
January 1980

Bahama Mockingbird Sighting on Elliott Key, Florida

Florida Field Naturalist

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Recommended Citation

Florida Field Naturalist (1980) "Bahama Mockingbird Sighting on Elliott Key, Florida," *Florida Field Naturalist*. Vol. 8 : Iss. 1 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn/vol8/iss1/15>

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Fla. Field Nat. 8(1): 31-32, 1980

Bahama Mockingbird sighting on Elliott Key, Florida.—At 1430 on 22 April 1979, Russell tentatively identified a Bahama Mockingbird (*Mimus gundlachii*) in the vicinity of the ranger station on Elliott Key, Key Biscayne National Monument, Dade County, Florida. On 24 April 1979, Bass and Sykes found the bird in the same locality at 1040 and again at 1300. The habitat was West Indian forest (hammock) edge near a disturbed area of mowed lawn, cabins and a small electrical generating plant. The weather for several weeks previous featured easterly to southeasterly winds and nearly complete absence of storm activity and frontal patterns.

Russell was first attracted to the bird by a song reminiscent of a Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*) but softer, more languid, and without the dramatic changes in volume. The song resembled a whisper-type song and was audible for about 10 m as the bird sang from the interior of a shrub. At no time did the mockingbird mimic other birds' songs as is typical of the Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*). Phrase patterns in the song were generally repeated four or five times.

Russell's first impression was of a bird larger than a Mockingbird and more thrasher-like in appearance and behavior. He saw no white wing patches even when the wings were open as the bird jumped from branch to branch, but did note rather faint, narrow white wing bars. The bird appeared gray to gray-brown with brownish tones on the back and neck and streaked with brown on the flanks. No white was seen on the tail but the tail was never fanned. A small light area was noticeable on the undertail coverts. The bird was somewhat retiring and deliberate in its movements. Russell watched it for about five minutes until it disappeared into the vegetation, but never obtained a satisfactory view of it. The weather at the time of observation was sunny, 28°C, winds east at 23 km per hour, freshening to 30 km per hour by afternoon.

On 24 April, Bass and Sykes studied the bird for three to five minutes on two occasions. It was seen feeding on the ground, and perched from just above ground to the lower part of the canopy (about 8-10 m). The bird tended to stay within the cover of the hammock forest. This is in sharp contrast with the usual conspicuousness of the Mockingbird in southeast Florida. The following notes were taken at the time: "Song soft and of Brown Thrasher quality. Upper parts were gray washed with brownish. Brownish cast quite apparent. Faint brown streaking on the crown, hind neck, and upper back. A light mark was faintly visible on the posterior of the auricular region. Faint superciliary streak. Distinct medium-dark streaking on the sides. Very faint whitish wing bars. No white in wings when bird flew. Fanned its tail when taking flight and on long hops. White seen in the tip of the outer two or three rectrices only. Under parts grayish. Iris yellow-orange. Bill and legs black. Appeared slightly larger than Mockingbird. Behaved like a thrasher while on the ground. Fed on fruits of the potato tree, *Solanum erianthum*."

The bird was not found during an intensive search by 10 observers for most of the day on 27 April at the same locality on Elliott Key where it had been found on 22 and 24 April (H. P. Langridge pers. comm.).

The Bahama Mockingbird is a fairly common, often abundant, resident throughout most of the Bahamas, except Great Abaco where apparently absent, (Brudenell-Bruce 1975, The birds of the Bahamas, New York, Taplinger Publ. Co.) and on some of the northern Cuban cays. Brudenell-Bruce (1975) describes the song as "more melodious and less strident" than the Mockingbird but also mentions a soft subsong often heard in winter. It is this latter type of song that we apparently heard. Brudenell-Bruce (1975) describes its Bahamas habitat as "Coppice and scrub of all sorts, including very arid places and small cays." This is quite similar to the habitat on Elliott Key.

