
January 1996

Late Breeding Records of a Red-headed Woodpecker and a Summer Tanager in Florida

Douglas B. McNair

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

Recommended Citation

McNair, Douglas B. (1996) "Late Breeding Records of a Red-headed Woodpecker and a Summer Tanager in Florida," *Florida Field Naturalist*. Vol. 24 : Iss. 3 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn/vol24/iss3/4>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by 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.

Fla. Field Nat. 24(3): 78-80, 1996.

LATE BREEDING RECORDS OF A RED-HEADED WOODPECKER AND A SUMMER TANAGER IN FLORIDA

DOUGLAS B. MCNAIR

Tall Timbers Research Station, Route 1, Box 678, Tallahassee, Florida 32312-9712

While studying the nesting phenology of passerines and woodpeckers in 75 year-old longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) forest in the Apalachicola National Forest near Sumatra, Liberty County, Florida, I found a late nest each of the Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) and Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*). These birds were unmarked. These breeding record dates exceed those for Florida cited by Stevenson and Anderson (1994) and elsewhere in the southeastern United States (Potter 1973, Smith and Layne 1986, McNair 1987, and Ingold 1987, 1989).

Red-headed Woodpecker (RHW).—One pair of RHWs apparently raised two broods from the same nest cavity in a bole of a longleaf pine snag. On 26 June, a large RHW nestling was being fed by a parent at the cavity entrance. This nestling fledged before 4 July.

One large RHW nestling of the second brood was being fed by an adult at the cavity entrance on 30 September. By noon of the next day (1 Oct), no activity was detected at the nest cavity.

About 3 months elapsed from the time nestlings from the first nest fledged until the time nestlings from the second nest fledged. After it fledged young from its initial nesting effort by early July, this RHW pair switched its nest-site to a snag 219 m away, where it remained until about 24 July. The pair of RHWs was not seen again at its original nest-site until 5 August.

The extremely late nest record of a RHW, in which the last nestling did not fledge until either 30 September or 1 October, is about 8-11 days later than the latest previous fledgling dates for RHWs in Florida (Nicholson 1927, Grimes 1947, Smith and Layne 1986). Outside of Florida, a few RHW nests were still active as late as mid-September in Mississippi (Ingold 1989; Ingold, *in litt.*). Otherwise, September nestling dates for RHWs are not documented.

The late RHW nesting record of Smith and Layne (1986) in Highlands County, Florida, was of a pair that abandoned their original nest cavity, in a slash pine (*P. elliotii*) snag, and relocated in another pine snag 150 m away. The young from the first brood fledged between 11-25 June. It was approximately 90 days before the nestlings from the later nest effort fledged in mid-September, approximately the same interval I observed in the Apalachicola National Forest. The longest previous interval between dates where nest attempts were completed for RHW pairs was 60 days in Mississippi (Ingold 1987). The length of undisturbed nesting cycles in the same cavity after the first breeding attempt are approximately 45 days (Jackson 1977, Short 1982, and Ingold 1989, 1994).

These two latest documented breeding attempts of RHW in Florida occurred after pairs switched nest-sites (temporary switch for one pair) after a first brood, yet both pairs were eventually successful in raising a second brood (Smith and Layne 1986; this study). The switch in nest-sites resulted in delays in the initiation of a successful nesting cycle. In the case of my RHW pair, nesting was delayed even further because the alternative snag lacked previously completed cavities, a rare event (Reller 1972, Jackson 1976; this study). Documented excavation times for this species have ranged from 6-17 days (Jackson 1977). However, the major proximate explanation for late nesting dates by RHWs is the length and timing of the breeding season. RHWs are frequently double-brooded in the South (Smith and Layne 1986; Ingold 1987, 1989; VENABLES and COLLOPY

1989; McNair and Engstrom, unpubl.) and do not begin their initial nesting efforts until mid April through early May, unlike most other woodpecker species in the southeastern United States.

Summer Tanager (ST).—A female was apparently incubating eggs in a nest located 19.75 m high in a 21.75 m tall longleaf pine. In over 1.5 hr of observations, I watched the female settle on the nest twice on 16 July, once on the 19th, and for the night at 2030 and 1937 hr on 16 and 19 July, respectively. On 24 July, one bird called near the nest-site. After this date, the nest was abandoned.

