

A NOTE OF FLORIDA BURROWING OWLS

by C. Brooke Worth

During three years in Tampa, Florida, I was able to band about a dozen adult Florida Burrowing Owls. These were all caught with a butterfly net in a building of an abandoned army camp at the Tampa International Airport. Several of these birds were later reported as having been found dead or caught and released, all of them in Tampa. The oldest owl was No. A-500661, banded on November 21, 1947, and reported as found dead in a letter to the F. and W. Service dated May 8, 1952.

These birds were common at the airport, being often seen at the edges of the landing strips, especially at night when the lights of incoming planes marked them out clearly. Some were killed by airplanes, but their abundance did not seem to be affected.

A pair nested for two years within about fifty feet of a building on the airport grounds where we had our laboratory. We used to see jets of sand flying out as the birds extended their burrow prior to egg laying. The resulting mound at the entrance was the customary perch of one or both adults throughout the day. Five young were reared in the first season, but the nest was flooded out by a heavy rain in the second year. I found one other nest; it resembled the first one exactly. Inquisitive people dug this one out, and one day I arrived just in time to prevent the same thing happening to the first nest. The enemies of these defenseless birds therefore include man in at least two destructive categories.

(Note: Dr. Worth, who spent the last two years doing medical research in India, has now returned to this country, but we do not have his current address at hand. His last copy of EBBA NEWS was returned to the Editor bearing the notation "Moved" as well as three forwarding addresses, one of which was the intriguing advice, "C/o Poor Box 8"!)