

# Three Records of Interest

Ira Joel Abramson et al.

A POSSIBLE THICK-BILLED VIREO (*Vireo crassirostris*) IN THE UNITED STATES.—Though the sight-record of a possible Thick-billed Vireo in southern Florida was mentioned in Audubon Field Notes (15: 3, 1961) no complete account of this observation has previously been published.

On February 4, 1961, while on a field trip with H.P. Langridge on Hypoluxo Island, Florida, an unusual vireo was observed. It was immediately recognizable as a vireo, but it was obvious that it was none of the species usually found in Florida. The bird was quite tame and permitted close observation for over twenty minutes from various angles and distances as close as 5 feet. Furthermore, it sang repeatedly during this time.

The American species which this bird most resembled were the White-eyed Vireo, *Vireo griseus*, and the Yellow-throated Vireo, *Vireo flavifrons*, however, unlike either of these, its underparts were entirely yellow. It also had a dark iris. Both observers, thoroughly familiar with the song of the White-eyed Vireo, agreed that the song of this bird, though similar, was recognizably different.

Since I always carry *Birds of the West Indies*, Bond, with me in the field in Florida, I was able to read the descriptions of all vireos included in this book and compare them with the bird still in view. The bird fit exactly the description of the Thick-billed Vireo. I have subsequently examined specimens of the Thick-billed Vireo and noted them to be identical in appearance with the bird observed on Hypoluxo Island.

The bird was also seen on the following day in the same location by Mrs. Roberta Knight, who has also had considerable experience in Florida.

I consider the following facts persuasive:

1) All observers who saw the bird had had at least several years of experience and were thoroughly familiar with the vireos found in Florida. In addition, I have seen every species of vireo recorded within the United States.

2) The bird was well seen and heard by all observers, and all are in agreement regarding the description.

3) The bird was identical to the description in Bond and to specimens of the Thick-billed Vireo I subsequently examined in the United States National Museum.

4) Several easterly storms had occurred in preceding months which might have brought the

bird to Florida. Hurricane *Donna* September 11, 1961 was followed by records of West Indian species. (i.e. Black-faced Grassquit, Bridled Tern, and other pelagics. See Audubon Field Notes, Vol. 15, 1, 1961, for further details.) Subsequent easterly storms had occurred in southern Florida, including one particularly vigorous storm as close as January 10, 1961, during which I had observed over 100 Gannets blown ashore.

5) The Thick-billed Vireo is the species whose range brings it closest to the area where it was observed. The distance from Hypoluxo Island, Florida to the Bahama Islands where it is resident is about 43 miles.

Though accorded specific rank by Bond, it is regarded by Hellmayr as a race of *V. griseus*. Regardless of which view is correct, it is recognizably distinct from races of *V. griseus* found in the United States.

The observation of a recognizable species in the United States only 43 miles outside of its range should be of interest and alert ornithologists to the possibility of future occurrences.—Ira Joel Abramson, 12550 Biscayne Blvd., North Miami, Florida 33161.

FIRST RECORD OF BLUE-WINGED WARBLER FOR HISPANIOLA.—On January 3, 1974, while visiting the Dominican Republic, Abramson and Weiss encountered a Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora pinus*) in a patch of second growth woodland 3 kilometers north of the village of Hatillo, Distrito Federal. The bird behaved in typical warbler fashion hopping from branch to branch about 15 feet from the observers who viewed it with 9 and 10x binoculars. All field marks, including the generally yellow color, black eye streak and blue-gray wings with two white wing bars, were noted. Both of the observers have been studying birds for over thirty years, during which time they have lived in areas where the species breeds and have thorough familiarity with it.

Review of the literature did not indicate a prior record for Hispaniola. Correspondence with Dr. James Bond likewise revealed that he had no knowledge of any prior records. After corresponding with Annabelle Dod, a naturalist who works in the New Museum of Natural History in Santo Domingo, we learned that on January 5, she saw two Blue-winged Warblers in the vicinity of Medina, near the village of Enriquillo, which

were the first that she had seen in 10 years of residence in the Dominican Republic. The birds were seen again on January 17.

The occurrence of the species is not unexpected since it has been observed on at least two occasions as far east as Puerto Rico (personal communication James Bond).—Ira Joel Abramson, 12550 Biscayne Blvd., North Miami, Florida, 33161, William J. Weiss, Jr., 602 Mountain Road, Kinnelon, New Jersey 07405, Annabelle Dod, Apartado 1053, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.



**TRANS-ATLANTIC VOYAGE OF WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS (*Loxia leucoptera*).**—A non-ornithologist friend of mine described some birds he had seen and photographed aboard ship during a trans-Atlantic ocean voyage. The two birds, one in adult and the other in juvenile plumage, were first noted on the morning of October 14, 1971 shortly after ship passed south of Newfoundland, and last noted on October 19, 1971 when the ship docked at Cobh, Ireland.

The photographs were examined by Dr. Harrison B. Tordoff of the University of Minnesota, who felt that the juvenile had typical White-winged Crossbill plumage, with sharper streaking, broad white wingbars, white on tertials and slim bill, which are diagnostic of the species. Although white wing bars were not conspicuous in the male, other features including the pink body plumage, slim bill, black wings, tails and scapular area and white spotting on tertials were diagnostic.

Such an observation arouses speculation regarding the origin and distribution of some trans-oceanic accidentals and also of disjunct populations, such as the White-winged Crossbills of Hispaniola. While the latter could not have been carried by ship, floating objects in favorable currents may have played a role in the spread of

some species for which this mechanism has never been suspected.—Ira Joel Abramson, 12550 Biscayne Boulevard, North Miami, Florida 33161.

That birds hitchhike on ships at sea is well-known. An instance was that of a juvenile Northern Oriole banded in a recent August on Nantucket Island, Mass., which turned up that October on a ship bound from Montreal to Lisbon, Portugal, as the ship was moving down the Saint Lawrence River. A passenger captured and fed the oriole aboard ship, and upon arrival in Portugal, carried it by car to the outskirts of the city, where it was released in good condition. Perhaps fortunately, no Portuguese birder has yet claimed a new species for the European list.—Ed.

## Communications

To The Editor:

In *Am. Birds* 28:73(1974) Frances Williams reports for the Southern Great Plains Region that:

“This fall observers in the high rainfall area of Nacogdoches discovered their sewage ponds and added a new bird to the state list! A ♀ *Long-tailed Jaeger* was collected Sept. 5. There had been a previous sight record in the state but this was the first specimen.”

I would like to point out that the previous Texas record was definitely more than a sight record, although it is true that the bird was not collected. I photographed an immature Long-tailed Jaeger at Gilchrist, Texas, on Nov. 28, 1971. Several color pictures, with the bird both sitting and in flight, were obtained and show all of the essential field marks. Many experienced birders were present at that time, and many others have examined the photographs.

One of these photographs, reproduced from the color slide and captioned “first authenticated state record,” appeared in *Am. Birds* 26:25, (1971). I believe this documentation to be sufficient to establish a state record without the necessity of collecting the specimen.

The Nacogdoches bird may be “. . .the first specimen,” but it is not “. . .a new bird to the state list!”

—John L. Tveten, Baytown, Texas.