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FIRST RECORD OF THE VARIED BUNTING FROM FLORIDA

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On 1 June 2005, at 16:00, a small dark-plumaged bird was found beneath a window of the Siesta Market on Siesta Key, Sarasota County, Florida. The bird was still limp suggesting it probably hit the window that day. Prepared as a study skin (Fig. 1, GEW 6004), the specimen was a male (testes: 4×3 mm.), weighed 12.5 g, had moderate fat and no molt. The feathers showed no fraying and the feet and the bill showed no abnormalities, which support the conclusion that the bird was not held in captivity. The fresh specimen was correctly identified as a Varied Bunting (*Passerina versicolor*) and placed in a freezer by MvD until transportation to Archbold Station could be arranged. The study skin is now in the ornithological collection at Archbold Biological Station.

The Varied Bunting occurs normally throughout almost all of Mexico, as a summer breeder in the north and central portion of the country, and as a permanent resident elsewhere except along the southwest coast and the southeast portion of the country where it is a winter visitor. The northern limit of its range is in the extreme southwest United States, specifically in southern Arizona, New Mexico and Texas (Groschupf and Thompson 1998). Vagrants are reported from the northern parts of these three states and from California. The only report from east of the Mississippi River is an individual (AHY female) photographed at Long Point, Ontario, Canada, 7 May 1995 (Prior 1995).

Four races of *Passerina versicolor* are recognized (Paynter 1970). However, the differences among them are slight, and validity of some races is doubted (Groschupf and Thompson 1998). Additional work is needed. We do not assign the Florida specimen to a particular race.



Figure 1. The Florida Varied Bunting specimen found on Siesta Key, Sarasota County, Florida; in dorsal, lateral and ventral view.

Assuming Mexico is the place of origin of the specimen reported here, and that natural events account for its appearance on 1 June along the Gulf coast of peninsular Florida, the individual probably flew eastward across the Gulf from Mexico. Less probably it may have flown along the Gulf shore of United States from Texas. No weather disturbances occurred immediately prior to the discovery of the specimen. Early June is when late migrant Varied Buntings are moving north to their breeding grounds. The appearance on the peninsula of Florida (Highlands Co.) on 19 June 1996 of a Western Wood-Pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*) may be a comparable event. This individual was thought to be a late spring migrant off course from its pathway from Central America to western North America (Woolfenden et al. 1996).

We thank several people, and especially Wes Biggs, for getting this specimen to Archbold where it was prepared and preserved, and Reed Bowman for taking the photographs. We urge other persons who report on birds rare in Florida to publish an account which includes a photograph. If the specimen disappears, for many species at least, tangible evidence of the occurrence still will exist in the form of the photograph.

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