
January 1991

Winter Report: December 1990 - February 1991

FOS Field Observation Committee

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Recommended Citation

FOS Field Observation Committee (1991) "Winter Report: December 1990 - February 1991," *Florida Field Naturalist*. Vol. 19 : Iss. 3 , Article 10.

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FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Fla. Field Nat. 19(3): 90-95, 1991.

DECEMBER 1990 - FEBRUARY 1991

WINTER REPORT: ~~MARCH-MAY 1991~~

FOS FIELD OBSERVATION COMMITTEE

Compiler: *Jim Cox, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission*
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The observations listed here are based on unsubstantiated accounts of rare birds and unusual numbers of birds reported to the FOS Field Observation Committee (Linda Cooper, Jim Cox, Peggy Powell, Bill Pranty, and Wayne Hoffman). The observations are not subjected to a thorough evaluation and formal peer review and thus must be considered tentative pending further review. We encourage observers to report their sightings to the FOS Records Committee (c/o Jocelyn L. Baker, Secretary, 851 N. Surf Rd., #302, Hollywood, FL 33019) for formal consideration. We also encourage observers to prepare formal notes and articles to describe extremely rare and unusual sightings.

Several conventions have been adopted in this report to save space. A 3-character set of alpha-numeric initials is used to identify contributors within the accounts of individual species. A complete list of observers and corresponding initials is provided at the end of this report. The list of observers is organized alpha-numerically using the 3-character initials. Names of observers for this report are drawn from a master list containing >150 names, and this procedure may result in occasional gaps in the alpha-numeric sequence (e.g., the listing of BB2 without a previous BB1). Another convention adopted is the use of common names exclusively. Persons interested in scientific names should consult AOU (1983. Checklist of the North American Birds, 6th ed., Washington, D.C., Am. Ornithol. Union) and revisions published in *The Auk*. Other abbreviations used occasionally are: imm., immature; m. obs., many observers; NP, national park; NS, national seashore; NWR, national wildlife refuge; SP, state park; SRA, state recreation area; and S, W, N, E etc. for compass headings. Unless necessary to clarify the location, the counties of named locations are omitted.

The FOS Field Observations Committee would like to thank everyone who contributed information. Please bring any unusual observations not reported here to the attention of Jim Cox, compiler.

SUMMARY OF THE WINTER SEASON

The winter of 1990-1991 was characterized by generally mild temperatures throughout the state and very heavy rainfall late in the season in northern counties. The mild temperatures likely contributed to the diversity of late reports of summer breeders and fall migrants throughout the state. In contrast, several southerly records noted in the Fall report for wintering songbirds continued on into winter (e.g., Brewer's Blackbird, Cedar Waxwing, Golden-crowned Kinglet). Increased wintering sparrow abundances were reported in central Florida where habitat has increased as a result of freeze-killed orange groves now containing greater amounts of grass and shrub.

There were several notable concentrations and unusual sightings of coastal and pelagic species. Among the more interesting of these were two reports of Black-legged Kittiwake, high numbers of Northern Gannets, Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers, and Double-crested Cormorants at various locations, as well as interior records for coastal gulls and Brown

Pelican. Although more than 100 cm of rain fell across north Florida in January and February creating extensive flooding, there were no noticeable effects on birds reported as a result of these downpours. Finally, wintering duck populations were generally reported as low again this winter.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

