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## Summer Status of the Common Snipe in Florida

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**Red-tailed Hawk preys on juvenile gopher tortoise.** — Information on predators of the gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) is scanty, with only snakes, dogs, and man reported (Douglass and Winegarner 1977, J. Herpetol. 11: 236-238). Therefore the following evidence of apparent predation on this species by the Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) seems worthy of note.

On 20 April 1977 we found a fresh, empty shell of a juvenile gopher tortoise beneath an active Red-tailed Hawk nest that was 15 m up in an isolated, dead slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) in scrubby flatwoods immediately west of the Archbold Biological Station in Highlands County, Florida. When found on 14 April, the nest contained two downy young; both eventually fledged. Based on the length (70 mm) and width (57 mm) of the slightly shrivelled, but otherwise intact, plastron, and the presence of umbilical scars, the tortoise was a yearling. The posterior end of the carapace and a strip along the spine extending into the nuchal region had been torn away. The type of damage, nature of the shrivelling, and the fact that the scutes were torn rather than flaked off suggest that the shell had been ripped open while fresh. The remains of the shell gave no indication of injury prior to capture by the hawk. Therefore we suspect the tortoise was taken alive by the hawk.

Bent (1937, Bull. U. S. Natl. Mus. 167) lists turtles among the miscellaneous food items of the Red-tailed Hawk, and Woodbury and Hardy (1948, Ecol. Monogr. 18: 145-200) and Ernst and Barbour (1972, Turtles of the United States, Lexington, Univ. Presses of Kentucky) suspect that hawks prey on *Gopherus agassizii* of southwestern North America. We thank John F. Douglass for his assistance in preparing this note. — JOHN W. FITZPATRICK, *Division of Birds, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois 60605* and GLEN E. WOOLFENDEN, *Department of Biology, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida 33620*.

**Aggression between an American Kestrel and Cattle Egret.** — On 3 January 1976 a wintering male American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) was observed perched on a power line near Pepper State Recreation Area on Highway A-1-A north of Ft. Pierce, St. Lucie County, Florida. On the road shoulder below, several Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*) were feeding on insects, chiefly grasshoppers. Suddenly, the kestrel descended from his perch and struck one of the egrets on the head and then returned to the powerline several hundred feet down the road.

Although this is the first time we have observed aggressive behavior of a kestrel against a Cattle Egret, it is not totally unexpected because we have seen the kestrel chase other food competitors, e.g., Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) and other kestrels, from its winter territory (Mills 1975, Wilson Bull. 87: 241-247), and it does not hesitate to harry larger birds of prey such as Red-tailed (*Buteo jamaicensis*) and Red-shouldered (*B. lineatus*) hawks (Bent 1938, U. S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 170: 115; Brown and Amadon 1968, Eagles, hawks and falcons of the World, New York, McGraw-Hill, p. 774). — RICHARD E. ROBERTS, *Division of Recreation and Parks, Florida Department of Natural Resources, P. O. Box 8, Hobe Sound, Florida 33455*, and HERBERT W. KALE II, *Florida Audubon Society, 35-1st Court SW, Vero Beach, Florida 32960*.

**Summer status of the Common Snipe in Florida.** — In Florida the Common Snipe (*Capella gallinago*) has been considered a common to abundant resident from September to April, with rare occurrences in May and August (Sprunt 1954). However, during the last decade, there have been infrequent records of individuals, as cited below, which suggest a reassessment of the summer status of the species: 18 June 1968, Lake Kissimmee (Osceola Co.), (Stevenson 1968); 9 July 1970, Lake Lafayette (Leon Co.), (Ogden 1970); 6 June 1972, Lake Alice (Alachua Co.), (Ogden 1972); 2 June 1974, Paynes Prairie (Alachua Co.), (Ogden 1974); 20 July 1974, Crestview (Okaloosa Co.), (Kennedy 1974). Also, there are additional unpublished June/July records from Paynes Prairie (Stephen A. Nesbitt pers. comm.).

A more recent and noteworthy record of the Common Snipe in Florida is one I flushed twice from a drainage ditch west of Tallahassee (Leon Co.) on 15 June 1977. At the same place during 25-28 June and once on 6 July, a snipe, probably the same bird, was flushed seven more times, including once by John R. Patterson (pers. comm.). The bird was wary and surprisingly silent; it flushed at about 30 m and only once gave its typical alarm note. The presence of a snipe for such an extended period (22 days) in June and July is unprecedented for Florida.

North of Florida the southernmost June-July records are more than 300 miles away in the Tennessee Valley of Alabama (Imhof 1976). The lack of any summer records in southern Alabama and Georgia may be partly attributed to the lack of field observers in those areas as compared to Florida.

The above records indicate that in Florida the Common Snipe is probably extremely rare in summer, and perhaps to be encountered more frequently in the northern part of the state.

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**First Florida specimen of the Lesser Nighthawk.** — On the afternoon of 19 May 1976, while observing migrants on St. George Island, Franklin County, Florida, I discovered a Lesser Nighthawk (*Chordeiles acutipennis*) perched lengthwise on a pine limb in a dense hammock near Rattlesnake Cove. The bird appeared smaller and browner than the Common Nighthawks (*C. minor*) that were abundant on the island. When the bird flew, the white wing bars seemed unusually close to the wing tips, and I collected it (specimen no. 3482, Tall Timbers Research Station). The bird was a male, with total length 220 mm, wing chord 176 mm and weight 47.0 g, and was not fat. Eugene Eisenmann (American Museum of Natural History) identified the specimen as *C. a. texensis*.

The only previous record of the Lesser Nighthawk in Florida is from the Dry Tortugas where 3-10 individuals were seen daily from 8-17 May 1966 (Cunningham 1966, Aud. Field Notes 20: 497-499). In Louisiana, this species has been recorded from the Gulf coast as a spring (7 April-23 May) and fall (8 Sept.-9 Jan.) migrant occurring in flocks or as single individuals (Lowery 1974, Louisiana birds, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State Univ. Press). One record for this species exists from Bermuda (Wingate 1973, Check list and guide to the birds of Bermuda, Hamilton, Bermuda, Island Press), a female found dying on 3 December 1965 (D. Wingate, in litt.).

More recently in Florida, another Lesser Nighthawk was seen well on 5 November 1977 by Bonnie Carter and the author at almost the exact location of the 19 May 1976 individual. — JAMES M. STEVENSON, 1409 Branch Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32303.