

NOTES

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A BANDED RED KNOT SEEN AT THE DRY TORTUGAS

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Despite its status as a regular, locally abundant transient and winter visitor on both coasts of peninsular Florida, the Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) is at best occasional and rare at the Dry Tortugas (Robertson 1986). We know of only three records prior to our sighting of an individual on 31 May to 1 June 1988. The previous records also are from spring: seven individuals seen by A. D. Cruickshank, 12 May 1956 (Sprunt 1962: 82), one seen by a group of observers, 12 May 1963 (Robertson and Mason 1965), and one desiccated specimen, largely in spring plumage, which W.B.R. found on Bush Key, 16 June 1977, and donated to the University of Miami Museum (UMRAC 10360). The bird we discuss here also had some breeding plumage.

The fact that the bird we saw was color-banded and flagged (green flag, yellow and red bands on the right leg, top to bottom; metal, orange, and red bands on the left leg, top to bottom) provides support for our field identification. It was marked as a Red Knot by Brian A. Harrington on Delaware Bay, at Reed's Beach, Cape May County, New Jersey, on 15 May 1986. It was seen there again on 25 May 1986, and a year later on 23 May 1987.

Robertson (1986) lists ten species of sandpipers and plovers that are common (i.e., more than 20 records per season) in spring at the Dry Tortugas. These include three species, Sanderling (*Calidris alba*), Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*), and Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*), that occur in habitats commonly frequented by Red Knots in other areas. Among the nine species of sandpipers and plovers seen during our 24 May to 1 June 1988 visit to the Tortugas were a few turnstones and black-bellies. We suggest that some reason other than lack of acceptable habitat accounts for the infrequent occurrence of Red Knots at the Dry Tortugas.

The Dry Tortugas is a coral atoll situated in the Gulf of Mexico 117 km west of Key West at 24°40'N, 82°50'W. Recent work by Harrington and colleagues on New World Red Knots (*C. c. rufa*) suggests that the Dry Tortugas is outside the normal migratory pathways of the species. Harrington et al. (1988) describe two widely disjunct wintering populations. The larger (ca. 100 000 birds) winters along the Atlantic coast of Patagonia, the smaller (ca. 10 000 birds) primarily on the Gulf coast of Florida. Neither population's usual migration routes include the Gulf of Mexico. Red Knots wintering in South America depart from North America at the latitude of southern New Jersey or farther north and fly over the Atlantic Ocean to the Guianas. Their spring return from South America also follows a course well east of, but closer to, the Florida peninsula, where good numbers occur along the east coast. Red Knots wintering along the Gulf coast of Florida move down the Atlantic coast to about Jacksonville and then may fly over the Florida peninsula to the Gulf coast (Harrington et al. 1982). The relative scarcity of Red Knots in fall along the Atlantic coast of Florida south of Cape Canaveral (Harrington et al. 1982), in the Florida Keys (Hundley and Hames 1961), and along the western panhandle coast (Loftin et al. 1987, Duncan 1988) supports this opinion. The fact that many of the 210 knots color-banded in Collier Co. during the past 6 years have been sighted locally, but none has been seen farther south (Below, pers. comm.) suggests the Gulf coast population rarely strays farther south.

Red Knots that reach the Dry Tortugas would appear less likely to come from the population wintering on the nearby Florida Gulf coast than from the Patagonian population, despite the fact that the Dry Tortugas is well removed from the population's ordinary flyway. Furthermore, according to Harrington et al. (1988), spring migrants from the population wintering on the Florida Gulf coast tend to by-pass New Jersey, where our individual was seen in two successive springs. We speculate that the knot we saw—and others from the Dry Tortugas—is likely to have been a member of the population that winters in Patagonia.

We thank Brian Harrington and Ted Below, both former frequent Tortugas visitors, for supplying unpublished data on marked knots, and them and Henry Stevenson for reviewing our manuscript.

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INCORRECT IDENTIFICATION OF A RED-THROATED LOON AS A PACIFIC LOON BASED ON BILL SHAPE

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On the lower Wakulla River (Wakulla Co.), 14 Dec. 1971, I collected a loon that appeared to fit the description of the Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*). This specimen was placed in the Tall Timbers Research Station collection and is referred to as TTRS 2783. Also in the TTRS collection are a Red-throated Loon (*G. stellata*) taken by Lovett Williams, Jr., on the St. Marks River, 3 Jan. 1957 (TTRS 2827), and one taken from a small lake in Tallahassee on 4 Jan. 1978 (TTRS 3592). The bird taken in 1957 had the upturned bill (culmen) commonly attributed to *G. stellata*, but the other two had bills as straight as a Common Loon's (*G. immer*), but shorter and more slender.

After examining these specimens in October 1990, W. B. Robertson, Jr. and G. E. Woolfenden pointed out that the three specimens appeared to represent a single species.