

**FIRST RECORD OF THE NORTHERN LAPWING IN FLORIDA**BILL PRANTY<sup>1</sup> AND GLEN E. WOOLFENDEN<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>*Audubon of Florida, 410 Ware Boulevard, Suite 702,  
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On 7 December 1997 at 1230, Eleanor and Frederick Pratt of Vermont discovered a Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) in Highlands County, Florida (Fig. 1). Within half an hour of discovery, the Pratts telephoned BP, who reported the sighting to others. The lapwing was intermittently present at this locality from 7 December 1997 to 4 January 1998, and a number of birders reported their observations. Attempts by us and others to find the bird during winter 1998-1999 were unsuccessful.



**Figure 1. Northern Lapwing along Mossy Cove Road, Highlands County, Florida. First verifiable Florida record. Photograph by Larry Manfredi, 12 December 1997 (TTRS P710).**

The lapwing was sighted along Mossy Cove Road, which extends 0.8 km from a fish camp on the eastern shore of Lake Istokpoga, east to County Road 621. Most of the habitat in the area is fenced "improved" cattle pasture. The bird was observed as close as 20 m (E. and F. Pratt *in litt.*) in a small portion of pasture on the north side of the road. The bird often flew in and out of the pasture, usually in a northerly direction. Searches by us and others elsewhere for the lapwing were limited because of lack of access to many areas, and were unsuccessful.

On the day of discovery and intermittently during the next few weeks, the edge of the pasture closest to the road was flooded. The dominant vegetation was bahiagrass (*Paspalum notatum*) with a small pickerelweed (*Pontedaria cordata*) marsh. The shoreline vegetation was trampled by cattle coming to drink. The trampled areas were interspersed with tussocks. Frequent visitors to the site were Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*), White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*), Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*), Lesser Yellowlegs (*T. flavipes*), and Boat-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus major*). Numbers of individuals of these species increased when water levels rose (BP and GEW pers. obs.).

Photographs of the lapwing were taken by several people, the best being the print shown in Figure 1. Identification is apparent from this photograph. The rather upright stance and large eye indicates the bird is a plover. The long, dark upturned crest of a few feathers indicates a lapwing of the genus *Vanellus*, and the head pattern with a pale face and dark bars at, below, and behind the eye, identifies the bird as a Northern Lapwing.

The original print by Larry Manfredi (TTRS P710) and a slide by Linda Cooper show the following colors. The elongated crest, large eyes, facial barring, wide breast band, outer wing, and most of the tail are blackish. The supercilium, feathering at the base of the bill, throat, sides, and outer tip of the tail are whitish. The nape and feathering behind the eyes are buffy. The back and scapulars are dark dull greenish, with buff edges to the scapulars. The small portion of the undertail coverts visible appear to be dull orange. The legs are hidden in the photographs, but field notes of GEW and the Pratts indicate that the legs were dull reddish-orange.

In flight the underwing linings and upper base of the tail were white, the wings were rounded, and the primaries were long relative to the secondaries. The legs did not extend beyond the tail (BP and GEW pers. obs.). The proportions of the wings, lack of buff edges to the back feathers (Hayman et al. 1986), and white tips to several of the primaries (W. Hoffman pers. comm.), indicated the lapwing was an adult in winter plumage.

When in flight, the wing beats sometimes were deep and jerky, and reminded us of the flight of a Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*). Mostly we observed the lapwing as it stood in dry ground in an upright posture. When foraging, it ran and plucked apparent arthropod prey from grass blades. We also noted foot shuffling and head scratching under the wing. The latter behavior characterizes plovers but not sandpipers (Van Tyne and Berger 1976). The loud strident call, given in flight, was *eee-eeep*, and was soon mimicked by a European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) (GEW pers. obs.).

The Northern Lapwing breeds in open country across Eurasia south of the tundra. Eastern populations winter well south of the breeding range. Most of the western populations are migratory, moving to southern Europe and northern Africa for the winter (Cramp and Simmons 1983, Hayman et al. 1986). The usual winter range of the species is similar in latitude to Florida.

