

THE FLORIDA FIELD NATURALIST 1973 TO 1997: THE FIRST 25 YEARS

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After 25 years of publication it seems appropriate to reflect upon how the *Florida Field Naturalist (FFN)* has changed and to assess how we are meeting the objectives established for the journal. In 1973 editor Henry M. Stevenson (*FFN* 1:1-2) challenged the Florida Ornithological Society membership to "make some real contributions to ornithology" by publishing systematic counts of birds and detailed observations of birds that are unusual to Florida. The two main objectives of *FFN*, described by William B. Robertson, Jr. (*FFN* 1(2):17-18), were "to achieve a modest professional respectability as the journal of Florida natural history and to enlist as contributors as many able Florida Ornithological Society members as possible." The emphasis on natural history has shifted to a more scientific perspective. Since 1982 (Vol. 10, issue 2) the definition of the *FFN* in the "Information to Contributors" has been: "a fully refereed journal emphasizing biological field studies and observations of vertebrates, especially birds, in and near Florida and the nearby West Indies."

Professional respectability depends on publication of relevant scientific articles that are produced in a consistent and scholarly format on a regular schedule. The relevance and usefulness of the *Florida Field Naturalist* is somewhat difficult to gauge, but one measure is the number of times that articles and notes from the journal are cited in other works. In a survey of the Literature Cited sections of 387 articles and short communications in the 1996 volumes of *Auk*, *Wilson Bulletin*, *Condor*, and *Journal of Field Ornithology*, only two *FFN* articles, Patton and Hanners (1984) and Mitchell et al. (1995), were cited in Gabrey (1996) and Mitchell et al. (1996) respectively. This indicates that *FFN* citations in the geographically and topically diverse mainstream ornithological journals are relatively rare. In "Florida bird species: an annotated list" (Robertson and Woolfenden 1992), over 150 *Florida Field Naturalist* articles and notes were cited. Although this is no surprise, because many of the notes in *FFN* document distribution of birds in Florida, it is one measure of usefulness. *FFN* articles and notes also were cited in species accounts in "Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida: Volume V. Birds" (Rodgers et al. 1996). For example, four *FFN* notes were cited accounts for Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*) (Paul 1996) and Florida Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis pratensis*) (Nesbitt 1996), but only two for the endangered Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*) (Ogden 1996). For "The Birds of North America" series, Hughes (1997) in her account of the Mangrove Cuckoo (*Coccyzus minor*) and Woolfenden and Fitzpatrick (1996) in their account of the Florida Scrub-Jay (*Apelocoma coerulescens*) each cited *FFN* three times; Post et al. (1996) cited *FFN* nine times for their account of the Boat-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalis major*). The use of *FFN* articles in the universe of scientific literature is beyond the scope of this article, but in the brief survey above, it appears that our journal supplies information for scholarly studies of Florida birds, particularly state bird books.

In an analysis of the 150 articles and 415 notes published in *FFN* from 1973-1997, most of the articles (84%) and notes (90%) were about birds. Mammals were the topic of 13 percent of articles and 6 percent of notes; herpetiles constituted about 3 percent of both notes and articles. This contrasts sharply with the journal, *Florida Scientist*, in which only 2 of 59 articles (3%) published from 1994 to 1996 concerned birds. Most (61%) of the articles and notes of *FFN* were about general biology (e.g., nesting and miscellaneous) and distribution of vertebrates in Florida (Table 1).

Table 1. Topics of articles ($n = 150$) and notes ($n = 415$) in *FFN* Vol. 1-25, 1973 to 1997. The number of articles or notes for each topic is followed by the percentage in parentheses. Topic categories are derived from "Recent Ornithological Literature," which is published as a supplement to *The Auk* and *The Ibis*.

