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Bahama Mockingbird *Mimus gundlachii*

The Bahama Mockingbird breeds throughout the Bahama Islands south to the Turks Bank north of Hispaniola, and cays along the northern coast of Cuba, and curiously, in an isolated region of dry limestone forest along the southern Jamaican coast. In the late nineteenth century, it was virtually unknown on the most northerly Bahamian islands, but it is now well established on Abaco and apparently on eastern Grand Bahama.

In Florida, the Bahama Mockingbird is rare but regular along the southeast coast and Keys since 1987 (Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

Habitat. Until recently, the biology of the Bahama Mockingbird was completely unknown. In the Bahamas and Greater Antilles, the Bahama Mockingbird prefers dry scrub habitats. Nests found in Florida in May and June resembled Northern Mockingbird's.

Statements in some older literature noting that the "more aggressive" Northern Mockingbird was driving it into oblivion are completely unsubstantiated. The more thrasher-like Bahama Mockingbird is less associated with human disturbance than the Northern Mockingbird and is generally far less demonstrative over most of the year. Development of the more populated Bahamian Islands has simply had the effect of substituting an obvious, exuberant species for one relatively shy around man.

Aldrich (1984) studied their relationship on partially developed Providenciales in the Turks and Caicos Islands and found that the 2 species coexisted abundantly there and interacted only slightly.

Seasonal Occurrence. Aldrich (1984) observed pre-copulatory behavior in the Bahama Mockingbird as early as February and found nests in shrubs and small trees as early as late March. One nest in April contained 2 eggs. It has been found nesting on the same island in late June (P. W. Smith, pers. obs.), it is likely the Bahama Mockingbird is at least double-brooded. Much more research is needed to gain an understanding of this poorly known species.

Status. The Bahama Mockingbird, first reported in Florida at the Dry Tortugas in 1973, had been seen in the United States only 5 times before the beginning of the Atlas project (Plockelman 1986). Since 1985, it has been reported in Florida each spring with increasing frequency, usually somewhere along the southeast coast. Usually it has remained only a few days before disappearing, but in June 1991, a singing Bahama Mockingbird was found building and defending a nest in a small tree in Key West, giving the species a tenuous claim among the state's breeding birds. Although this bird made a valiant attempt all summer to attract a mate, the "nesting" evidently was never consummated (J. Ondrejko, pers. commun.). The nest was collected by Eugene Stoccardo and was deposited in the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville. A male, presumably the same one, returned to the same yard in May, 1992.

The increasing reports in Florida during spring are consistent with a species producing more offspring than can obtain territories locally. One might reasonably predict the Bahama Mockingbird will eventually colonize at least the Florida Keys, if not the southeast mainland.

P. William Smith

Bahama Mockingbird

