
January 1986

Dolphin Interferes with Loon

Florida Field Naturalist

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn>

Recommended Citation

Florida Field Naturalist (1986) "Dolphin Interferes with Loon," *Florida Field Naturalist*. Vol. 14 : Iss. 4 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn/vol14/iss4/5>

This Note is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Field Naturalist by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usf.edu.

Dolphin interferes with loon.—On 6 December 1985, my group was watching a Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) fishing close to shore off the northwest point of Mullet Key, Florida. A bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) appeared and began to play with or tease the loon. When the loon dove, the dolphin would push it to the surface with its nose, sometimes lifting the loon clear of the water. Several episodes took place over a period of about four minutes. Suddenly the loon raised its body to a vertical position, flapped its wings, and called loudly, an unusual occurrence in Florida. The dolphin departed, and the loon continued fishing.—**Oliver H. Hewitt**, 24437 Harbor View Road, Charlotte Harbor, Florida 33950.

Florida Field Naturalist 14: 100, 1986.

Florida Grasshopper Sparrow breeding distribution and abundance in 1984.—Early reports, although vague, indicate a relatively large and widespread population of Florida Grasshopper Sparrows (*Ammodramus savannarum floridanus*) existed in central peninsular Florida (sources cited in Delany et al. 1985). A review of information on Florida Grasshopper Sparrow egg data slips in museum collections revealed additional locations (McNair 1986). More recent searches have failed to locate Grasshopper Sparrows or revealed only isolated pairs or individuals (Stevenson 1968, 1978; Ogden 1971). Because of an apparent population decline, the subspecies was classified as endangered by the State of Florida (Kale 1978). Extensive surveys between 1980-82 located only 93 Florida Grasshopper Sparrows at seven sites (Delany et al. 1985). The sparrow was found at only one of its former locations, suggesting further reduction in both abundance and occupied range. Because of a decline in abundance, contraction of range, and loss of habitat, the Florida Grasshopper Sparrow is being considered for Federal listing as endangered (Federal Register Vol. 50, No. 243). As part of a status survey, additional searches were conducted in 1984 to gather more information on the sparrow's distribution and abundance. This paper reports 1984 survey results.

Surveys were conducted in the dry prairie region of south-central Florida within the known range of the Florida Grasshopper Sparrow. Eight unsearched areas identified as potential Grasshopper Sparrow habitat in 1982 and six previously searched areas (Delany et al. 1985) were surveyed between 30 April and 30 June 1984. Surveys were conducted between sunrise and 1300, by one to three individuals who walked transects at 50-m intervals, stopping frequently to make visual and auditory observations. Eighty-six man-hours were spent walking transects in potential Grasshopper Sparrow habitat. Where sparrows were found, information was obtained on population size and current land management practices. We watched singing males in order to detect the presence of non-singing birds, probably females, and juveniles nearby. Information pertaining to recent and planned activities at other occupied areas also was obtained.

The survey in 1984 located 109 Florida Grasshopper Sparrows at six former locations and one new site (Figure 1, Table 1). At all sites except for Avon Park (site 7), the sampling effort was similar to previous surveys. Our lower count for the United States Air Force (USAF) bombing range at Avon Park was caused by reduced sampling effort. This site was intensively searched in 1982.

Thirty-two sparrows (site 8) were found at a former location 24 km northwest of Basinger, Okeechobee County (Howell 1932), that was unoccupied in 1982 (Delany et al. 1985). The new site (4) may be the location where W. H. Nicholson collected eggs on 13 May 1947, near Highway 60 in Osceola County (McNair 1986). Present land use trends at some sites