Topic	Articles	Notes
Behavior and Vocalizations	10 (7)	50 (12)
Conservation	1 (1)	1 (<1)
Diseases, Parasites & Pathology	2 (1)	10 (2)
Distribution	35 (23)	127 (31)
Ecology and Populations	18 (12)	9 (2)
Evolution, Systematics, & Hybrids	1 (1)	—
Feeding Behavior, Diet & Predators	10 (7)	73 (18)
General Biology	57 (38)	124 (30)
Histories and Checklists	2 (1)	6 (1)
Identification	5 (3)	6 (1)
Migration	2 (1)	7 (2)
Pesticides and Pollution	5 (3)	—
Techniques	2 (1)	2 (1)

I find it surprising that so few articles and notes have addressed conservation and migration: topics that have a strong geographic identity. The subject material for *FFN* in general tends to be descriptive instead of quantitative, but use of statistics is becoming more frequent and more sophisticated. (See, for example, Delany and Linda, this issue.) State ornithological journals, including *FFN*, seem to attract quirky, singular observations, such as "Brown Pelican found dead with adult Double-crested Cormorant in pouch" (Francis 1981), "Foraging of Boat-tailed Grackles at car radiators" (Schardian and Jackson 1978), and "The Pink Pause, a previously undescribed behavior by Roseate Spoonbills" (Ogden 1976).

Geographical distribution of contributions is somewhat skewed to south and central Florida. Of the 150 articles, study locations for 48 (33%) were in the southern peninsula and Keys, 36 (24%) in the central peninsula, 16 (11%) in the northern peninsula, and 9 (6%) in the Panhandle. The remainder of the articles were statewide or coastal 35 (23%) or miscellaneous locations 6 (4%), such as the Bahamas, Virgin Islands, Georgia, and the southeastern U.S.

FFN has strived for a consistent scientific style and timeliness of publication. The journal format has been publicized in the "Suggestions to Contributors" section of *FFN*, which has been periodically updated. I am currently working on "Guidelines for Contributors" that give explicit instructions to contributors in the form of a checklist. Peer review—typically by two referees—has been an essential part of the publication process. *FFN* has gradually adopted a more formal scientific journal article format with Abstract, (Introduction), Methods, Results, and Discussion sections. The only change in publication schedule has been the shift from two to four issues per year in 1981 (Volume 9). Turn around time from submission of a note or article to publication in *FFN* is short because the total number of submissions is small, but delays and complications on some manuscripts are inevitable.

The *Florida Field Naturalist* has changed over the years. Most noticeably it has grown from two issues of approximately 40 pages per volume to four issues per in 1981 (Fig. 1). The length of articles has grown from three to four pages in the first seven volumes to about seven to ten pages currently, and the mean number of authors per article has increased from about one to two. While the total number of pages has increased to

