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Foods of the Osprey at Newnans Lake

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asionally as late as mid-November was reported by Robertson and Ogden (1968, Florida region. *Audubon Field Notes*, 22:29). Sprunt (1954, Florida Bird Life, New York, Coward-McCann:259-260) in 17 winters at Okeechobee heard the species only twice, in the same hammock two successive years on 31 January 1949 and 30 January 1950, both warm winters. The temperature was about 83 degrees when I heard the bird sing.--Margaret Coon Bowman, Box 783, Wabasso, Florida 32970.

Foods of the Osprey at Newnans Lake ¹

Newnans Lake in eastern Alachua County, three miles east of Gainesville, has a high Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) population. During the spring and summer of 1972, Ospreys were observed with telescopes and field glasses as they fished there, prey species were identified, and size estimates made of prey.

Thirty-four captures were observed. All prey were fish, 25 (73.5%) of which were Gizzard Shad (*Dorosoma cepedianum*) and Threadfin Shad (*D. petenense*). The remaining nine (26.5%) fish were sunfish (*Lepomis* sp.), Black Crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*), Large-mouth Bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), or were unidentifiable. The average length of captured prey was about 18 cm with a range of 7.5-35 cm. At least eight (23.5%) captures were of dead or dying fish floating near the surface.

Fishery studies (unpublished) by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission revealed that shad make up 34.0% of the fish population in the lake. Threadfin Shad comprise 32.3% and Gizzard Shad 1.7%. The average length of Gizzard and Threadfin Shad taken from Newnans Lake in this fishery studies was 13 and 10.3 cm. respectively.

Ospreys were preying on shad of above-average length at a rate greater than their relative abundance would indicate (even after eliminating from the count those shad picked up as dead or dying). A ratio of 1.1 attempts per capture (excluding those of dead or dying fish) suggests that shad are especially vulnerable to being captured by Ospreys. This is even more apparent when this capture ratio for shad is compared with a ratio of four attempts per capture on another area where the primary prey species was sunfish, *Lepomis* sp.--Stephen A. Nesbitt, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, 4005 South Main Street, Gainesville, Florida 32601.

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