- RED-THROATED LOON: 2 at St. Marks NWR on 16 Dec (DS1); imm. in Port Richey (Pasco Co.) on 27 Dec (BP1, DG1, PY1, m. obs.), first co. record since 1888; 1 at Merritt Island NWR from 10 to 16 Dec (m. obs.).
- COMMON LOON: 300 off Honeymoon Island SRA (Pinellas Co.) on 6 Feb. (SB1, MT1); high number.
- EARED GREBE: 1 off Crystal Beach (Pinellas Co.) on 17 Jan (SB1, MT1), irregular in area; 4 throughout period at 2 Polk Co. locations (m. obs.).
- BROWN BOOBY: adult off St. George Island (Franklin Co.) on 17 Feb (RW3), flying with imm. Northern Gannets.
- NORTHERN GANNET: hundreds off St. George Island (Franklin Co.) throughout winter (RW3).
- DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT: enormous flock of 25,000+ off Anclote Key (Pasco Co.) on 15 Jan (BP1, PY1).
- BROWN PELICAN: 2 inland records: 1 at Lake Istokpoga (Highlands Co.) on Lake Placid CBC on 23 Dec (GW1, JF2), first count record; injured bird near Lake Jackson (Leon Co.) on 3 Feb (BN2, DE2).
- MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD: 1 at Canaveral NS (Brevard Co.) on 3 Dec (HR1), rare this late.
- GREAT BLUE HERON, white morph: adult in Brandon (Hillsborough Co.) from Aug through 4 Dec (RP1); 1 on nest on Cortez Key (Sarasota Co.) on 8 Jan and 25 Feb (RP1) where a bird has regularly nested since 1982.
- REDDISH EGRET, white morph: 2 reports N of normal range of white morphs: imm. on Three Rooker Bar (Pinellas Co.) on 15 Jan (BP1, PY1, DR2); imm. on Anclote Key (Pasco Co.) on 15 Jan, first co. record of white morph.
- WHITE IBIS: 1,341 on Lakeland CBC on 15 Dec, twice the usual number; RP1 estimates a 90% reduction in the number of breeding pairs at Alafia Banks rookery (Hillsborough Co.): 40,000+ pairs in 1940's, 22,000 in the late 50's, 15,000 in the mid 70's, 6000-10,000 in the mid 80's, and only 4000-5000 pairs presently.
- GLOSSY IBIS: 477 on Lakeland CBC on 15 Dec, twice the usual number.
- GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE: 1 at St. Marks NWR on 1 Jan (DS1); 22 near Lanark Village (Franklin Co.) on 21 Jan (DB3), large number.
- AMERICAN BLACK DUCK: only 1 winter report for NW region (RD1).
- EURASIAN WIDGEON: male at Merritt Island NWR from 13 Dec through 31 Jan (HR1).
- RING-NECKED DUCK: erythristic female at Lake Marion (Polk Co.) on 26 Jan (TP1).
- LESSER SCAUP: decreasing numbers reported for Tampa Bay (RP1) over last 20 years: 60,000-106,000 from 1971-75 and 1977; 8000-20,000 during 1976 and 1978-81; 5000 from 1981-1990. Largest concentration in 1991 was ca. 700 birds.
- GREATER SCAUP: 60 off Turtle Mound (Volusia Co.) on 1 Dec (HR1); 22 at Merritt Island NWR (Brevard Co.) on 12 Jan (m. obs.).
- COMMON GOLDENEYE: female on East Pasco CBC on 26 Dec (LH1, RS2); 1 in Tarpon Springs (Pinellas Co.) on N Pinellas CBC on 22 Dec (*vide* PT3), rare and irregular in Tampa area.
- SURF SCOTER: 1 on Cedar Key CBC (Levy Co.) on 29 Dec (BC2, LC2, DH2, BW1), first count record; 3 in Cedar Key area on 17 Jan (BM3, DH2, BW1).
- COMMON MERGANSER: pair at Kennedy Space Center (Brevard Co.) from 10-15 Dec (*vide* DS3).

