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Red-winged Blackbird nest usurpation by rice rats in Florida and Mexico.—

The rice rat (*Oryzomys palustris*) is known to use a variety of materials in constructing its nest (Negus et al. 1961) in marshland areas, though it seems primarily to use various grasses (Hamilton 1946, Worth 1950). Several other marshland-breeding animals also use grasses in nest construction, which might offer rice rats the opportunity to pilfer or reuse materials from some other nest, rather than collect new materials. In this note we report the use of Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) nests by rice rats in southern Florida and in Veracruz, Mexico.

On 5 May 1982, in Dade County, Florida, we observed a Red-winged Blackbird nest next to a drainage ditch. It contained a single egg and was constructed of intertwined blades of grass located approximately 1.3 meters above the ground in a wax myrtle bush (*Myrica cerifera*). When we revisited the nest the next day, the bottom lining of the nest had been pushed or pulled up and reworked to form a plug over the nest cup's opening, creating a roughly spherical structure with an enclosed central chamber. The single egg was missing.

The chamber contained four young rodents that we tentatively identified as recently born rice rats. The identification was later confirmed by J. N. Layne (pers. comm.) from photographs of the young and through comparisons with illustrations in Lowery (1974). Although we carefully reconstructed the nest after examining the young, they were missing when the nest was rechecked the next day.

On 5 June 1983 in marshes around the Papaloapan River in the state of Veracruz, Mexico, we found another Red-winged Blackbird nest containing three young rodents that we identified as rice rats. The nest was constructed of grasses and was approximately 2 meters above the ground in cattails (*Typha* sp.). We found the nest after it had been abandoned by the Red-winged Blackbird and therefore could not determine its status when taken over by the rats. The nest had been altered in the same manner as the Florida nest. When we visited the nest the next day, the rats were still there.

Bancroft (1983) noted that rice rats usurped the nests of Boat-tailed Grackles (*Quiscalus major*) and that rats accounted for a large portion of the egg and nestling predation at some of his study sites. Kale (1965) also noted that nestling Marsh Wrens (*Cistothorus palustris*) were occasionally taken by rice rats, though he did not describe instances of wren nests being used by rats for nesting. The occurrence of this nest usurpation in different bird species and in two widely separated locales indicates that this behavior may be a common activity of rice rats. In any event, these represent interesting cases of interspecific nest use.

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First Gulf Coast record of the Bar-tailed Godwit.—On 23 April 1983, the authors and Steve Howell observed a Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) on a sand spit opposite the Florida State University Marine Lab near Turkey Point, Franklin County, Florida. The godwit rested with a flock of 15 Marbled Godwits (*L. fedoa*) and 45 Willets (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*) near the high tide line. We observed it under excellent light conditions (1400) with binoculars and spotting scope at distances down to 15 m for 10 minutes. We then deliberately flushed the bird to observe its wing and tail pattern. The bird was in basic plumage and the following field marks were noted and discussed during the observation period: (1) "obvious" godwit bill, slightly upturned,