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ADDITIONAL 16TH CENTURY BIRD REPORTS FROM FLORIDA

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Abstract.—Several previously unrecognized reports and records from 16th-century Florida have revealed the presence of birds in the state at that time. The Spanish explorers de Vaca in 1528 and de Soto in 1539 reported in general terms waterfowl, hawks, partridges, and sparrows. Mallards and probably Northern Bobwhites by de Vaca and Wild Turkeys by de Soto probably constitute the earliest known reports of these birds in eastern North America. The French explorers, Ribaut and Laudonnière in 1562-65 accounted for bitterns, egrets, and cormorants, as well as the first report of the Carolina Parakeet. These Spanish and French explorers and occupants of 16th-century Florida thus left reports indicating a large diversity of bird life including waterfowl, cranes, hawks, shorebirds, quail, turkeys, and a few passerines. The accounts summarized here emphasize the need for further research into other explorers' reports to discover additional historical records of birds in Florida.

Little has been published about the early history of birds in Florida. The only report for the 16th century thus far published in the ornithological literature was that of Jean Ribaut (also known as Ribaud and Ribault) at Mayport, which first appeared in Howell's (1932) *Florida Bird Life*. In the course of library research into the history of Virginia's ornithology, I found several additional references to French and Spanish explorers in Florida who left written records of their movements, observations of people, the environment, and natural history. Those reports are presented here to improve our understanding of Florida's early bird life.

Before examining the reports in detail, I emphasize that most birds seen by these explorers in North America were new to them, and the names they applied reflected experiences with similar species they had seen in their native countries or on other expeditions. De Vaca, for example, wrote of birds "like those of Spain." Thus, their vernacular names may or may not have been accurately applied to the new birds seen, as spelled out below.

Historical Accounts

The Spaniard, Ponce de Leon (1460?-1521), is credited with discovering Florida in 1513 after he had sailed from the West Indies. He skirted the Florida coast seeking a suitable bay, and finally anchored in a harbor near St. Augustine on or about 2 April 1513. He then sailed south to the Florida Keys in May, and up the west coast as far as the area of Sanibel Island. He returned to Cuba via the Dry Tortugas on 26 June. Unfortunately none of the accounts of his explorations contains mention of bird life (Lawson 1946).

Alvar Nuñez Cabeça de Vaca, another Spanish explorer, arrived in Florida with the Narváez expedition on 14 April 1528, and anchored near shore in the mouth of a bay (about St. Clement's Point, on the peninsula west of Tampa Bay) (Brebner 1955). Toward the end of June, de Vaca and his party traveled overland and north to a lake shore (probably on Miccosukee Lake) "to this town region of Apalachen", where he described cedars, evergreen oaks, pines, and "palmitos like those of Spain." De Vaca's reference to "Large lakes" was probably to the lake country in the northern part of Leon and Jefferson counties. He went on to report "Deer of three kinds, rabbits, hares, bears, lions and other wild beasts. . . . Animal with a pocket on its belly. . . . Birds are of various kinds. Geese in great numbers. Ducks, mallards, royal-ducks, fly-catchers, night-herons and partridges abound. We saw many falcons, gerfalcons, sparrow-hawks, merlins, and numerous other fowl" (Hodge 1907:29-31).

Most of de Vaca's bird names are either very general (geese, ducks, fly-catchers) or suggest a careful evaluation here. For example, his "royal-duck" is a faulty translation of the Spanish "pato real," meaning the "real duck, the true one," i.e. the Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) (Michel Desfayes, pers. comm.). "Partridges" were probably Northern Bobwhites (*Colinus virginianus*), but the hawk names could have applied to any of several species of North American accipiters, buteos, or falcons, although probably not the Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*). Even so, de Vaca's list of birds from Florida in 1528 is important in the historical annals of American ornithology because it is *the first known list of birds from continental North America* (Allen 1951; Johnston 2002). It also contains the first mention of Mallards and probably Northern Bobwhites in the New World.

Another Spanish explorer in the 16th century, Hernando de Soto (1500-1542) left Spain on 7 April 1538, and by way of Cuba landed at Tampa Bay on 25 May 1539. Traveling overland to the north, he reached Apalachen near the modern city of Tallahassee on 6 October 1539. He remained there over winter, leaving on 3 March 1540 to continue his travels through Alabama, Georgia, and ultimately west across the Mississippi River to Texas and Mexico (Shipp 1881). Haklvyt's (1609:181-182) work contains a narrative, "The discouerie of Florida, next adioyning to Vir-

ginia" of Soto, first written in Portuguese by Elvas the chronicler of the expedition and presumably translated from the Portuguese by Hakluyt. It reads that in Florida "there be many wild Hennes as big as Turkies, Partridges small like those of Africa, Cranes, Duckes, Pigeons, Thrushes, and Sparrowes. There are certaine Blacke birds bigger then Sparrows, and lesser then Stares. There are Gosse Hawkes, Falcons, Jerfalcons, and all Fowles of prey that are in Spaine" *This Florida report of "pigeons" in 1539, very likely the Passenger Pigeon (Ectopistes migratorius), is the earliest known report of that species in what is now the United States* (Jacques Cartier had reported pigeons in Canada in 1534, Schorger 1955).