This is the third and northernmost report of the Bahama Mockingbird for Florida. The first report was a bird seen 3 May 1973 at East Key, Dry Tortugas, by Fran and Paul Buckley (Kale 1973, Amer. Birds 27: 763), and the second report was a bird on Garden Key, Dry Tortugas, 17 May 1976, seen and photographed by Scott Robinson and Kenn Kaufmann (Kale 1976, Amer. Birds 30: 830-831). Of added interest is a specimen collected on 23 April 1968 on Cay Sal (165 km SSW of Elliott Key) in the Cay Sal Banks where the species is not known to breed (Buden and Schwartz 1968, Quart. J. Florida Acad. Sci. 31: 290-320). With four

records now of the Bahama Mockingbird in the region of the Florida Straits in the period from 22 April to 17 May, Paterson's (1972, *Birds of the Bahamas*, Brattleboro, Vermont, Stephen Green Press) suggestion that the species may be partially migratory seems likely.

We wish to thank William B. Robertson, Jr., for helpful suggestions in the drafting of this note.—ROBERT P. RUSSELL, JR. AND ORON L. BASS, JR., *South Florida Research Center, Everglades National Park, Homestead, Florida 33030*, and PAUL W. SYKES, JR., *4195 Maurice Drive, Delray Beach, Florida 33445*.

NOTES AND NEWS

Samuel A. Grimes, first Honorary Member of the Florida Ornithological Society.—Sam Grimes is an outstanding ornithologist. For more than 60 years he has contributed to the study of birds with perceptive notes and articles, superb photographs, excellent recordings of songs, and patient guiding of younger naturalists. Sam's work in Florida began when he moved to Jacksonville as a boy in 1917. His earliest article in the *Florida Naturalist* was in 1928, and he started the Jacksonville Christmas Bird Count in 1929 as the sole observer—on bicycle. Sam was a pioneer bird photographer. His photographs are scattered throughout the *Bent Life Histories* series and they have graced the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, *World Book Encyclopedia*, *National Geographic Magazine*, most North American bird journals, and many state bird books. He published *Bird Lore's* first color photograph of a bird, a Roseate Spoonbill with young, in the Sept.-Oct., 1937 issue, and produced his own book in 1958: *An Album of Southern Birds*. For more than a decade Sam's bird photos provided most of the *Florida Naturalist* covers until the magazine changed its format in the early 1960's. Field work connected with his photographic interests resulted in many important records listed in Sprunt's *Florida Bird Life*. With Glen Chandler he found the first known Cattle Egret nest in North America at Kings Bar Rookery, Lake Okeechobee, on 5 May 1953. Because of his contributions to ornithology, he was voted an Elective Member of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1951. He has belonged to that organization since 1925, and he joined the Wilson Ornithological Society in 1924. He has long been associated with the National Audubon Society and its Florida chapter, and is a Charter Member of the Florida Ornithological Society. Sam is not a professional ornithologist: his business is engraving and printing and his expertise in that field is lent to many for the preparation of photographs and maps for papers and books on birds. Also, for years most of the naturalists in the Southeast have found out what day it was by consulting a Sam Grimes bird-photo calendar. Recently, his interest in Mockingbird song has resulted in his phonograph album *The Vocally Versatile Mockingbird*. Hours of painstaking field work and careful editing are represented in that instructive work. In 1958, Sam became a charter member of the Board of Directors of Tall Timbers Research Station and he was recently elected president of the Board. He always has time for those who need his help or advice. He is a real friend and a true gentleman. His enjoyment and fascination with birds benefits us all.—ROBERT L. CRAWFORD.

Report on the 1979 spring and June meetings.—Bushes at the shell mound, Dauphin Island, Alabama, were decorated like Christmas trees for the joint FOS/AOS meeting on 27-29 April 1979. The migrants timed their arrival to coincide with ours and the birding was better than any we have had for years. We did manage to drag ourselves indoors long enough to elect William D. Courser, President; Brooks H. Atherton, Vice-President; Caroline H. Coleman, Treasurer; and Barbara C. Kittleson, Secretary. Rebecca Payne, Wally George and Stephen A. Nesbitt were elected to the Board of Directors for 1979-1981.

At a special meeting in Gainesville, 7 June 1979, the by-laws were amended to comply with the Internal Revenue Service code for non-profit organizations.

Other items of business included further recognition for Florida Audubon Society in appreciation of all the help they have given us by voting them a gratis subscription to the *FFN*; a resolution of thanks to David W. Johnston for his services as president of the FOS; a resolution of thanks to the AOS for hosting our meeting; and the unanimous election of Samuel A. Grimes as Honorary Member of the FOS.

The skin quiz, prepared by W. Wilson Baker, was won by Lucy A. Duncan.—Barbara C. Kittleson, Secretary.