

Roof Nesting by Black Skimmers

During the breeding seasons of 1974 and 1975 weekly surveys (mid-April to mid-August) were made of a Least Tern (*Sterna albifrons*) colony nesting on the gravel-covered rooftops of three warehouses belonging to the Port Everglades Authority in Fort Lauderdale, Broward County, Florida. (These data will be presented in a subsequent report.) The roofs are covered with crushed limestone over tar and are rapidly drained after heavy rainfall.

On the morning of 14 June 1975, as the survey team reached the roof of Warehouse No. 2 (Fig. 1), a dozen Black Skimmers (*Rynchops niger*) flew off. This was the first time skimmers had been observed in the port area since the end of March, when a single bird was present, although large flocks of skimmers and gulls roosted on the warehouse roofs during the winter months. While counting the Least



Figure 1. Nest scrape and eggs of Black Skimmer on warehouse roof, summer of 1975, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida (Photograph by E. S. Greene).

Tern nests and chicks, two black circles, or scrapes, each about 15 cm in diameter were noted. One scrape contained a single Black Skimmer egg, the other contained 2 eggs. The adults had scraped out all the gravel down to the tar surface. Because of this the nests were easy to detect from a distance, unlike the Least Tern nests, which were slight depressions in the gravel.

During the following weeks the numbers of adult skimmers, nests, and eggs increased (see Table 1), but no successful hatching of eggs occurred. Eggs on subsequent visits were found punctured or had mysteriously disappeared. On the other hand, Least Terns on the same roof were successful in hatching and fledging their young.

On 4 July about 10 Fish Crows (*Corvus ossifragus*) were seen flying over and landing on the roof of Warehouse No. 3, a short distance from Warehouse No. 2. However, this was the first time we had seen crows in the vicinity while the skimmers were nesting. (The home of the senior author is directly opposite these warehouses, just across the intracoastal waterway.)

Unlike skimmers nesting on beaches, which when disturbed will fly closely around intruders and give their characteristic barking cry, and occasionally a broken-wing display, these birds did not harass us (although the Least Terns made a protective hat necessary!). Instead, they flew in ever-widening circles, and then flew off down the waterway. Nor did the skimmers return when the survey team had

Table I. Roof nesting by Black Skimmers in summer of 1975, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

Date	No. of Birds	No. of Nests	No. of Eggs
14 June	12	2	1 (1 nest) 2 (1 nest)
22 June	18	2	2 (2 nests)
30 June	18	0	0
12 July	45	8	1 (5 nests) 2 (2 nests) 3 (1 nest)
22 July	25	4	1 (4 nests)
2 August	20	3	1 (2 nests) 2 (1 nest)
9 August	0	0	0
	Totals:	19	27

left the roof—again unlike the Least Terns, who promptly settled down on their nests.

One clue to what may have happened to some of the eggs was suggested when one egg in a nest of two was seen to be cracked open on the underside—the side lying on the tar. Possibly the heat being absorbed by the tar was too great for the eggshell in contact with it. The conspicuousness of the black circular nests, coupled with the skimmers' failure to protect them, suggests also that predation by Fish Crows, or by the Boat-tailed Grackles (*Cassidix major*) nesting in nearby palm trees, was occurring.

As far as we can ascertain this is the first record of Black Skimmers nesting on the roof of a man-made structure.

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Third Record of the Arctic Loon from Florida

The first Arctic Loon (*Gavia arctica*) recorded in Florida was a dead bird found in Palm Beach County on 2 November 1959 (Langridge, *Auk*, 77: 351). The second record was a live bird collected on the lower Wakulla River, Wakulla County, 14 December 1971 (Stevenson, *American Birds*, 26: 593). On 20 April 1975 a desiccated carcass still retaining many feathers was found on Bush Key, Dry Tortugas, Monroe County. Identification as an Arctic Loon was verified by Mrs. Roxie Laybourne of the National Museum of Natural History. The specimen (GEW 5000) is now a skeleton housed at the University of South Florida. The well-feathered condition suggests that the bird perished not too far from the Dry Tortugas. The winter range of the Arctic Loon on the Pacific Coast of North America includes southern Baja California, but on the Atlantic Coast it is a rare vagrant. This is the southernmost record for the United States.

I thank William B. Robertson, Jr., and Glen E. Woolfenden for help in preparing this note,—*Barbara C. Kittleson, 5334 Woodhaven Drive, Lakeland, Fla. 33803.*