- RED-BREASTED MERGANSER: 1 male at IMC mines (Polk Co.) on 16 Feb (m. obs.); male in downtown Lakeland on 21 Feb (TP1), unusual location.
- TURKEY VULTURE: 128 moving SE past Lake Jackson (Leon Co.) on 1 Jan (JC1), notable concentration for area.
- SWALLOW-TAILED KITE: 1 in Lakeland on 30 Jan (JG4), first winter record for area.
- SNAIL KITE: 1 at Lake Istokpoga (Highlands Co.) on 23 Dec (MB2), first winter record for area.
- COOPER'S HAWK: courtship behavior observed early at Melbourne Village (Brevard Co.) on 22 Feb (BH2, SH1), nested in area last year.
- BROAD-WINGED HAWK: early record in Tallahassee on 22 Feb (JC3, KN1); heard and then seen soaring.
- SHORT-TAILED HAWK: light morph at St. Marks NWR on Jan 20 (DE3), near place where 1 was seen last year; dark morph SW of Sebring (Highlands Co.) on 20 Feb (FL1, JF2).
- SWAINSON'S HAWK: 1 on Lake Placid CBC (Highlands Co.) on 23 Dec (BP1, DG1, GW1, GS2); good details provided.
- PEREGRINE FALCON: many reports of 1 in downtown Jacksonville where pair wintered last year.
- CRESTED CARACARA: 1 on Lake Wales CBC (Polk Co.) on 29 Dec, first count record.
- BLACK RAIL: 1 seen at St. Marks NWR on 9 Dec (BN2); 1 heard in Upper Tampa Bay Park (Hillsborough Co.) on N Pinellas CBC on 22 Dec (BP1); 1 heard on offshore key near Cedar Key on 29 Dec (BC2, LC2, DH2, BW2); status unknown in winter.
- SANDHILL CRANE: 6 at St. Marks NWR on 9 Dec (DE2, BN2), unusual number.
- BLACK-NECKED STILT: 35 at McKay Bay (Hillsborough Co.) on 26 Jan (RS2), high number for winter.
- PIPING PLOVER: 233 recorded in Pasco and Pinellas Cos. as part of the annual winter survey conducted on 15, 19 Jan (m. obs., *vide* SB1, JR6); concentrations/unusual sightings were 5 on Anclote Key (Pasco Co.), 59 on Three Rooker Bar (Pinellas Co.), 102 on Honeymoon Island SRA, 12 on Caladesi Island SRA, 19 on N Clearwater Beach, 10 on Sand Key, 19 in Fort DeSoto Park, and 2 on the Sunshine Skyway causeway. Concentrations/unusual sightings elsewhere were: 41 at Lanark Reef (Franklin Co.) on 21 Jan (DB3, RC2); 1 off Shell Mound (Levy Co.) on 2 Feb (JH3, RB2).
- SNOWY PLOVER: 12 at Fort DeSoto Park (Pinellas Co.) on 31 Dec (SB1, MT1), large number for area; 22 at St. George Island SP (Franklin Co.) on 20 Feb (DB3).
- AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER: 850 near Cedar Key (Levy Co.) on 29 Dec (BC2, LC2, DH2, BW1), very large number.
- SOLITARY SANDPIPER: 2 on Lake Placid CBC (Highlands Co.) on 23 Dec (BP1, DG1, GW1, GS2).
- AMERICAN AVOCET: 1 at Buck Island (Duval Co.) on 26 Feb (RL1), unusual.
- LONG-BILLED CURLEW: 1 wintered at Cape San Blas (Gulf Co.) from 27 Dec (SS1) to at least 21 Jan (DS1).
- LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER: 1 at St. Marks NWR on 8 Feb (DE2), few mid-winter reports.
- AMERICAN WOODCOCK: early breeding record (based on lengthy distraction behavior) from SW Jackson Co. on 17 Jan (*vide* RW1).
- CARIBBEAN COOT: 2 on St. Petersburg CBC (Pinellas Co.) on 15 Dec (BP1, DG1, WB1, m. obs.); 1 on Tampa CBC (Hillsborough Co.) on 29 Dec (BP1, DG1, GS2); 1 on Lake Pasadena (Pasco Co.) on 19 Jan (BP1, DG1, DR2).
- LITTLE GULL: first basic plumage bird at Lake Jessup (Seminole Co.) from 31 Dec through mid Jan (TR1, CT2, m. obs.).
- BONAPARTE'S GULL: 300 at Tierra Verde (Pinellas Co.) during a storm on 15 Feb (LA1, BA1), locally high number.
- LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL: 2 (1 first-year, 1 third-year) at Pinellas Co. landfill on 1 Dec (LA1, BA1); rare inland record of adult at Keystone Heights dump (Bradford Co.)

