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

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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

Resumen Primer registro de *Cistothorus platensis* para las Bahamas y el Caribe—El 1ro de noviembre de 2016, durante el último día de un viaje grupal de observación de aves a la Mancomunidad de Bahamas, observamos y fotografiamos una especie de rálido en el Garden of the Groves, Freeport, isla de Gran Bahama. Identificamos al individuo como *Cistothorus platensis*. Este es el primer registro de esta especie para las Bahamas y la región del Caribe.

Palabras clave Caribe, *Cistothorus platensis*, isla de Gran Bahama

Résumé Première donnée du Troglodyte à bec court (*Cistothorus platensis*) pour les Bahamas et la Caraïbe—Le 1er novembre 2016, lors de la dernière journée de notre voyage ornitho aux Bahamas, nous avons observé et photographié un troglodyte à Garden of the Groves, près de Freeport à Grand Bahama. Nous l'avons identifié comme étant un Troglodyte à bec court (*Cistothorus platensis*). C'est la première donnée de cette espèce pour les Bahamas et la Caraïbe.

Mots clés Caraïbes, *Cistothorus platensis*, île de Grand Bahama, Troglodyte à bec court

On 1 November 2016 at about 1415, a small bird flew out from the edge of a trail at Garden of the Groves, Freeport, Grand Bahama Island. The bird immediately disappeared into nearby low vegetation. Initially, we believed the sighting was of a grassquit or a warbler species. Two members of our birding group (AL and FD) were soon able to obtain a brief view of the bird when it flushed a second time, and then concluded that the bird was a species of wren. After a series of 4–5 short flights, the bird flew across the trail and settled in a large bush, where it allowed our group to observe it well enough to collectively identify it as a Sedge Wren (*Cistothorus platensis*).

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



Fig. 1. Sedge Wren photographed 1 November 2016 in the Garden of the Groves, Freeport, Grand Bahama Island. Photograph by Anthony Levesque.

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Fig. 2. Habitat where Sedge Wren was observed: an abandoned golf course with regenerating vegetation. Photograph by Eric Delcroix.

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.

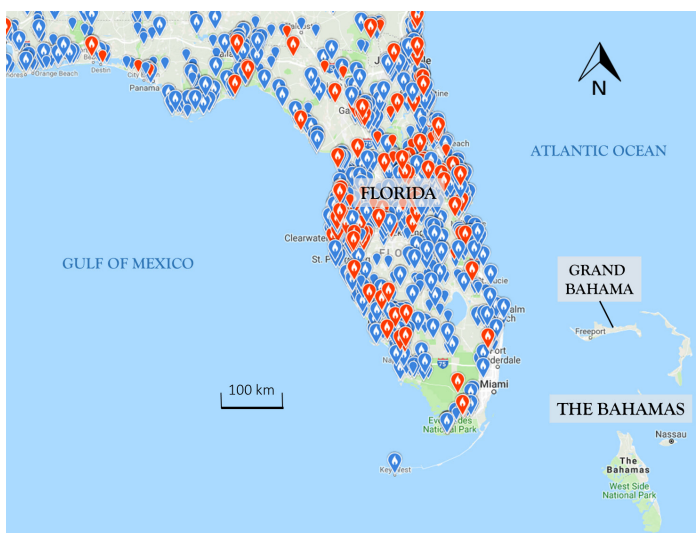


Fig. 3. Records of Sedge Wren during the winter period occur west of the Bahamas. All records and map are from eBird (2018).

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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