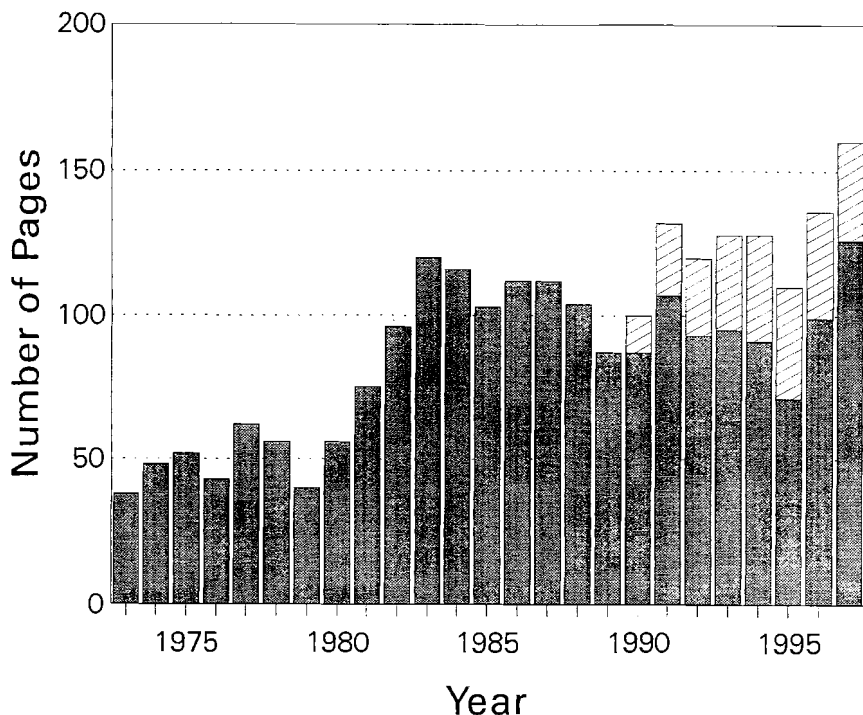


Figure 1. Growth in the number of pages of the *FFN* from 1973 to 1997. The hatched areas indicate the number of pages devoted to Field Observations.

160 in issue 25, a large proportion of the journal in the last eight years (approx. 20% to 35%) has been devoted to the Field Observations section. If the Field Observations section were removed, the number of pages in each volume has not changed appreciably since the mid-1980's. Overall, approximately 41 and 32 percent of the first 25 years of the *FFN* were devoted to articles and notes respectively, 9 percent to Field Observations, 6 percent to reviews, 10 percent to Florida Ornithological Society and *FFN* business, and 2 percent to "Florida Birds in the Periodical Literature."

The second objective of the journal is to enlist Florida Ornithological Society members to contribute. This objective falls squarely within Article II of the Articles of Incorporation of the Florida Ornithological Society "... to unite amateurs and professionals in the study of birds in the wild." On this objective, the results are mixed. Of 150 articles published in the first 25 years in *FFN*, only 14 (9%) of the first authors were amateurs or private individuals (Table 2). (I use "amateur" to mean one "who cultivates any study for pleasure instead of professionally or for gain," not to indicate any lack of skill.) Most of the first authors of articles were professionals who were associated with in-state academic institutions (27%) or county, state, and federal governmental organizations (28%). Fourteen percent were contributed by state non-profit research organizations and 16% were from out-of-state museum and university personnel. In contrast, the first authors of 117 (28%) *FFN* notes were private individuals. Only 8 of 16 Helen G. and Allan D. Cruickshank Award winners have authored or co-authored articles or notes in *FFN*.

In conclusion, *FFN* mainly provides a niche for studies of the distribution and status of Florida birds and miscellaneous natural history observations. Although the *FFN* is

Table 2. Affiliations of first authors of articles ($n = 150$) and notes ($n = 415$) in *FFN* Vol. 1-25, 1973 to 1997. The number of articles or notes for each affiliation category is followed by the percentage in parentheses.

	Articles	Notes
Government		
Florida State (FGFWFC, DNR, DEP, etc.)	27 (18)	75 (18)
County	3 (2)	—
Federal (USFWS and National Parks)	12 (8)	30 (7)
Academic Institutions and Museums		
Out-of-state	24 (16)	48 (12)
In-state	40 (27)	75 (18)
Private		
Research Stations	16 (11)	47 (11)
Audubon Society	5 (3)	14 (3)
Consulting Companies	9 (6)	9 (2)
Individuals	14 (9)	117 (28)

rarely cited in national ornithological journals, it provides a forum for documentation of Florida birdlife that is unavailable in other journals. Conservation and migration—topics with a strong local emphasis that would seem to be logical for a state journal—have been poorly represented. Not surprisingly, notes tend to be written by amateurs, and articles by professionals. The size of the journal, except for the addition of the Field Observations section, reached a plateau in the mid-1980's.

To stimulate readership and improve the quantity and quality of articles and notes in *FFN*, I hope to: (1) initiate an invited Commentary section, (2) encourage graduate students to submit manuscripts, particularly students who have received the Cruickshank Award from the Florida Ornithological Society, (3) encourage use of the Field Observations section for scientific studies, (4) provide new Guidelines to Contributors, and (5) conduct a workshop at a future Florida Ornithological Society meeting on study design, literature survey, field techniques, and data analysis that would encourage amateur-professional partnerships within the Florida Ornithological Society as stated in the Articles of Incorporation.

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