Bagg (1967) listed all occurrences of the Northern Lapwing in North America through 1966. These reports were scattered along the Atlantic coastline from Baffin Island to Barbados, but were concentrated in Newfoundland and along the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Only nine reports were from the United States, all of them along the Atlantic coast (Maine, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, North Carolina, and

**Table 1. Reports of Northern Lapwings in North America since the publication of Bagg (1967). AB = American Birds, AFN = Audubon Field Notes, FN = Field Notes, NAB = North American Birds.**

Date(s)	Location	#/Age	Reference
10 Oct 1968	Maine: Penobscot Co., Brewer	1	AFN 23:18
3 Jan 1971	Newfoundland: St. Johns, Quidi Vidi Lake	1	AFN 25:551
3-26 Dec 1983	Newfoundland: St. Johns	1	AB 38:294
8 Apr 1988 ff	Nova Scotia: Yarmouth	1	AB 42:408
10-13 Nov 1988	Newfoundland: Ferryland	1	AB 43:56
early Dec 1988	Newfoundland: Port Saunders	1	AB 43:279
22 Mar 1991	New York: Albany Co., New Scotland	1	AB: 45:422
5 May-20 Jul 1991	New Brunswick and Nova Scotia: Auluc	1	AB 45:409
23 Nov 1994	Newfoundland: Daniel's Harbor	1	FN 49:14
29-30 Dec 1994	Ohio: Adams	1	FN 49:153
28 Jan-25 Mar 1995	New York: Suffolk Co., Mecox Bay	1	FN 49:133, 232
6-7 Jul 1996	Delaware: Bombay Hook NWR	1	FN 50:933
26-30 Dec 1996	Massachusetts: Martha's Vineyard, Chilmark	1 ad	FN 51:729
1-4 Jan 1997	New Jersey: Cape May Co., near Goshen	1	Records of New Jersey Birds 24: 61
10 Mar 1997	Ohio: Ashtabula Co., near Andover	1	C. Schooley in litt.
7 Nov 1997	Newfoundland: Portugal Cove	1	FN 52:23
7 Dec 1997-4 Jan 1998	Florida: Highlands Co., Lake Istokpoga	1 ad	this paper
27 Dec 1997	Newfoundland: St. Anthony	1	FN 50:141
17-19 Nov 1999	Newfoundland: Cape Spear	1	NAB <i>fdde</i> M. Patten

South Carolina). Seasonally the reports were concentrated in November, December, and January. Bagg (1967) found correlation between meteorological events over Europe and the North Atlantic Ocean that appear to account for groups of lapwings showing up in North America. However, he concluded that isolated occurrences of lapwings could not be interpreted from weather data with confidence.

To update Bagg's (1967) list of occurrences, we searched the winter, spring, and fall seasonal reports for the Atlantic coast regions published in *Audubon Field Notes* and its successors from 1967 to 1999. We also searched internet lists such as the BIRDCHAT archives (<http://listserv.arizona.edu/lsv/www/birdchat.html>). We found 19 reports of Northern Lapwings, all of single birds, of which nine were in the United States. Florida, Massachusetts, and Ohio were added to the list of states reporting the species (Table 1).

The only prior reference to a [Northern] Lapwing in Florida, at West Palm Beach Airport, Palm Beach County, on 9 June 1968 (Swem 1969), is unidentifiable from the published account. The description given seems more like that of a Southern Lapwing (*V. chilensis*), with, "considerable black on the face." Several Southern Lapwings occurred in southern Florida from 1959 to 1962, and some of these were known to be escapees (Robertson and Woolfenden 1992). The Northern Lapwing was excluded from the list of verified birds of Florida by Robertson and Woolfenden (1992) for lack of tangible evidence, and by Stevenson and Anderson (1994) because the report was completely undocumented. This report provides the first tangible evidence and description of the Northern Lapwing in Florida. The Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee accepted the record (R. Bowman pers. comm.; FOSRC 99-401).

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