

Fla. Field Nat. 9(4) : 64, 1981.

Everglade Kite predation on a soft-shelled turtle.—In Florida, the Everglade Kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*) is considered (Stieglitz and Thompson 1967, U.S. Fish. Wild. Serv., Spec. Sci. Rep.-Wildl. 109: 1-109) to feed solely on one species of snail (*Pomacea paludosa*), although reports of nonsnail prey items (a small turtle, a small mammal) have been noted (Sykes and Kale 1974, Auk 91: 818-820). On 4 January 1979, at 1000, we saw an Everglade Kite perched in a tree along the Tamiami Trail (U.S. Highway 41), Dade County, approximately 35 km west of Miami, Florida. The kite, in juvenal or female plumage, was holding a small soft-shelled turtle (*Trionyx ferox*) in its bill. The kite dispatched the still struggling turtle while clutching it in its talons and striking it repeatedly with the beak. We watched the bird for 10 minutes, but the kite (probably disturbed by the observers) departed with the turtle still clutched in its talons. A photograph of this event, too poor for publication, has been deposited at the Florida Ornithological Society Archives, Florida State Museum. Improved understanding of the circumstances in which Everglade Kites demonstrate selection of nonsnail prey will further our knowledge of Everglade Kite feeding ecology.—MARC C. WOODIN AND CRYSTAL D. WOODIN, *Department of Entomology, Fisheries, and Wildlife, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota 55108.*

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The 1980 Dusky Seaside Sparrow survey.¹—The Dusky Seaside Sparrow (*Ammospiza maritima nigrescens*) was known only from areas of cordgrass (*Spartina bakerii*) in northern Brevard County, Florida, along the eastern drainage of the St. Johns River and in the tidal marshes of Merritt Island (Sharp 1970, Wilson Bull. 80: 158-166). Because of its declining numbers, the Dusky Seaside Sparrow was regarded as threatened with extinction by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1966 (USFWS, Resour. Publ. No. 34) and officially classified as an endangered population under the 1973 Endangered Species Act. In 1968 an estimated 894 Dusky Seaside Sparrows were in the St. Johns marsh and 34 were on Merritt Island where the original population may have been 2,000 pairs (Sharp 1970). Since 1968, annual Dusky Seaside Sparrow surveys indicated a steadily declining population. On Merritt Island, the last Dusky Seaside Sparrows seen were 2 birds in 1977 (Sykes 1980, Amer. Birds 34: 728-737). The St. Johns marsh population persisted a little longer. In 1977 and 1978 only 28 and 24 singing males, respectively, were found and during the 1979 survey, only 13 male Dusky Seaside Sparrows were left (11 on the St. Johns National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)). The last nest on the St. Johns marsh was seen in 1975 (James L. Baker, pers. comm.). Habitat loss was a major factor in the decline of the Dusky Seaside Sparrow. On Merritt Island the salt marshes were impounded for mosquito control (Sykes 1980). On the St. Johns marsh, drainage, housing developments, and highway construction all contributed to habitat loss. Extensive wildfires during the dry season (December-April 1973-1976) also contributed to the population decline (James L. Baker, pers. comm.).

¹Dedicated to the memory of Beau Sauselein who died on 9 June 1981 from burns received while fighting a wildfire on Merritt Island NWR.