This active nest, during which the female was apparently incubating eggs from 16-19 July, and perhaps as late as 23-24 July, is by far the latest active nest reported for STs in Florida. The latest egg dates listed by Stevenson and Anderson (1994) are 13 and 24 June, and they also state that a brood of young "just out of the nest" was seen on 30 June. Consequently, the latest active nest during the incubation stage documented herein exceeds the previous latest dates in Florida by about 25-30 days.

This late nest record in Florida is even late for the species throughout its breeding range (McNair 1987). The latest published record of an active tanager nest in the southeastern United States is from North Carolina, where a female incubated eggs up to 2 July, when they hatched (Potter 1973). The late Florida date exceeds that by about three weeks. Unlike all other species cited in McNair (1987), early egg-laying dates from egg set data were not overrepresented for ST, though the end of the breeding season might be poorly defined.

The late nest record documented herein, in conjunction with an earlier nest record located 131 m away (McNair, unpubl.), suggests the possibility of double-broodedness. The two territories overlapped broadly, as only a slight shift was detected between nest attempts. I observed no other pairs of ST within or adjacent to the study area. Unfortunately, I am uncertain of the eventual fate of the earlier breeding record, though it was probably only 2-3 days from successful fledging. Double-broodedness has never been documented for the ST (Isler and Isler 1987).

I thank R. T. Engstrom, D. J. Ingold, D. C. Lenard, P. Small, and W. K. Taylor for comments on the manuscript.

LITERATURE CITED

- GRIMES, S. A. 1947. Birds of Duval county. Florida Nat. 21:1-13.
- INGOLD, D. J. 1987. Documented double-broodedness in Red-headed Woodpeckers. J. Field Ornithol. 58:234-235.
- INGOLD, D. J. 1989. Nesting phenology and competition for nest sites among Red-headed and Red-bellied Woodpeckers and European Starlings. Auk 106:209-217.
- INGOLD, D. J. 1994. Influence of nest-site competition between European Starlings and woodpeckers. Wilson Bull. 106:227-241.
- ISLER, M. L., AND P. R. ISLER. 1987. The Tanagers: Natural History, Distribution, and Identification. Smithsonian Inst. Press, Washington, D.C.
- JACKSON, J. A. 1976. A comparison of some aspects of the breeding ecology of Red-headed and Red-bellied woodpeckers in Kansas. Condor 78:67-76.
- JACKSON, J. A. 1977. How to determine the status of a woodpecker nest. Living Bird 15:205-221.
- MCNAIR, D. B. 1987. Egg data slips—are they useful for information on egg-laying dates and clutch sizes? Condor 89:369-376.
- NICHOLSON, W. H. 1927. Late Red-headed Woodpecker. The Oologist 44:13.
- POTTER, E. F. 1973. Breeding behavior of the Summer Tanager. Chat 37:35-39.
- RELLER, A. W. 1972. Aspects of behavioral ecology of Red-headed and Red-bellied woodpeckers. Amer. Midl. Nat. 88:270-290.

- SHORT, L. L. 1982. Woodpeckers of the world. Delaware Museum of Natural History, Greenville, Delaware.
- SMITH, D. R., AND J. N. LAYNE. 1986. Occurrence of a double brood in Red-headed Woodpeckers in south central Florida. *Florida Field Nat.* 14:98-99.
- STEVENSON, H. M., AND B. H. ANDERSON. 1994. *The Birdlife of Florida*. Univ. Press Florida, Gainesville.
- VENABLES, A., AND M. W. COLLOPY. 1989. Seasonal foraging and habitat requirements of Red-headed Woodpeckers in north-central Florida. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Comm. Nongame Wildl. Program Final Rept.

The Florida Ornithological Society
is Proud to Announce Special Publication No. 6

FLORIDA BIRD SPECIES: AN ANNOTATED LIST

BY

WILLIAM B. ROBERTSON, JR.

GLEN E. WOOLFENDEN

The first complete and authoritative review of Florida's avifauna since Arthur Howell's 1932 *Florida Bird Life*. Treats over 660 species reported in the state. More than 140 species of non-native exotics. Essential for everyone interested in the modern status of Florida's native and introduced birds.

	SOFT COVER	HARD COVER
FOS Members	\$14.95	\$19.95
Non-Members	\$17.95	\$22.95

All orders add \$2.00 shipping and handling per book.
Florida residents add 7% sales tax to the total.
Make checks payable to Florida Ornithological Society.

Mail to:

F.O.S. SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS EDITOR

ARCHBOLD BIOLOGICAL STATION

P.O. BOX 2057

LAKE PLACID, FL 33862