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Winter Breeding of the Common Gallinule in the Florida Panhandle

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Fla. Field Nat. 9(1):8, 1981

An unusual female Ruddy Duck in central Florida.—From late December 1973 to early February 1974 I sometimes visited Lake Davis, a small lake in the urban area of Orlando, Orange County, Florida. Peak counts of Ruddy Ducks (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) on the lake rose to well over 300 ducks with males predominating. A conspicuous member of the flock was a female Ruddy Duck with head and neck clear white, but otherwise with normally colored plumage and dark bill and eyes. On inquiry of local observers, I was informed that this duck had been on Lake Davis during previous winters "for many years", but it had not been recorded on any other nearby lakes.

Frank C. Bellrose, Jr., (in litt.) has informed me he knows of no personal records of unusually plumaged Ruddy Ducks. However, Palmer (1976, Handbook of North American birds, vol. 3, New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, p. 503) mentions only one, "a mostly black (melanistic) female was collected in Utah in early June". I would be interested to learn of other records of unusually plumaged Ruddy Ducks.—BERNARD KING, *Gull Cry, 9 Park Road, Newlyn, Penzance, Cornwall, England.*

Fla. Field Nat. 9(1):8-9, 1981

Winter breeding of the Common Gallinule in the Florida Panhandle.—The Common Gallinule (*Gallinula chloropus*) is an abundant permanent resident at the Wakulla Springs Wildlife Sanctuary, Wakulla County, Florida. On 12 January 1980, while on the "Jungle Cruise" approximately one km downstream from the Wakulla River springhead, I observed an adult gallinule feeding a downy chick about 9-10 cm long. The adult was foraging near others on a mat of the floating ends of eel grass (*Vallisneria americana*). The observation was made with binoculars from a distance of 6-7 m in clear weather.

Wilburt Gavin, a tour guide for the Wakulla Springs Wild. Sanc., subsequently reported observing 2 chicks at the same location 2 days earlier, and remembered nest-building activity several weeks earlier. Careful searching on subsequent boat tours on that and following days revealed only adults, so I conclude that no chicks survived.

I estimate the age of the chick I observed to be one week or less, which when considered with a 19-22 day incubation period (Harrison 1978), places the start of incubation near the second week of December. An unusually warm 10-day period (5-14 December), with afternoon temperature maxima ranging from 19-26°C, may have contributed to this unusual winter breeding.

Previous accounts of downy young Common Gallinules include a record on 13 December 1976 in Broward County (Stevenson 1977) and in mid-December in Tampa (Hillsborough Co.) (Woolfenden 1979) and, also from this winter, two St. Petersburg (Pinellas Co.) accounts on 10 December 1979 and 29 February 1980 (Stevenson 1980). These locations are substantially south of the Florida Panhandle, where breeding records occur only as late as September (Stevenson 1958, Robertson 1970, Stevenson 1973). Consequently, this observation of downy young in January represents an unusual winter breeding of the Common Gallinule in Florida and is especially noteworthy for its occurrence in the Panhandle.

M. C. Bowman's invaluable index (1978) was especially helpful in the preparation of this note. I also thank Todd Engstrom for his comments.

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Fla. Field Nat. 9(1): 9, 1981

The absence of hematozoa in Burrowing Owls of the Tampa Bay area, Florida.—The Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*) has been given very little attention in surveys of blood parasites of birds. This may be due in part to the difficulty in capturing these ground-dwelling birds. Previous studies of Burrowing Owls (Stabler and Holt 1965 J. Parasitol. 51:927-928; Greiner et al. 1975 Can. J. Zool. 53:1762-1787) revealed no hematozoa in the few birds checked.

The effects of hematozoa on birds differ with the species of parasite and the species of bird infected. Pigeons (*Columba livia*) infected with *Haemoproteus columbae* seldom show any signs of disease, yet *Leucocytozoon simondi* is highly pathogenic to ducks and geese with the fatality rate approaching 85% in ducklings.

We examined blood smears from 1 adult and 29 young Burrowing Owls over the 6-year period 1975-1980, but no hematozoa were observed. Twenty nine of the birds were captured in Tampa, Hillsborough County, Florida, by plugging and carefully excavating the burrow. One bird, found injured and being held captive until recovery, was from Homosassa Springs, Citrus County, Florida.

Thin smears were prepared from blood obtained by venipuncture in the tarsometatarsus region. The smears were fixed in methanol and stained with giemsa. A minimum of 50 oil immersion fields were carefully examined by two of the authors (GMD, PMD).—GEORGE M. DOORIS, *Division of Natural Science and Mathematics, Saint Leo College, Saint Leo, Florida 33574*, and PATRICIA M. DOORIS AND WILLIAM D. COURSER, *Environmental Section, Southwest Florida Water Management District, Brooksville, Florida 33512*.

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American Robins and Cedar Waxwings rain-bathing under lawn sprinklers.—At Merritt Island, Brevard County, Florida, on 17 January 1974, a day of high humidity and temperature (max. 87° F), I watched a group of about 35 American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) and 35 Cedar Waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) rain-bathing in the spray of rotary water sprinklers operating in two adjacent residential lawns. For the 20 min I watched the two species, there was no aggression between them.

The two species used different methods of bathing. For example, some robins just squatted in the wet grass for 2-3 min at a time, with their heads and necks extended horizontally and with bills slightly open and pointing upward. Often their wings and tails were spread over the grass. Some robins lolled on one side with the upper wing partially extended over the ground, or more often stretched at an upward angle. Then, after a while, they turned onto the other side of their bodies and repeated the performance. Intermixed with this bathing was