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Hooded Merganser Breeding in a North Florida Phosphate Mine

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Egg removal by Little Blue Heron. — On 15 April 1977 at a large mixed heronry on Sunken Island, Hillsborough Bay, Hillsborough County, Florida, I observed an incubating Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*) remove four eggs from its nest in four trips during a period of 35 minutes. Carrying each egg crosswise in its mandibles, the heron flew out of view into the heronry. As the heron returned for the complete clutch, I assumed it was depositing the eggs in another nest. During this stage of the breeding cycle, there are numerous abandoned nests in the heronry for the heron to utilize.

I was using an observation blind within 4 m of this abandoned nest, and I tried to avoid disturbing the birds under study, but the herons at this nest were disturbed twice a day, two days a week, for the two weeks the pair occupied the nest. This is the first instance of egg removal I observed during three breeding seasons. I believe my presence contributed to the heron relocating the clutch. Considering the amount of time and energy the heron had invested in pair formation, nest construction, and incubation, it would be more advantageous (i.e., greater behavioral fitness) for the Little Blue to relocate nesting rather than abandon nest and eggs. — JAMES A. RODGERS, JR., *Department of Biology, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida 33620.*

Hooded Merganser breeding in a north Florida phosphate mine. — On 19 April 1977 we saw a female Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) with nine downy young in an inactive settling pond at the Occidental Chemical Company's Suwannee River Mine, Hamilton County, Florida. This 75 acre diked settling pond has a soft mud bottom and is surrounded by willow thickets. The hen, with all nine young, was observed again on 22 April 1977, but by 27 May only two young were found (J. H. W., G. E. Menk, H. M. Stevenson).

The previous history of this species' breeding in Florida consists of three records. Brewster (1878, Bull. Nuttall Ornithol. Club 3: 40) saw a hen with flightless young on the St. Johns River, Volusia County, on 28 March 1877 and mentioned that this species nested on the Wekiva River though he found no nests or young. Sprunt (1954, Florida bird life, New York, Coward-McCann, Inc.) reports that on 3 March 1929, R. C. Hallman and a friend collected a female Hooded Merganser and unsuccessfully attempted to collect her flightless young in a cypress swamp near St. Augustine, St. Johns County. In June 1963, Richard G. Naegeli (Stevenson 1963, Aud. Field Notes 17: 454-457) observed a female with young on Cypress Creek in Hillsborough County.

In Georgia, Burleigh (1958 Georgia birds, Norman, Univ. Okla. Press) reports that this species may breed in Chatham County where pairs were encountered on 4 June 1918 and 20 May 1925 and single birds were found in the summer from 1926 to 1935. Odom (1971, Proc. 24th Ann. Conf. SE Game Fish Comm., pp. 108-117) reports that a Hooded Merganser bred in a Wood Duck nest box on the Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge in Jones County.

In Alabama, (Imhof 1976, Alabama birds, University, Ala., Univ. Ala. Press) most breeding records of the Hooded Merganser are from the Tennessee River valley in the extreme northern portion of the state where three to five pairs breed at the Wheeler Refuge. Other breeding records are from Antanga County in central Alabama and Clarke County in southwestern Alabama.

As the above records indicate, the Hooded Merganser is a rare breeder in this area. — ROBERT W. REPENNING, *National Fish and Wildlife Laboratory, 412 N. E. 16th Ave., Room 250, Gainesville, Florida 32601*, and JOHN H. WESTER, *Occidental Chemical Company, P. O. Box 300, White Springs, Florida 32096.*