

FIRST RECORD OF ANHINGA (*ANHINGA ANHINGA*) IN
NEVIS, WEST INDIES

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Abstract. --- Professor Robert Ricklefs, Dr. Steven Latta, and Mark Michael Ludlow observed at a relatively close distance a single Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*) flying north to south over water along the western coast of the island of Nevis, West Indies, in the proximity of the Sea Bridge Ferry dock, adjacent to the Caribbean Sea (IHO 1953: 14-15), within St. Thomas Lowland Parish, Nevis, The Federation of St. Christopher and Nevis, West Indies, on 11 April 2012.

Key words. --- *Anhinga*, *Anhinga anhinga*, *Caribbean*, *Nevis*.

ANHINGA (*ANHINGA ANHINGA*)

AOU (1998: 34), Dickinson (2003: 93), and Clements (2000: 17) do not show *Anhinga* occurring or reported on the island of Nevis. Raffaele *et al* (1998: 226) state ‘A common year-round resident on Cuba, including the Isle of Youth and a vagrant elsewhere -’. Raffaele *et al* (1998: 455) do not list the species in the ‘Locality Checklist’ as recorded for the artificially conjoined listing of the geographically and ecologically separate and distinct islands of St. Kitts and Nevis. A fuller description of the current ranges of *Anhinga* can be found in the above cited references.

NEVIS

Nevis is a compact oceanic island of volcanic origin with an area of circa 93 km² (circa 36 square miles), situated in the northern Lesser Antilles. Politically it is a portion of the two island country, The Federation of St. Christopher and Nevis. The island rises gradually from the shore to a central peak of circa 985 meters (circa 3232 feet) and exhibits a range of natural and secondary habitats which include: elfin woodland, montane forest, palm brake, grassland, coastal scrub, dry woodland, and farmland (Robinson and Lowery 2000).

THE RECORDED SIGHTING

On 11 April 2012, Professor Richard Ricklefs, University of Missouri – St. Louis, Member of the National Academy of Science, Dr. Steven Latta, Director of Conservation & Field Research, National Aviary, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, and Mark Michael Ludlow, the author (during a National Geographic Society funded research expedition to the islands of Nevis and St. Kitts), observed a single *Anhinga* flying north to south about fifty feet above the water along the coast of the western side of the island of Nevis just beyond the western/open water end of the Sea Bridge Ferry dock on the island of Nevis, West Indies. The location was at: Longitude 17°11'19.69" North; and Latitude 62°37'12.56" West. The bird was observed clearly without optic enhancements from an

elevation on the dock circa 12 feet above sea-level. No photographs were able to be taken but the identification of the single species was apparent to the observers (Sibley 2000; Raffaele *et al* 1998).

This observation becomes part of the efforts of the newly formed Nevis Ornithological Society to document all of the species of birds to be found solely on the island of Nevis (and proximal Booby Island). Historically bird species listings have artificially conjoined the two geologically and ecologically separate and distinct islands (the island of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) and the island of Nevis): An example would be the 'Locality Checklist' within Raffaele *et al* (1998: 453-495). The Nevis Ornithological Society is also attempting to: 1) systematically review and evaluate reported bird sightings on the island of Nevis, as well as Booby Island, with a high degree of academic rigor; and 2) provide a central repository for those accepted reports that are solely for the island of Nevis.

A fuller significance of this sighting remains undetermined. Combined with past and future records, fuller patterns may become clearer. As in this case, and in the future, increasing numbers of bird watchers and researchers in the field, on comparatively remote and under frequented islands, for sustained periods of time, may account for increasing numbers of documented reports.

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