

**A VERIFIABLE WINTER RECORD  
OF ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK IN FLORIDA**

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On 5 January 2002, while participating on the Ten Thousand Islands Christmas Bird Count, Linda Douglas, Holly Hamilton, and Kathy O'Reilly-Doyle (KOD) spotted a female *Pheucticus* grosbeak in Collier-Seminole State Park (CSSP), Collier County. Details of the observation were insufficient to identify it as a Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*P. ludovicianus*) or a Black-headed Grosbeak (*P. melanocephalus*). TJD and KOD returned to CSSP several times in January, but could not relocate the bird. On 9 February 2002, during a Naples Bird Club field trip to CSSP, several participants again identified a female *Pheucticus* grosbeak, but the bird slipped away before it could be studied in detail. On 10 February 2002, TJD and Doug Sutor returned to CSSP to relocate the bird. At approximately 11:00 we located the bird, identified it as a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak and obtained several photographs (Fig. 1).

The bird appeared to be loosely associated with a mixed species flock including White-eyed and Blue-headed vireo (*Vireo griseus* and *V. solitarius*), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila caerulea*), and Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*), birds that were wintering in the tropical hardwood hammock vegetation. The grosbeak tended to stay separate and above the flock and was only mildly interested in the Eastern Screech-Owl (*Otus asio*) tape being played as compared to the rest of the flock. No vocalizations were heard.

The bird was relatively large as compared to the other species with which it was seen. The bill was large, stout, and conical as is typical of this genus. Unlike the Black-headed Grosbeak, the bill was relatively uniform in color and the upper bill relatively pale as shown in the National Geographic Society (1999) and Sibley (2000) field guides. The head and upper parts were relatively dark brown with a whitish throat, supercilium, median crown stripe, and wing bars. The underparts were whitish with a buffy wash and coarse streaking across the breast and down the flanks, as compared to the Black-headed Grosbeak which has finer and less extensive streaking that generally does not extend across the breast (fide Sibley 2000). In addition, the buffy wash was lighter than expected of a first-winter male Rose-breasted or female Black-headed Grosbeak, and there was no hint of red on the breast which first-winter male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks often have (National Geographic Society 1999).

The Rose-breasted Grosbeak winters from central Mexico south to northern South America (AOU 1998). Apparently it is a rare, irregular winter visitor throughout Florida (Robertson and Woolfenden 1992) with approximately 40 unverified reports, including a questionable report for Collier County (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). The Black-headed Grosbeak is also a rare, somewhat irregular winter visitor throughout Florida (Robertson and Woolfenden 1992) with approximately 40 reports, several verified, although none in Collier County (Robertson and Woolfenden 1992, Stevenson and Anderson 1994). It usually winters in Mexico (AOU 1998).

Since the winter of 1992-1993, the last period covered by Stevenson and Anderson (1994), there have been eight additional winter reports and one verifiable winter record, in addition to this one, of Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Florida including: one 5 Dec 1993 at Delray Beach, Palm Beach Co., (B. Hope *in* West et al. 1994); a first winter male 17-25 Feb 1997 in Gainesville, Alachua Co., (M. Hemp and R. Rowan *in* Pranty 1997); a female



**Figure 1. Female Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Collier-Seminole State Park, Collier County, Florida, 10 February 2002. This provides the first published, verifiable winter record for the state. Photograph by Terry J. Doyle.**

9 Dec 1997 at Ft. Pickens, Escambia Co., (B. Duncan *in* Stedman 1998); an adult male apparently documented but not published 18 Feb-20 Mar 1998 at Sanibel Island, Lee Co., (Dick Konz *in* Pranty 1998, many observers *in* West 1998); one 2 Jan 1999 at Newnans Lake and one 22 Jan-14 Feb 2001 in Gainesville, (C. Reno and I. Fromberg and S. Hellard *in* West and Anderson 1999); an immature male 13 Jan-3 Feb 2001 in Gulf Breeze, Santa Rosa Co. (F. Basset and P. Taylor *in* Cooley 2001); an immature male 21

Feb 2001 in Newport, Franklin Co., (R. Gidden *in* Anderson 2001), and a female 5 Jan 2002 on Merritt Island, Brevard Co., that was photographed on the same day the CSSP bird was first seen (J. Hafizi *in* Anderson 2002).

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