- on 7, 15, and 20 Dec (BB4); first-year bird at Eastpoint landfill (Franklin Co.) on 29 Dec (LA1, BA1); 1 adult, 1 imm. at Wards Bank (Duval Co.) on 6 Feb (BR2).
- GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL: imm. at Keystone Heights Dump (Bradford Co.) on 28 Dec (BB4, JM2), accidental; 4 at Fort DeSoto Park/Sunshine Skyway Causeway (Pinellas Co.) from 8 Jan to 28 Feb (LA1, SD1), good number for the Gulf coast.
- BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE: 2 at St. George Island (Franklin Co.) on 27 Dec (RW3), photo taken of one that lay exhausted on the beach and later died (TM1); 2 in first basic plumage at Sebastian Inlet (Brevard Co.) on 6 Jan (HR1).
- GLAUCOUS GULL: first basic plumage bird at Wards Bank (Duval Co.) on 6 Feb. (BR2).
- PARASITIC JAEGER: 15 at Turtle Mound (Volusia Co.) on 1, 2, Dec (HR1).
- POMARINE JAEGER: 1,717 migrating S past Turtle Mound (Volusia Co.) on 1-3 Dec (HR1).
- ROYAL TERN: 26 at IMC mines (Polk Co.) on 31 Dec (PF1, CG1, BD1, HD1), high co. record.
- EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE: 2 in Ozello (Citrus Co.), throughout period (BS3).
- RINGED TURTLE-DOVE: 1 singing N of Hudson (Pasco Co.) on 2 Feb (BP1, DR2); irregular outside St. Petersburg, but reported annually in Pasco Co. since 1985.
- BLUE-CROWNED PARAKEET: 2 in Dunedin (Pinellas Co.) on 6 Feb (SB1, MT1); second consecutive winter sighting here.
- BLACK-HOODED PARAKEET: 2 N of Dade City (Pasco Co.) since mid-Dec (BP1, DR2), new area for this exotic.
- COCKATIEL: 1 in Crews Lake Park (Pasco Co.) on 20 Jan (DR2); first co. record (local escapee).
- GROOVE-BILLED ANI: 1 at Paynes Prairie SP (Alachua Co.) on 9 Jan (BS2, ES2) and later on 24 Jan (DH2, BM3).
- SHORT-EARED OWL: 1 on Lake Placid CBC (Highlands Co.) on 29 Dec (JF2), first count record; 1 at Merritt Island NWR (Brevard Co.) from 13 Dec through 31 Jan (HR1), possibly same one as last year.
- CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW: 1 on Lake Placid CBC (Highlands Co.) on 29 Dec (BP1, DG1, GW1, GS2); first record.
- COMMON NIGHTHAWK: 2 (calling) in Pinellas Co. on 18 Dec (RS2), rare in winter.
- RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD: several reports from feeders in Titusville (Brevard Co.) during period (DS3).
- BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD: first-year male (violet gorget developing) at Cedar Key (Levy Co.) on 4-8 Jan (DH2, DF3).
- Selasphorus* sp.: 1 arrived in Gainesville on 15 Nov and stayed through 7 Mar (DF3, m. obs.). Bird had rufous color on head, back, and tail, but gorget did not develop. One seen at different feeders at Cedar Key (Levy Co.) from 19 to 27 Jan (DF3, DH2).
- Chaetura* sp.: 2 swifts, perhaps early Chimney Swifts, over NW Pasco Co. on 28 Feb (PY1).
- VERMILION FLYCATCHER: 1 stayed at St. Marks NWR from mid Dec-mid Feb (m. obs.), last seen just before major storm dumped 40+ cm of rain; female at White Oaks Plantation (Duval Co.) throughout season (MT1); 1 at Lake Woodruff NWR (Volusia Co.) on 26 Jan (HR1).
- WESTERN KINGBIRD: 1 at St. George Island Causeway (Franklin Co.) on 2 Dec (BN2, DE2); 1 at Alligator Point (Franklin Co.) on 9 Dec (DE2, BN2); 2 in Polk Co. on 9 Dec (TP1); 1 SE of San Antonio (Pasco Co.) on E Pasco CBC on 26 Dec (PF1, CG1, PT2); 22 in Homestead Area (Dade Co.) on 6 Jan (DF1); 1 at White Oaks Plantation (Duval Co.) from 10 Jan to end of season (MT1).
- GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER: 2 reports from rural Alachua Co.: 1 from 28 Nov through end of period (JH2) and 1 from 2 to 17 Jan (m. obs.); 1 called 5 times on University of Florida campus (Alachua Co.) on 1 Feb but not seen (BM5).

