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**FIRST WINTER RECORDS IN FLORIDA OF
COMMON NIGHTHAWK (*Chordeiles minor*), CLIFF
SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*), RED-EYED
VIREO (*Vireo olivaceus*), AND BOBOLINK (*Dolichonyx
oryzivorus*), AND FIRST RECENT WINTER RECORD
OF MISSISSIPPI KITE (*Ictinia mississippiensis*)**

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Robertson and Woolfenden (1992:6) challenged “birders of all degree to seek and preserve the best possible supporting documentation” of birds rare in Florida. One topic of great personal interest is the documentation of birds that breed in and/or migrate through Florida but that are rarely encountered during the winter season (i.e., 1 December-28/29 February). Since 1994, formal details have been published for seven species of Neotropical migrants verifiably recorded during winter for the first time: the Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*; Pranty et al. 2008), Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*; Bowman et al. 1995), Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora cyanoptera*; Pranty et al. 2005), Magnolia Warbler (*Setophaga magnolia*; Pranty et al. 2005), Black-throated Blue Warbler (*S. caeruleascens*; Pranty et al. 2003), Black-throated Green Warbler (*S. virens*; Pranty 2000), and Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*; Doyle 2002). Additionally, the second winter record of Swainson’s Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*) in the state was recently verified (Pranty and Sanchez 2011). Not yet described in detail were the first winter records of three other Neotropical species: Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) salvaged in Gainesville, Alachua

County, 1 December 1993 (Kratte et al. 2002); Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (*Empidonax flaviventris*) at Delray Beach, Palm Beach County, 24 Jan 1994 (B. Hope, accepted by Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee [95-341]); and Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*) at Cantonment, Escambia County, 28 December 2011 (B. Duncan in litt.).

While cataloguing and archiving photographs and recordings of significant ornithological value that BP has amassed over the years, we came across unpublished records that represent the first or first recent verifiable winter records for four species of Neotropical migrants, and we were directed to a recent, fifth record. We present relevant information about each species here, arranged in taxonomic sequence. All "BPA" catalog numbers refer to the Pranty archive. Although photographs verify the identities of four of the five species (the fifth record is verifiable from audio recordings), only the photograph of the Red-eyed Vireo (Fig. 1) is of sufficient quality to publish here.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*): One juvenile was observed twice over Key Largo, Monroe County, on 6 December 2003: first "cruising by" Tavernier among a flock of Turkey Vultures (*Cathartes aura*) by Brennan Mulrooney (in litt.) and Alexander Sprunt IV; and again observed with Turkey Vultures 9 km to the northeast over Rock Harbor by Brennan Mulrooney and Brynne Langan, where it was photographed. The single photograph (available also as a cropped image; BPA 663a-b) shows the bird in ventral view gliding away from the camera. Visible is the Mississippi Kite's characteristic profile of long, narrow, pointed wings and long, narrow tail. Other than the pale head and dark eye patch, the upperparts are not visible, but the rump was noted to be dark (B. Mulrooney in litt.). The underparts show heavy brown streaking throughout the pale body. The underwing surfaces and the tail appear all dark, probably the result of being largely in shadow.

Mississippi Kites are generally rare migrants throughout Florida and are rare to uncommon breeding residents in the Panhandle and northern half of the peninsula. They are casual during winter, with at least 12 reports (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). Among the winter reports is one specimen from Otter Creek, Levy County, collected sometime during the 19th century. This specimen (CIN 29153), at the Cincinnati Museum Center at Cincinnati, Ohio, is still extant (BPA 2325a-b). The original tags on the specimen state, 1) "Otter Creek - Fla -" "(Winter)" and "A.J.W." and 2) "C. Dury No. 35." Stevenson and Anderson (1994) give the date as "18??" but this information is not present on the specimen tags. This specimen provides the first winter record in Florida (Stevenson and Anderson 1994), while the Key Largo kite furnishes the first winter record in more than 100 years.

Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*): Two recent records are known. The first involves two birds found over a supermarket

at Homestead, Miami-Dade County, on 14 December 2005 by Larry Manfredi (BPA 1339); one nighthawk was found at this site earlier in the month by Mark Faherty. One of the birds, presumably a male, was performing the characteristic “booming” display dive. Manfredi returned to the site later that evening and obtained video-recordings (BPA 1339) of one of the birds. The image in the video is nearly black but six distinct “peent” calls are clearly audible. The second record involved one nighthawk found in a commercial area of Gainesville, Alachua County, on 21 December 2006 by Earl Scales. The following evening, Rex Rowan obtained an audio recording (BPA 1491; Florida Museum of Natural History animal sound archive master tape 2244) that contains 31 “peent” calls and one “boom” caused by the nighthawk’s display dive. Rowan (in litt.) thought that two birds were calling simultaneously, one in flight and the other perched on a roof, and the audio recording seems to confirm the presence of two birds.

Common Nighthawks are uncommon to common migrants throughout Florida, primarily during fall, and are fairly common breeders nearly throughout. They apparently are very rare during winter (with more than 50 reports, Robertson and Woolfenden 1992), but no report was known to be verifiable until the recordings obtained by Manfredi and Rowan.

Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*): Two “northern” Cliff Swallows (*P. p. pyrrhonota*) were photographed at Fort De Soto Park, Pinellas County, during the evening of 26 February 2004 (not 27 February 2004, as in Smith 2011) by Lyn S. Atherton. The birds were flying with several Barn Swallows below the treeline near East Beach Point. Atherton considered the birds to be early spring migrants (Smith 2011), an assessment with which we agree given the lack of observations earlier in the season. Atherton obtained two photographs of the swallows (BPA 664a–b) using a flash. Each photo shows a single swallow (uncertain if the same or a different individual), one of a dorsal view and the other of a ventral view. The dorsal view shows a whitish forehead, dark crown, and dark rufous face. The bill is short and black. A pale gray collar separates the head from the black back, with a single pale “brace” visible. The wings are relatively broad and rounded, with blackish coverts and paler flight feathers. The rump and uppertail coverts are pale buff, and the short, square tail is black. The ventral view, which is somewhat out of focus, shows a dark throat, dusky upper breast, flanks, and undertail coverts, and a whitish lower breast and belly. The undersides of the wings and tail are dark. The pale foreheads rule out “southwestern” Cliff Swallows (*P. p. melanogaster*) and Cave Swallows (*P. fulva*) of the “Mexican” (*P. f. pelodoma*) and “Caribbean” (*P. f. fulva*) races.

Cliff Swallows are rare to locally common migrants throughout Florida, primarily during fall. They are rare but increasing as a breeding species and are casual during winter. Robertson and Woolfenden (1992) listed “ca. 15” winter reports, none verifiable from photographic or specimen evidence, and with some possibly pertaining to Cave Swallows. Stevenson and Anderson (1994) accepted four winter reports of Cliff Swallows in Florida, with one of these possibly representing *P. fulva*. Six subsequent winter reports of Cliff Swallows have been published (Field Observations Committee reports, Christmas Bird Count data, 1992–2011) but Atherton’s photographs furnish the first and only known verifiable record during this season.

Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*): One reportedly with a broken wing was found and captured by hand at Ocoee, Orange County, on 7 December 2010 by a local resident. After taking a single photograph (Fig. 1, BPA 665), the resident released the vireo on the ground under a shrub, where it presumably perished later. The resident shared his photograph with a friend (“Roger O’T”), who posted it to the “BirdForum” listserver along with a request to identify the bird: <<http://www.birdforum.net/showthread.php?t=187335>>. The photograph (Fig. 1) shows a small passerine with olive-green upperparts including the uppertail coverts, a brown tail with each rectrix narrowly edged with olive-green, blackish primaries with a long primary extension, a gray crown, a white supercilium with a narrow blackish border above, and a red iris. Except for the whitish throat, the underparts are not visible. The two other vireo species with red irides and similar plumage can be ruled out. The Black-whiskered Vireo (*V. altiloquus*) shows a dark malar stripe in all plumages, and the Yellow-green Vireo (*V. flavoviridis*), casual in Florida, shows a muted head pattern and yellow-green upperparts, including the sides of the face.

Red-eyed Vireos are common migrants throughout Florida and are rather common breeding residents south to the central peninsula, but they are only casual during winter (ca. 20 reports; Robertson and Woolfenden 1992). Stevenson and Anderson (1994) stated that, “There have been more than a dozen winter reports, mostly on CBCs, but confirmation is needed for the species’ occurrence in winter.” No subsequent winter report in Florida seems to have been published (review of CBC data and the Field Observations, 1992-2011), although Pranty has deleted several undocumented or poorly documented reports on CBCs since 2002. Thus, the image in Figure 1 provides the first detailed winter report of a Red-eyed Vireo in Florida in more than 17 years, and the first record verifiable from photographic evidence.

Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*): One in basic plumage was discovered during the St. Petersburg Christmas Bird Count at Clam Bayou Park, Gulfport, Pinellas County, on 20 December 1997 by



Figure 1. Red-eyed Vireo captured by hand at Ocoee, Orange County, Florida, 7 December 2010. Photographer unknown. This photograph, which was posted to the “Birdforum” listserv, furnishes the first verifiable record of a Red-eyed Vireo in Florida during the winter months.

Austin & Ron Smith and Ray Webb (Smith 2011, R Smith in litt., R. Webb in litt.). The two images taken by Webb (scanned from slides; [BPA 758a–b](#)) show a small passerine perched upright on the ground. In one image ([BPA 758a](#)) the entire bird is visible (although backlit); in the other image ([BPA 758b](#)), only the bird’s head and neck are visible above the grass. The Bobolink is identified by its overall yellowish-buff coloration, the plain face with large and conspicuous eyes, pale lores, and a dark post-ocular eyestripe, a dark crown, paler nape, and pink conical bill. The remainder of the upperparts are in shadow and appear overall brown with few features visible. The tail appears fairly short and dark. The underparts are plain buff except for brown streaking on the flanks and undertail coverts. The legs are pale.

Bobolinks are fairly common to abundant migrants over most of Florida, primarily during spring. They do not breed in the state and are casual during winter (eight reports, some questioned; Stevenson and Anderson 1994). Only five subsequent winter reports have been published (Field Observations Committee reports, Christmas Bird Count data, 1992–2011), including the record described here.

In the past 18 years, first winter records have been obtained for 14 species of Neotropical migrants that migrate through, and in most cases breed, in Florida. Although a combination of the internet, affordable digital cameras with telephoto lenses, and increased effort by us and others is largely responsible for these recent records, warmer temperatures associated with climate change may well result in an increase in the number of Neotropical species that attempt to winter in Florida at least occasionally. Vigilance by birders will help continue to define this apparent trend.

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