First record of Sedge Wren (*Cistothorus platensis*) for the Bahamas and the Caribbean

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Photo: Frantz Delcroix
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Anthony Levesque, Antoine Chabrolle, Frantz Delcroix, and Eric Delcroix

Abstract On 1 November 2016, during the last day of a group birding trip to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, we observed and photographed a wren species in the Garden of the Groves, Freeport, Grand Bahama Island. We identified the individual as a Sedge Wren (*Cistothorus platensis*). This is the first record of the species for the Bahamas and the Caribbean region.

Keywords Caribbean, *Cistothorus platensis*, Grand Bahama Island, Sedge Wren

Observations

Bird Description

When the bird flushed for a second time, we noted it to be considerably small, rounded, and brown-colored, with whitish lines on the back. When the bird finally perched where it could be observed under good lighting for nearly a full minute, we...
were able to observe the following: a whitish supercilium with a darker line running underneath; a short, pointed, and slightly down-curved bill; a white throat; barred wings and tail, the latter frequently raised; and a streaked crown (Fig. 1).

It is important to note that the streaked crown, short bill, lighter body coloration, and barred wings distinguish the Sedge Wren from the similar Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*), a species that has been previously documented within the Caribbean on Cuba (Garrido and Kirckonnell 2000).

Fortunately, we were able to photograph the bird, and although the photos are not crisp, they clearly show the distinguishing features typical of a Sedge Wren (Fig. 1).

**Habitat Description**

The habitat where we observed the Sedge Wren was an overgrown fairway of an abandoned golf course. The vegetation was a combination of Caribbean pine (*Pinus caribaea bahamensis*) mixed with bracken fern (*Pteridium* sp.), shepherd’s needles (*Bidens pilosa*), Brazilian pepper-tree (*Schinus terebinthifolia*), and native grasses (Fig. 2).

**Distribution**

The Sedge Wren comprises 20 subspecies ranging from North to South America. The individual we observed most certainly belongs to the *C. p. stellaris* subspecies which breeds from southern Canada (east Saskatchewan, central Manitoba, southern Ontario, and southern Quebec) southwards into the USA to northern Kentucky, eastern Pennsylvania, and New York. The subspecies winters from eastern USA (Virginia), southwards and then westwards along coastal states to Texas and northeast Mexico (Kroodsma and Brewer 2005).

The Sedge Wren is a common winter visitor to Florida (eBird 2018). From the closest point of Florida (West Palm Beach area) to the westernmost point of Grand Bahama Island is approximately 100 km (all over open water, Fig. 3), and then an additional 40 km eastwards over the island to the Garden of the Groves where our observation occurred.
This observation of a Sedge Wren is a first for the greater Caribbean region (eBird 2018). It is also the first record of a Sedge Wren for the Bahamas (Hallett 2006), making it the 333rd bird species to be recorded within the Bahamas Archipelago (Raffaele et al. 1998). Our discovery of a Sedge Wren on Grand Bahama Island is not unexpected given that this migratory species is frequently observed throughout the nearby mainland state of Florida during migration and the wintering season.

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Literature Cited

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