- Empidonax* sp.: 1 at Paynes Prairie SP (Alachua Co.) on 6 Dec. (RR1); 1 at same place on 18 Feb. (JH2, AK1) was most akin to a Traill's; 1 in Tallahassee on 25 Jan (BN2); whatever the species, these are rare winter records.
- TREE-SWALLOW: roost of 500,000 ± at Lake Istokpoga on Lake Placid CBC (ML1, CW3, MW2); 1,000,000 + at Merritt Island NWR on 24 Jan (HR1); these large numbers may be attributed to drought conditions farther south.
- CAROLINA CHICKADEE: 7 in Brevard Co. on 15 Feb (DS3), unusual location.
- RED-BREADED NUTHATCH: 1 at University of North Florida campus (Duval Co.) on 10 Jan (RL1), only report received.
- BROWN CREEPER: 2 reports from Tallahassee area on 6 Dec (TM2) and 2 Jan (DE2); 1 at St. Marks NWR on 2 Dec (DE2), unusual near coast; 1 in Gainesville on 27 Feb (SM1).
- BEWICK'S WREN: 1 in Apalachicola NF (Leon Co.) on 26 Nov and 6 Jan (TM2), rare in recent years.
- WINTER WREN: 1 in Apalachicola NF (Leon Co.) on 6 Dec (TM2), unusual location.
- GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET: 2 in NW Pasco on 14 Dec (PY1), first co. record; 1 on St. Petersburg CBC (Pinellas Co.) on 15 Dec (DR2); 1 on S Brevard CBC on 29 Dec (m. obs.), first count record.
- CEDAR WAXWING: 4 flocks totaling 750 birds in Beacon Woods (Pasco Co.) on 27 Feb (BP1); very large number for area and indicative of abundance reported in area throughout winter.
- AMERICAN PIPIT: 1 at St. Marks NWR on 2 Dec (BN2), rare in recent years; only 40 in Avon Park area (Highlands Co.) on 8 Feb (DF1), lower numbers for this area.
- TENNESSEE WARBLER: 1 on Lake Placid CBC (Highlands Co.) on 29 Dec (DG1, BP1), first count record; 1 on Ponce Inlet CBC (Volusia Co.) on 27 Dec.
- YELLOW WARBLER: 1 in Carillon (Pinellas Co.) on St. Petersburg CBC on 15 Dec (MH4); 1 on the Ponce Inlet CBC (Volusia Co.) on 27 Dec; very rare in winter.
- CAPE MAY WARBLER: 1 on Ponce Inlet CBC (Volusia Co.) on 27 Dec, first count record; 1 at M-K Ranch (Gulf Co.) on 27 Dec (JL2).
- BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER: up to 3 in Sawgrass Lake Park (Pinellas Co.) from 17 Dec (HB1) through end of period (*vide* DG1); 1 NW of Lake Pasadena (Pasco Co.) on 26 Dec on E Pasco CBC (DR2); perhaps becoming more regular in winter in the Tampa Bay area.
- BAY-BREADED WARBLER: 1 in Orange Co. on 3 Jan (HR1).
- AMERICAN REDSTART: 1 on Lake Placid CBC (Highlands Co.) on 29 Dec, 2nd count record.
- BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER: 1 on the Ponce Inlet CBC on 27 Dec, first count record.
- WORM-EATING WARBLER: 1 on South Brevard CBC, 2nd count record.
- LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH: 1 in the Starkey Wellfield (Pasco Co.) on the W Pasco CBC on 27 Dec (BP1, DR1), extremely rare in winter.
- NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH: 1 on the Brooksville CBC (Hernando Co.) on 17 Dec (LA1, DG2).
- HOODED WARBLER: male at Melbourne Village (Brevard Co.) throughout period (BH2, SH1).
- CANADA WARBLER: 1 at bird bath at Melbourne Village (Brevard Co.) on 12 Dec (BH2, SH1).
- OVENBIRD: 1 S of Tallahassee on 30 Dec (TM2); not regularly reported in winter.
- STRIPED-HEADED TANAGER: good description of female at Snake Bight Trail, Everglades NP, on 14 Dec (MG2, BP2); bird observed for over an hour and photographed.
- SUMMER TANAGER: 1 in Venus (Highlands Co.) on 13 Feb (PS1, SS1).
- SCARLET TANAGER: male near coast in Citrus Co. on 2 Feb (DC5).
- BLUE GROSBEEK: female on St. Marks CBC on 17 Dec (BN2, DE2) and later on 13, 27 Jan (DS1); female at St. George Island (Franklin Co.) on 8 Feb (RW1); 2 in Titusville (Brevard Co.) on 22 Feb (BH2, SH1).