Two other translations are slightly but importantly different from that of Haklvyt (above) read: "There are . . . in Florida . . . numerous wild fowl, as large as pea-fowl; small partridges, like those of Africa, and cranes, ducks, pigeons, thrushes, and sparrows. There are blackbirds larger than sparrows and smaller than stares; hawks, goshawks, falcons, and all the birds of rapine to be found in Spain." (Lewis 1907:271-272). And: "There be many Wild-hennes as bigge as Peacocks, small Partridges like those of Africa, Cranes, Ducks, Rolas, Blackbirds, and Sparrowes. There be certeine Blacke birds bigger than Sparrowes and lesser than Stares. There be Sore-hauks, Faulcons, Gosse-hauks, and all fowles of pray that are in Spaine" (de Soto 1602:38).

From these translations we can suggest the following concerning de Soto's birds. The "wild fowl [or Hennes] as large as pea-fowl" were most certainly Wild Turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) and "pigeons" must have been Passenger Pigeons. The change from "pigeons" to "Rolas" by Brereton is curious because "Rola" is the European Turtle-Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*), which would most closely resemble the American Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) (Desfayes 1998). "Sore-hauk" is a falconer's term for a young hawk meaning "reddish hawk," "Gosse-hauk" originally referred to the Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) and might have been used by de Soto for any of the American buteos. The comparative "Stares" are European Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) (Michel Desfayes 1998 and pers. comm.). De Soto was probably the first writer to mention the Wild Turkey in eastern North America.

The reports of these early 16th century Spanish explorers indicate a variety of birds in Florida at the time, from large and conspicuous geese and hawks to flycatchers. It is interesting to note the lack of any adjectives suggesting abundance of the bird life, but this might have been lost in the translations.

French explorations to northeastern Florida in the 1560s have been described in the accounts of Jean Ribault or Ribaut (1520-1565), René Goulaine de Laudonnière (1533-?), Nicolas Le Challeux, and Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues (1533-1588). Admiral Gaspard de Coligny in 1562 chose Jean Ribaut to command the first French expedition to the east

coast of Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. His lieutenant was René Goulaine de Laudonnière, the future commander of Fort Caroline. On 30 April 1562, they reached the coast of Florida (29°30'N), which Ribaut named French Cape, a few miles below Matanzas Inlet. On 1 May, they arrived at the entrance of a large river, which they called the River of May (now the St. John's) and took possession of the land for the French. The Ribaut party spent two days near the present town of Mayport, then sailed north on the coast, naming all the rivers after those in France—Seine (= St. Marys), Somme (= St. Andrews Sound), Loire (= St. Simons Sound). He reached Port Royal at the mouth of the Broad River in South Carolina where he built Charlesfort on the present-day Parris Island, then, on 10 June 1562, Ribaut returned to France with Laudonnière.

In May 1563 Ribaut published in London an English version (translated from French) of his first Florida expedition (Ribauld 1563). Quoting Ribaut's account of birds observed from a manuscript copy in the British Museum, Connor reported: "And the sight of the faire medowes is a pleasure not able to be expressed with tonge, full of herons, corleux, bitters, mallardes, egertes, woodkockes, and of all other kinde of smale birdes . . ." (Connor 1927:72). This is the same quotation used by Howell (1932). The original 1563 edition was similar: "And the syght of the fayre Medowes is a pleasure not able to be expressed wt tongue: full of Hernes, Curlues, Bitters, Mallardes, Egrepths, Wodkockes, & all other kynde of small byrdes . . ." (Ribauld 1563:4-5).

Of Ribaut's Florida observations in 1562-63, only the Mallard and probably the American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) can be identified specifically with any certainty. "Corleux" or "curlues" could have been any birds with down-curved bills, and "egertes" (egrets) and "woodkockes" might have referred to any of several species.

Upon his return to England Ribaut was imprisoned, so the French named René de Laudonnière as commander of their second expedition to Florida. On 22 June 1564, Laudonnière arrived off the Florida coast near St. Augustine, and remained at Fort Caroline through the following summer. He described the Indians' custom of planting crops and then living off game in the woods until the crops matured. He also reported birds seen there: "The Fowles are Turkie Cocks, Partridges, Perrots, Pigeons, Ringdoves, Turtles, Blacke birds, Crowes, Tarcels, Faulcons, Leonards, Herons, Cranes, Storkes, wild Geese, Mallards, Cormorants, Herneshawes, white, red, blacke, and gray, and an infinit sort of all wildfoule" (Laudonnière 1602:40).

