
January 1979

First Nesting of the Caspian Tern in the Florida Panhandle

Florida Field Naturalist

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

Recommended Citation

Florida Field Naturalist (1979) "First Nesting of the Caspian Tern in the Florida Panhandle," *Florida Field Naturalist*. Vol. 7 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn/vol7/iss1/6>

This General Notes is brought to you for free and open access by the Searchable Ornithological Research Archive at 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.

this loss, Ospreys remained in the vicinity of the nest throughout May. Whether the birds at the new site were the original pair or a different pair is unknown because the original pair was not marked and had no distinguishing characteristics. The Merritt Island NWR has a resident breeding population of approximately 6-10 pairs of Ospreys and a total peak population of approximately 50 birds, therefore, it is possible the original pair followed the nest but this is only speculation.

The relocation nest site will be watched during the next nesting season to see if it is used by Ospreys.—WILLARD P. LEENHOUTS, *Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, P. O. Box 6504, Titusville, Florida 32780.*

First nesting of the Caspian Tern in the Florida Panhandle.—The Caspian Tern (*Sterna caspia*) is one of the more recent additions to the list of breeding birds in Florida, first found nesting in Pinellas County in 1962 (Woolfenden and Meyerriecks 1963, *Auk* 80:365-366). By 1974 (Dunstan, et al. 1975, *Fla. Field Nat.* 3:16-17), five additional nesting sites had been discovered in peninsular Florida, four on the gulf coast (Charlotte Co., Hillsborough Co., Pinellas Co.—2) and one on the east coast (Brevard Co.).

In 1978, Caspian Terns nested on a spoil island about 50 m off Eastpoint, Franklin County, Florida. Annual checks of this island over a period of 30 years had indicated no previous nesting of the species, but much additional fill was added to the island in the early spring of 1978. On the highest part of the new portion, I found four Caspian Tern nests on 10 June, three of which contained two eggs each and the other only one. A few empty scrapes of similar size were also noted. On that date I estimated the number of adults at 15. Estimates of adults of other species nesting there were 100 Black Skimmers (*Rynchops niger*) and 200 Least Terns (*Sterna albifrons*).

I did not return to this island until 11 July, when I found several Caspian Tern nests containing eggs and/or young, as well as two downy young on the beach and a few empty scrapes. Two downies were taken for specimens (No. 3600, Tall Timbers Research Station; No. 3375c, Florida State University). As nesting was not entirely synchronous, it was difficult to determine the number of occupied nests. There may have been as many as 10, although I was never certain that as many as 20 adults were present.—HENRY M. STEVENSON, *Tall Timbers Research Station, Rt. 1, Box 160, Tallahassee, Florida 32312.*

Cliff Swallows continue to nest in Florida.—Cliff Swallows (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) were first discovered nesting in Florida in June 1975, on the east side of Lake Okeechobee under the U. S. Highway 441 bridge across the St. Lucie Canal at Port Mayaca, Martin County (Sykes 1976, *Wilson Bull.* 88:671-672). Of the nine nests at the site, two were found to be active. The location of the nests on the concrete structure was described. A male (NMNH 567576) of the nominate race and shell fragments of two fresh eggs were collected and sent to the U. S. National Museum. This small colony was inactive 1976-78, and the bridge is to be demolished and replaced.

In 1978, I discovered two occupied Cliff Swallow nests on 17 June, among a group of five beneath a low concrete bridge on U. S. Highway 441 4.5 km (2.8 mi.) north of the original colony. At least five adults were present on 17 and 26 June. On the latter date two young extended their heads out of one nest and a sixth nest was under construction. Contents of the other nests were never determined. This bridge is considerably lower and smaller than the one used in 1975 (Fig. 1), with a span of 18.3 m, a width of 9.9 m, and the underside of the roadbed 1.5 m above the water. The typical gourd-shaped mud-pellet nests were built against the vertical surfaces of the middle of three transverse beams and the underside of the roadbed. The beams, oriented east-west, are mounted on concrete pilings. Three nests were on the north side of the beam and three on the south, and all were about 1.4 m above the water.