

whet Owl because of its similarity to recorded calls. The record was published (1973, Amer. Birds 27:145, 302) but with skeptical comments by the editor, Allan D. Cruickshank. Therefore, discussion of hitherto unpublished details of this record are appropriate. On two different nights thereafter, Fred Wetzel, formerly assistant curator at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Pennsylvania, was able to get the owl to answer his whistled imitation of its call. He had no doubt that this bird was a Northern Saw-whet Owl. On one of these occasions, Wetzel and other observers saw a small owl fly toward them from the direction of the call, but they were unable to see it well enough to say with certainty that it was a Saw-whet Owl.

These sound records, together with the two specimen records, all from the same area of Florida, raise the possibility that this tiny, secretive owl may be more common in winter in northeast Florida than previously thought. Because of its nocturnal habits and preference for thick cover, it is easy to overlook. Further research is needed to accurately understand its status in Florida.—Lisa Marie Miller, P.O. Box 16196, Jacksonville, Florida 32245 and Robert W. Loftin, University of North Florida, 4567 St. John's Bluff Rd. S., Jacksonville, Florida, 32216.

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**Tree Swallow flock preys on swarming termites.**—Tree swallows (*Iridoprocne bicolor*) wintering in the southern USA commonly form large flocks (Howell 1932, Bent 1942, Longstreet 1969, Terres 1980, Kilham 1980). The function of such flocking may be variable. In this note I show that one function is feeding on swarming insects.

At 1240 on 18 February 1983, four colleagues and I saw several hundred tree swallows massing over the railroad tracks and the pine woods adjoining the main building at the Archbold Biological Station, Highlands County, Florida. The skies were partly cloudy, air temperature 21.1°C, relative humidity 25%, barometric pressure 763.0 mm Hg, wind speed 107-215 m/min gusting to 270 m/min, wind direction NNW ranging from W to NNE. The birds flew quickly back and forth or in circles, veering from side to side. Individuals sometimes made short, low-pitched sounds as if they were clapping their wing tips. Occasionally the flock formed a vortex that rose from a few meters above the ground to more than 50 m, as judged from the height of the Station's water tower (42.7 m).

The flock of tree swallows centered over a rotten slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) stump from which alate termites were dispersing into the air. Andrew Schreffler and I observed several birds swoop down and catch termites before the insects had risen more than 3 m above the stump. For the next 2 hr the swallow flock moved periodically from east to west and back again downwind from the source of termites, suggesting that it was tracking a plume of the weakly-flying insects carried away from the stump. This pattern was reminiscent of that described by David et al. (1982) for insects cuing on odors dispersing from a point source. The termites were identified by Mark Deyrup as *Reticulitermes flavipes* (Kollar), a common eastern subterranean species that swarms in the spring with the onset of seasonally warm temperatures (Snyder 1948). These flights are solely for dispersal of virginal adults, usually for short distances from the parental colony; mating is delayed until a pair of termites establishes itself in a retreat within wood or in soil (Nutting 1969).

Migrant tree swallows may commonly aggregate to prey upon swarming insects. Several years ago in late winter Fred Lohrer (pers. comm.) saw an aggregation of tree swallows feed on winged termites or ants as they emerged from the ground in Highlands County, Florida. Flocks of tree swallows perform similarly when ants, moths, and other small insects swarm over wetlands, hammocks, and cultivated fields in the state (Howell 1932, Bent 1942). This behavior may be extensive within the Hirundinidae, for migrants of this and other swallow species also assemble in large aggregations in the fall to feed aerially on large swarms of midges in Illinois (Grabber et al. 1972). Aerial predation of this sort might be difficult to detect from a distance, even with binoculars. Swarming also occurs in the absence of insect foraging (Robertson pers. comm.) and perhaps without any relationship to immediate foraging (Kilham 1980). It therefore may have several functions.

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**Vigorous digging by a Brown Thrasher after disturbance at the nest and comments on the species' behavior.**—On 23 April 1981, I observed a Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*) perform a behavior to my knowledge not reported previously in the literature. The bird was an especially pugnacious thrasher nesting in an abandoned citrus grove, 4.8 km S of Oviedo, Seminole County, Florida. When I approached its nest located in a small oak, the incubating bird flew immediately from the nest onto the ground in a sandy area