A different ("new") translation of the report on birds reads: ". . . turkeys, partridges, parrots, pigeons, woodpigeons, turtledoves, blackbirds, crows, hawks, falcons, lanners, herons, cranes, storks, wild geese, ducks, cormorants, white, red, black and grey egrets, and a vast number of another kind of waterfowl" (Lawson 1992:5).

Some birds in this report can be specifically identified: Wild Turkey, Carolina Parakeet (*Conuropsis carolinensis*), and a cormorant (*Phalacrocorax* probably *auritus*). *This report contains the first known reference to the Carolina Parakeet in the published literature.* "Ringdoves" are Wood Pigeons probably the same as his "pigeons" = Passenger Pigeons, "Leonard" is a dialectal variant of linnet, and "herneshawes" are herons (M. Desfayes, pers. comm.). Other bird names are too general for specific identification.

Nicolas Le Challeux, a carpenter who accompanied Capt. Ribaut on his last voyage to Florida in 1565, wrote a book (LeChalleux 1566) about the hardships of the French forces as they attempted to escape decimation by the Spaniards at Fort Caroline. In that book he described impenetrable forests, treacherous marshes, and wide rivers, as well as 12-ft. crocodiles, winged serpents, and the savages who wore "feathers of birds, which are of various colors" (Lorant 1946:94).

In 1565 Ribaut was released from prison and went back to France. He was put in command of a fleet to take provisions to Fort Caroline, then known as New France, arriving there in August. The Spanish, aware of the French encroachments on Florida, sent warships and soldiers to the region, captured Fort Caroline and Charlesfort in South Carolina, and massacred the remaining French including Ribaut.

Andre Thevet or Theuet (1504?-1592), the Royal Cosmographer of France, made several 16th-century voyages to the New World from which he published three papers (Thevet 1557, 1575, 1588). On his return trip from Brazil to France in 1556, Thevet claimed that the trip took him past Haiti, Cuba, Florida, and "very close to Canada." Presumably from Fort Caroline on the St. John's River, Thevet wrote that "the commonest animals of this land are stags, hinds, . . . wild dogs, turkeys, partridges, . . . parrots, wood-pigeons, turtledoves, blackbirds, crows, tercels, falcons, lanners, herons, cranes, storks, wild geese, ducks, cormorants, egrets of divers colors, and an infinity of kinds of game" (Schlesinger and Stabler 1986:139-140).

This list is remarkably similar to that of Laudonnière (1602) obtained in 1564-65:

Laudonnièrre (1602)	Thevet (1575)
turkeys, partridges, parrots, pigeons, woodpigeons, turtledoves, blackbirds, crows, hawks, falcons, lanners, herons, cranes, storks, wild geese, ducks, cormorants, white, red, black and grey egrets, and a vast number of another kind of waterfowl.	turkeys, partridges, parrots, wood-pigeons, turtledoves, blackbirds, crows, tercels, falcons, lanners, herons, cranes, storks, wild geese, ducks, cormorants, egrets of divers colors, and an infinity of kinds of game.

Because Laudonnière's work was not published until 1586, scholars now believe that "Thevet possessed Laudonnière's narrative, which he suppressed in order to pose as an authority on Florida" (Schlesinger and Stabler 1986). It is obvious that Thevet plagiarized the report of Laudonnière, and probably he was never in Florida.

The first known illustrator of natural history in North America was the Frenchman, Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues (1533-1588) who, as the "recording artist," accompanied the Laudonnière expedition to the northeast coast of Florida in 1564-65 (Alexander 1976). While there, he described activities of the French, relationships with the Indians, explorations along the River of May, and fate of the expedition at the hands of the Spaniards in 1565. He noted the trade of hatchets, knives, and mirrors with the local Indians for fish, venison, turkeys, and bear-cubs. This information has been included in Le Moyne's "Narrative" (Hulton 1977a:119-138). Therein Le Moyne quoted excerpts from the history of Florida and compiled by Laudonnière: "For seven weeks at this time pigeons were flying about in such great numbers that every day we killed with the arquebus more than two hundred in the woods surrounding our fort" (Hulton 1977a:129).

Le Moyne also prepared sketches from the expedition, which were completed as water colors later in London. Theodore de Bry, the skillful engraver, purchased Le Moyne's plates in 1585 and published 42 of them in 1591 (de Bry 1591, Hulton 1977b). These depicted Fort Caroline, Indian life, and "crocodiles," but only one contained birds, namely, Wild Turkeys at Port Royal, South Carolina (incidentally, the first known illustration of a North American bird, Johnston in press). While living in London, Le Moyne painted flowers and several birds from the English countryside, but no more North American species (Le Moyne 1586).

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