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NOTES

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SOUTHERNMOST BREEDING OF BLACK SKIMMERS ALONG ATLANTIC COAST OF FLORIDA IS RESTRICTED TO ROOFTOPS

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The Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) is listed as a “species of special concern” by the State of Florida (Chap. 39 F.A.C.). The general ecology and status of the North American population have been reviewed in Clapp et al. (1983) and Spindelov and Patton (1988). The status and distribution of Black Skimmers in Florida have been reviewed by Loftin and Smith (1996). Nesting reports for the early 1990s suggested a Florida breeding population of 1,500-2,000 breeding pairs (Loftin and Smith 1996).

Historically, Black Skimmers typically nested on open, flat barrier island beaches with a substrate of sand and shells (see reviews in Clapp et al. 1983, Spindelov and Patton 1988). Coastal development in south Florida has eliminated most of this nesting habitat, or otherwise made it prone to disruptive disturbance by human activities (Rodgers and Smith 1995, 1997). In south Florida, Black Skimmers were first reported nesting on gravel-covered rooftops by Greene and Kale (1976). Rooftop nesting also has been reported in northwest Florida (Gore 1987, 1991), and northeast Florida (Hovis and Gore, unpubl. rept.). In this note we report the southernmost known nesting by Black Skimmers along the Atlantic Coast of the United States in Broward and Palm Beach counties, Florida; all of the nesting occurred on rooftops.

We surveyed Indian River County to Monroe County on the Atlantic Coast of Florida for nesting Least Terns (*Sterna antillarum*; see Zambrano et al. 1997) from 12 May to 26 June 1995, with additional observations in June 2000 in Palm Beach County. Data regarding Black Skimmers and other “shorebirds” were concomitantly collected. Surveys were conducted in the morning or very late afternoon to minimize heat stress to eggs and chicks in case adults were flushed. For all roof sites, we requested access from the management or owner of the building. If access was refused, we observed the site from the roof of an adjacent building. If possible, we observed nesting activity from the edge of the colony with spotting scopes or binoculars to minimize disturbance.

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Table 1. Breeding summary of rooftop nesting Black Skimmers in south Florida.

Colony	County	Latitude	Longitude	Date	Breeding pairs
Pharmor, Plantation	Broward	26.10	80.25	2 June 1995	5
Home Depot, Plantation	Broward	26.10	80.25	2 June 1995	8
Miramar Exchange Park, Miramar	Broward	25.97	80.30	21 June 1995	1
Fort Pierce Police Department	St. Lucie	27.43	80.32	31 May 1995	6
Indian River Community College, Fort Pierce	St. Lucie	27.42	80.36	6 June 1995	4
Winn Dixie, Fort Pierce	St. Lucie	27.37	80.33	6 June 1995	1
Albertsons, West Palm Beach	Palm Beach	26.81	80.10	19 June 2000	1

We located six colonies of Black Skimmers along the Atlantic Coast during the 1995 survey (Table 1). Three were located in St. Lucie County and three in Broward County; all were on rooftops. Five of the colonies also supported nesting Least Terns (see Zambrano et al. 1997), the exception being a colony at Pharmor—Plantation which had only the five breeding pairs of skimmers (Table 1). Verbal reports of Black Skimmers flying over an additional rooftop (Albertsons—Northlake Blvd.) in Palm Beach County during June 2000 prompted a supplementary survey. On 19 June 2000 we observed an adult flying over the site and a quick inspection of the rooftop found a chick estimated to be approximately two weeks old (Table 1). This colony also supported nesting Least Terns.

Due to manpower constraints, we were unable to monitor nesting success rates during 1995 and 2000. We recommend additional surveys for rooftop nesting terns and skimmers be conducted every three years to monitor trends in Black Skimmer nesting range and success. Rooftop management techniques should also be implemented to improve the breeding success of this species (Coburn et al. 2001).

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