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An Orphaned Young Ruddy Duck in North Florida

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lotte County were post-lactating, and a sixth was pregnant with a single fetus on 7 September 1979. Our record of advanced gestation on 30 August is further evidence of a late summer-fall birth season in southern Florida. Individuals of the conspecific *E. g. glaucinus* in Cuba have been found pregnant in September and October, and lactating females have occurred in July, September, October and November (Silva Taboada 1979: Table 3.31-3).

Observations of mastiff bats in Florida are rare. The most recent find confirms the continued existence of a small breeding population of this species in southern Florida. The Florida mastiff bat is currently under review for listing by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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An Orphaned Young Ruddy Duck in North Florida

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As Thomas A. Morrill and I canoed among the cypress-lined edge of Lake Munson, Leon County, on 4 July 1986, we observed a large downy duck near the edge and about 20 m from us. Although we expected a Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*), the only anatid regularly breeding in this part of Florida except the much larger Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*), neither of us was certain of the bird's identity as we studied it. That it did not seek cover when pressed was uncharacteristic of young Wood Ducks. On the first occasion it attempted flight, but its remiges were much too short and helped only to propel it along the surface in coot-like fashion. The second time we approached closely it dove, remained under water for about 20 sec., then surfaced about 30 m behind us. During this two-hour trip we saw no other duck, although Wood Ducks have bred near this lake, where I saw 12 birds including a brood of 5 ducks on 6 July 1975.

Examination of paintings in Kortright (1942) revealed a surprising resemblance in the general color patterns of downy young Ruddy Ducks (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) and Wood

Ducks, and I had failed to notice whether the dark cap of the bird extended to or below the eye. Fortunately, Morrill had noticed this feature and that the cap did extend to the level of the eye, as in the Ruddy Duck. That species had been under consideration from the beginning, as it had been known to nest in Florida. For a review of such records see Woolfenden and Woolfenden (1984). Furthermore, numbers of Ruddies frequent this lake each winter, and cripples have been seen there in summer. When I saw Wood Ducks of similar age on 10 July and noticed their much buffier ground color and more restricted dark caps, I was certain that the Lake Munson bird was a Ruddy Duck. On two later trips to Lake Munson I saw no ducks. Although the downy young may have been capable of flight by the latter date (15 July), it seems very doubtful that it would have left the lake so early. The consistent absence of its parents also was surprising. Morrill and I believe that the entire family was victimized by predators. Alligators (*Alligator mississippiensis*) of varied size, large turtles, and large fish are plentiful. At least one Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) was present, a species that occasionally preys on small birds (Wiley and Lohrer 1973), and large snakes and predatory mammals doubtless occur there.

A less likely explanation for the absence of adult Ruddy Ducks might arise from the species' habit of dumping its eggs in the nests of other water birds. Weller (1959) did not list the Wood Duck among six species of birds victimized by the Ruddy Duck's egg dumping, nor would one expect that any tree-nesting duck would be thus parasitized. Neither do the Anhingas (*Anhinga anhinga*) or the various wading birds at Lake Munson nest near the ground (if they nest there at all), and we have no recent records of Purple Gallinules (*Porphyryla martinica*) or Common Moorhens (*Gallinula chloropus*) at this polluted lake. Thus egg dumping is not a likely reason for the absence of adult Ruddy Ducks at Lake Munson in July 1986.

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