpated" Puerto Rican Screech Owl (*Otus nudipes*) has been reported recently on the western side of the island by several persons, but verification is needed. The cumulative species list for St. Croix is now 138, 62 of which are North American migrants (Leck, Field checklist of birds of the American Virgin Islands, R. Mason's Tours Inc., Kissimmee, Florida, 1971).

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