- PAINTED BUNTING: male in S Jacksonville on 17 Jan and 4 Feb (MD1).
- GRASSHOPPER SPARROW: 1 at Alligator Point (Franklin Co.) on 13 Jan (BN2, DE2); 2 on Lake Wales CBC (Polk Co.) on 29 Dec; 11 in Winter Haven area (Polk Co.) on 10 Feb (PF1, PT2).
- FOX SPARROW: 1 at St. George Island SP (Franklin Co.) on 2 Dec (DE2) was unusual; several other reports from Wakulla (DE2) and Leon Cos. (DE2, TM2, DL3); 1 at Paynes Prairie SP (Alachua Co.) on 26 Jan (CP2).
- LARK SPARROW: imm. at Paynes Prairie SP (Alachua Co.) on 26 Dec (TR1), rare in winter.
- CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: 2 in Brevard Co. on 2 Feb (m. obs.); 3 in Polk Co. on 10 Feb (PF1, PT2).
- HENSLOW'S SPARROW: 1 in Polk Co. on 9 Feb (TP1).
- LE CONTE'S SPARROW: 1 S of Wewahitchka (Gulf Co.) on 6 Jan (m. obs.).
- LINCOLN'S SPARROW: 1 on Lakeland CBC on 15 Dec, first count record.
- WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW: imm. at Wards Bank (Duval Co.) on 7 Dec (PP1); 3 in Titusville (Brevard Co.) on 2 Feb (m. obs.); 17 in Winter Haven (Polk Co.) on 10 Feb (PF1, PT2).
- DARK-EYED JUNCO: 1 in Gainesville on 13 Dec (BM3) and 31 Jan (DW2); 1 in S Jacksonville on 19 Dec (JC2); only reports received.
- BRONZED COWBIRD: 5 on Lakeland CBC on 15 Dec, in same location as previous year.
- ORCHARD ORIOLE: 1 female in Volusia Co. on 31 Dec (BC3).
- BREWER'S BLACKBIRD: 2 females on Brooksville CBC (Hernando Co.) on 17 Dec (BP1, DR2); irregular this far south.
- PURPLE FINCH: pair in S Jacksonville from 16 to 27 Feb (JC2); 3 in Gainesville on 31 Jan (DW2); 5 in Gainesville from 12 to 26 Jan and 12 from mid Feb to end of period (RR2); 4 at Lake Jackson (Leon Co.) on 10 Feb (DE2, BN2); 9 at Wakulla Springs SP on 17 Feb (DE2).
- HOUSE FINCH: several reports from Ft. Walton Beach (Walton Co.) in early Dec (DW1).
- PINE SISKIN: 1 near Wakulla Springs SP (Wakulla Co.) on 9 Dec (DE2).
- HOUSE SPARROW: 1 along coast at St. Marks NWR (Wakulla Co.) on 2 Dec (DE2, BN2), unusual location.

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The Carolina Parakeet in Florida, by Daniel McKinley. 1985. Florida Ornithological Society, Special Publication No. 2. Price \$6.00.

Status and Distribution of the Florida Scrub Jay, by Jeffrey A. Cox. 1987. Florida Ornithological Society, Special Publication No. 3. Price \$8.00.

Florida Bird Records in American Birds and Audubon Field Notes 1947-1989, by Robert W. Loftin, Glen E. Woolfenden, and Janet A. Woolfenden. 1991. Florida Ornithological Society, Special Publication No. 4. Price \$8.00.

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