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Spin Walking by a Wilson's Phalarope

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If the resident crane population in Florida is about 3000 breeding birds (Williams 1978), the population in extreme southern Florida is relatively miniscule, less than 1%. Additional birds occur in southern Florida in the northern Big Cypress Swamp and northern Everglades (Thompson 1970, Auk 87: 492-502), but by far most cranes reside farther north in the state (Walkinshaw 1976, Proc. Int. Crane Workshop 1:1-18). The cranes of southern Florida may show ecological affinities to the Sandhill Cranes of Cuba and so may merit comparative study. The Sandhill Crane can be considered a rare resident of extreme southern Florida, where a minimum of about 2 dozen occur in Everglades National Park and the southern Big Cypress National Preserve, hopefully protected there by continued habitat preservation.

I thank Oron L. Bass, Jr., who flew the Cape Sable Sparrow census, and Paula C. Frohring, who participated in subsequent censuses. I appreciate the advice of Stephen A. Nesbitt, William B. Robertson, Jr. and Lawrence Walkinshaw who reviewed and commented on the manuscript. I also thank Dottie Anderson and Dee Childs for typing.—JAMES A. KUSHLAN, *National Park Service, South Florida Research Center, P.O. 279, Homestead, Florida 33030.*

Fla. Field Nat. 10(4): 74-76, 1982.

Sandhill Cranes prey on amphiumas.—On Sunday morning 6 December 1981, I stopped along the park drive in Myakka River State Park to obtain photographic slides of a Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) family group feeding. Two adults and a young sandhill of the previous Spring were actively foraging in a marsh.

The cranes flipped vegetation aside and rapidly probed the mud. After watching this behavior for approximately ten minutes I observed one crane catch a two-toed amphiuma (*Amphiuma means*) about 0.5 m long. It appeared to stab the amphibian with its bill several times and shook it vigorously prior to swallowing it. Intrigued, I continued to watch the cranes feed and in the next one-half hour observed them catch four more amphiumas and what appeared to be a striped crayfish snake (*Regina alleni*).

A cursory search of the literature on Sandhill Cranes did not provide descriptions of similar feeding behavior. Much smaller vertebrates, invertebrates, and plant materials are generally described as the primary fare of these birds. ROBERT L. DYE, *Division of Recreation and Parks, Department of Natural Resources, Myakka River State Park, Rt. 1, Box 72, Sarasota, Florida 33583.*

Fla. Field Nat. 10(4): 76, 1982.

Spin walking by a Wilson's Phalarope.—On 11 July 1981 at approximately 1000 EDT Helen and William Dowling and I were observing shorebirds at Duda Farms near Belle Glade, Palm Beach County, Florida. We were in a draining field that had no vegetation and very little water. The behavior of a Wilson's Phalarope (*Steganopus tricolor*) in winter plumage attracted our attention. For three minutes this phalarope simulated the whirling motion that phalaropes make in water during feeding, but with no water nearby. It whirled around and around in the same direction and in one spot on damp muck. Propelling itself by using its feet in a stamping motion, this spinning bird held its body well off the surface of the ground. We noticed no feeding during or after this whirling action. As no other Wilson's Phalarope was in the immediate area, this whirling bird was not interacting with another phalarope.

Hohn (1967) unequivocally stated that spinning is a feeding motion. The purpose of spinning on water is to concentrate and draw food toward the bird (J. P. Hailman pers. comm.). So "spin walking", or whirling on land, has no feeding function, and it seems to be an inherent behavior pattern (Johns 1969).

Bent (1927), Matthiessen (1967), and Johnsgard (1981) did not report whirling on land by Wilson's Phalaropes, but Hohn (1967) described young birds in captivity spin walking while feeding in a very shallow dish of water and wrote that Dr. Pfeiffer of Montana State University had seen spin walking by an adult captive Wilson's Phalarope. Johns (1969) also observed spin walking by incubator-reared young beside a dish of shallow water containing food. Thus although spin walking during feeding has been observed in captive birds under confined conditions, our viewing appears to be the only observation of a wild bird spin walking.

I thank Paul Sykes, Gloria Hunter, and Jack Hailman for their help with this manuscript.

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Scrub Jay in Osceola County, Florida.—The Scrub Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) in Florida is associated closely with scrub habitat. In many areas of Florida, this habitat is disappearing rapidly because of residential and commercial developments. Consequently, the Scrub Jay has diminished in numbers or disappeared from many localities as a result of destruction of scrub. Sprunt's (1954, Florida bird life, Coward McCann, Inc., New York) map of the Scrub Jay's range shows it absent in the Kissimmee Prairie area and south to the extreme southern tip of the peninsula. On 4 January 1974 a dead adult male Scrub Jay was found by Bruce Anderson on U.S. Highway 441, about 3.2 km S of Yeehaw Junction, Osceola County, Florida. Another jay perched near the road shoulder gave alarm calls, evidently in response to the dead male. The specimen is a skin in the bird collection (UCF 1681) in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Central Florida, Orlando. To my knowledge these individuals are the first recorded for this locality.

The collection site apparently is not an area stressed by development. One wonders if the species has always been in this area, omitted from the range map by Sprunt, and heretofore not looked for. Similar Pleistocene beach areas may exist elsewhere in Florida, and it may prove worthwhile for such sites to be thoroughly investigated.