

---

January 1974

## Purple Gallinule Carrying Young

Florida Field Naturalist

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

---

### Recommended Citation

Florida Field Naturalist (1974) "Purple Gallinule Carrying Young," *Florida Field Naturalist*. Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 10.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn/vol2/iss1/10>

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](mailto:digitalcommons@usf.edu).

Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*), Louisiana Heron (*Hydranassa tricolor*), Great Egret (*Casmerodius albus*), Snowy Egret (*Leucophoyx thula*), Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*), White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*), and Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*).

The property on which the colony exists is owned by Haywood Smith, who has lived there and observed storks in the area for 3 years. To his knowledge this was the first year they nested there. It is noteworthy that the colony was bordered on 3 sides by pasture and was only 300 meters from two occupied house trailers, Stephen A. Nesbitt, *Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, 4005 South Main Street, Gainesville, Florida 32601*, and John H. True, *Jacksonville Zoological Park, 8605 Zoo Road, Jacksonville, Florida 32218*.

### Purple Gallinule Carrying Young

While fishing on Lake Jackson, Leon County, On 9 July 1967, L. Cliff Chavez and I observed an adult Purple Gallinule (*Porphyryla martinica*) flying with a large, black object in its bill. As it passed we could see that it was carrying a downy chick by the nape or back. The bird, thus burdened, flew about 75 meters from one patch of water lilies to another and, still carrying the young one, walked another 50 or more meters across the lily pads, finally disappearing into an area of emergent grass.

The distance of the observation was too great to determine the specific identity of the chick, although the Purple Gallinule is a fairly versatile predator, it seems probable that this individual was not engaged in an act of predation or cannibalism since other species of rails are known to carry their young. This behavior has been recorded in the Water Rail, *Rallus aquaticus* (Zimmerman, 1937; Desfayes, 1951), Virginia Rail, *Rallus limicola* (Bent, 1927; Walkinshaw, 1937), Clapper Rail, *Rallus longirostris* (Tompkins, 1937), King Rail, *Rallus elegans* (Johnson, 1950), and Common Gallinule, *Gallinula chloropus* (Wolff, 1953).

What is perhaps noteworthy about the present instance is the relatively great distance covered and the fact that the adult both walked and flew while holding the chick. It is interesting to note that at least two other species of birds that live on floating vegetation (the jacanas *Actophilornis africanus* of Africa and *Irediparra gallinacea* of Australia) have developed a rather specialized method of transporting their young under their wings (Hopcraft, 1968; Cobcraft, 1934).

Later on the same day as the above observation, we happened to run very suddenly in our boat upon a brood of small, downy Purple Gallinule chicks. These readily effected their escape by expertly diving and swimming under lily pads. I had previously noted that adults of this species are capable of diving and swimming underwater (Olson, 1966), so it was inter-

esting to see that this ability was well developed in the downy chicks.

#### LITERATURE CITED

- Bent, A.C. "1926" (=1927). Life Histories of North American Marsh Birds. *U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull.* 135. 490 pp.
- Cobcraft, K. 1934. The jacana. *Emu*, 34: 47-49.
- Desfayes, M. 1951. Râle d'eau transportant ses jeunes. *Nos Oiseaux*, 21: 129.
- Hopcraft, J.B.D. 1968. Some notes on the chick-carrying behavior of the African Jacana. *Living Bird*, 7: 85-88.
- Johnson, R.A. 1950. King Rail carries its young. *Bird-Banding*, 21: 18.
- Olson, S.L. 1966. Purple Gallinule survives loss of wing. *Florida Nat.*, 39: 117.
- Tompkins, I.R. 1937. Wayne's Clapper Rail carries its young. *Wilson Bull.*, 49: 296-297.
- Walkinshaw, L.H. 1937. The Virginia Rail in Michigan. *Auk*, 54: 464-475.
- Wolff, G. 1953. Grunfussiges Teichhuhn trägt Junge aus dem Nest. *Vogelwelt*, 74: 182-183.
- Zimmerman, R. 1937. Fortpflanzungsbiologische Beiträge. VIII. Zur Fortpflanzungsbiologie der Wasserralle, *Rallus a. aquaticus* L. *Mitt. Ver. Sächs. Ornith.*, 5: 105-111.
- Storrs L. Olson, U.S. National Museum, Washington, D.C. 20560.

### Evidence for Learning to Feed in Laughing Gulls

Considerable recent information indicates that feeding ability improves with age and experience in several genera of birds whose feeding methods require capture of live prey – *Pelecanus* (Orians, *Anim. Behav.*, 17: 316-319, 1969); *Florida* (Recher and Recher, *Anim. Behav.*, 17: 320-322, 1969); *Sterna* (Dunn, *Ibis*, 114: 360-366, 1972). Our note presents evidence for the development of feeding behavior for the Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*).

On 29 July 1973 on the Gulf of Mexico beach at Manasota Key, Charlotte Co., Florida we cast-netted large numbers of 4 to 9 cm Scaled Sardines (*Harengula pensacolae*). Laughing Gulls continuously cruise along this beach, and when we threw fish into the air in front of one, it wheeled, called, and came to the food. Within approximately 5 minutes, 15 to 20 gulls were circling and swooping over us as we tossed fish into the air. Judging by its distinct plumage, one of the gulls was a juvenile, not more than 3 months old. The remainder were birds in adult plumage. The adult