
January 1974

Remarkable Weights Carried by Red-shouldered Hawks

Florida Field Naturalist

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn>

Recommended Citation

Florida Field Naturalist (1974) "Remarkable Weights Carried by Red-shouldered Hawks," *Florida Field Naturalist*. Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn/vol2/iss1/7>

This Field Notes is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Field Naturalist by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usf.edu.

Recent Unprecedented Numbers of Buff-breasted Sandpipers

A decidedly rare migrant in Florida, the Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*) has historically been recorded only in very small numbers and primarily in September. Nearly all of its spring migration passes northward through Texas and the High Plains, which makes all the more remarkable a flock of exactly 75 which were seen by about 100 Florida Ornithological Society members on 28 April 1973 at Mullet Key near St. Petersburg. A tornadic, northwesterly front two nights before had swept in a myriad of trans-Gulf migrants, and many continued to arrive for two more days, presumably from coastal points farther south where they had first come ashore. The usually tame Buff-breasts were very flighty; at noon they often took off and circled excitedly, by 1600 only 37 remained, and at 1830 Henry Stevenson, Stephen Stedman, and the writer saw them fly away up the coast. Two hundred miles farther north, near St. Marks Light, Stevenson saw 3 on 30 April.

The Mullet Key number nearly equalled the two flocks combined (each of 40+ birds) which had been present simultaneously at Zellwood and Rodman Reservoir between 19 August and early September, 1972, the total of which exceeded all previous Florida records combined. Those of us who found the Zellwood birds were surprised not only by their number, but also by their earliness and concealment in tall grass and weeds. Since the few past Zellwood records had involved birds seen in very open areas, and only in September, we wondered if earlier birds had not formerly been overlooked. Following up on this in 1973, we again found good numbers between 16 August and 15 September, and the largest number (24 on 25 August) were again in head-high vegetation. Of interest were two of these upland birds seen among many other shorebirds feeding in shallow water on 18 August. Very careful coverage of various habitats probably will prove this species to be an earlier, more regular, and a bit more common, fall migrant than has heretofore been evident. *John B. Edscorn, Rt. 14, Box 350, Lakeland, Florida 33801.*

Remarkable Weights Carried by Red-shouldered Hawks

In Everglades National Park on 14 November 1971 a Red-shouldered Hawk of the small, very pale south-Florida race (*Buteo lineatus extimus*) appeared from beyond a line of trees 100 meters from where, partly concealed, my mother, my daughter Heidi, and I stood. It flew straight toward us, while carrying a Louisiana Heron (*Hydranassa tricolor*) of considerably greater dimensions than itself, and lit on the ground only 3 meters away. It began to tear into its prey which, judging by the bleeding, had just been killed. Then it saw us and flew away screaming. We stepped off the distance

to the heron and withdrew to perhaps 100 meters. The hawk did not resume its repast, so we drove away to assure it privacy.

On 19 January 1969 another Insular Red-shouldered Hawk crashed into Black Mangrove (*Avicennia nitida*) pneumatophores beside my boat, barely missing a Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*). I assumed that prey of that size could be carried, but a big, gangly Louisiana Heron being borne through the air by one of these buteos was astonishing. This species can make off with prey of almost unbelievable size and weight. On 21 November 1970 Paul Fellers and I parked just 2 m from an immature Red-shouldered Hawk in Lake County which frantically got away from us with its full-grown Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), by dragging and actually lifting it in very short, laborious flights. That young hawk very possibly was briefly lifting a weight equal to its own. Perhaps even heavier was the small Opossum (*Didelphis marsupialis*) which I saw an adult Red-shoulder carry off strongly on 10 March 1973 in Polk County.

Specimens at the University of Miami include south Florida Red-shouldered Hawks of 384, 402, 409, 424, and 584 grams, Louisiana Herons of 265, 299, 378, 380, and 390 grams, and Gray Squirrels of 401, 410, and 499 grams. *John B. Edscorn, Rt. 14, Box 350, Lakeland, Florida 33801.*

Glossy Ibis Nesting in Southern Florida

Although the Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) nests commonly at Kings Bar in Lake Okeechobee, there are only a few records, all over 30 years old, of its nesting further south in Florida. A few pairs were reported to have nested in large mixed-species colonies of wading birds at Shark River in 1934 and at an unnamed southwest coastal river in 1940 (Allen, 1934a, b; Baker, 1940). A few were also reported to have nested in 1940 at a colony north of Tamiami Trail (Baker, 1940). Considering the incompleteness of existing information on the early history of southern Florida wading birds, the two reports of nesting near Shark River suggest that the Glossy Ibis probably nested there irregularly and in small numbers throughout the 1930's. The record from Tamiami Trail is certainly a single episode.

Despite relatively intensive coverage of wading bird colonies after the 1930's, sponsored by the National Audubon Society, Everglades National Park, and other agencies, there had been no additional nesting records south of Lake Okeechobee until the spring of 1973. At that time we found Glossy Ibis nesting in a wading bird colony located about 2.5 km south of State Road 84 (Alligator Alley) between U.S. Highway 27 and the Miami Canal in the Everglades of Conservation Area 3. The colony was composed primarily of White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*), Great Egrets (*Casmerodius albus*), Louisiana Herons (*Hydranassa tricolor*), and Snowy Egrets (*Egretta*