

## A Second Recent Royal Tern Nesting Colony on the Gulf Coast of Florida

The Royal Tern (*Thalasseus maximus*) is abundant along Florida's coasts throughout the year and formerly bred at many locations along the Gulf Coast and on the Dry Tortugas. These sites were abandoned by the early 1900's (Howell 1932). However, in June 1951 R. C. Hallman (1952) found Royal Tern eggs on the northern Gulf Coast at Shell Island, off Port St. Joe. On subsequent visits Hallman located from one to 2 nests per annum through 1969, but in 1970 he counted 26 Royal Tern nests (Stevenson 1972). Stevenson (1972) later in that same nesting season saw approximately 165 Royal Tern chicks at this locale. In 1968 a large Royal Tern nesting colony was established on the Atlantic Coast at Bird Island in Nassau Sound, Duval Co., and in 1970 S. A. Grimes and E. LeBaron (Ogden 1970) reported finding 1000 nests and 200 downy young at this colony. In 1974 Steve L. Sutton (Ogden 1974) found 2100 Royal Tern nests on nearby Little Bird Island in Nassau Sound. In 1973 Robert D. Barber and Allan D. Cruickshank (Ogden 1973) found the species breeding on spoil islands inside Merritt Island Refuge, Brevard Co., and in 1974 Jim Baker (Ogden 1974) found 2000 Royal Tern nests on Merritt Island. In 1975 E. A. and R. W. Schreiber (1976) found a single pair of Royal Terns nesting within a Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*) colony on a spoil island along the Intracoastal Waterway in Charlotte Harbor, Charlotte Co.

On 3 July 1975 we located more than 35 old nests (identified by broken eggshells), 12 eggs, and approximately 45 flightless Royal Tern chicks on 2 of 13 spoil islands extending about 2 kilometers into the Gulf of Mexico from the mouth of the Cross-Florida Barge Canal near Yankeetown, Citrus Co. The Royal Terns were nesting in association with approximately 450 Laughing Gulls, 250 Black Skimmers (*Rynchops niger*) and 225 Least Terns (*Sterna albifrons*). Also seen in the area during the nesting period, though no nests were found, were 4 Snowy Plovers (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), 15 American Oystercatchers (*Haematopus palliatus*), and 21 Sandwich Terns (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*), approximately one third of the terns being immatures capable of flight.

These spoil islands were constructed between 1964 and 1967 (U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, pers. comm.) and conform to Royal Tern colony site characteristics as described by Buckley and Buckley (1972)—i.e. (1) absence of mammalian predators; (2) general inaccessibility and excellent visibility of surroundings, usually typified by isolated spoil banks; (3) extensive areas of adjacent shallows for feed-

ing; and (4) location at or very near an inlet between bay and ocean.

The recent breeding by Royal Terns at scattered localities throughout the state, particularly on newly created spoil islands, suggests that they may be re-establishing themselves as breeders along Florida's coasts.

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*D. Bruce Barbour, Stephen A. Nesbitt, and D. Terry Gilbert, Wildlife Research Projects, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, 4005 S. Main St., Gainesville, Fla. 32601.*

#### Sandhill Crane Data

Dr. Lawrence H. Walkinshaw has deposited in the Archbold Biological Station Library a copy of his field notes on Sandhill Cranes in the southeastern United States and Cuba. These field notes relate mainly to Florida during 1966-74, but also cover Mississippi, Georgia, and Cuba during 1938-74. The crane data include nesting season and habitat, nest site and construction, adult behavior at the nest, eggs, young, nesting success, and local movements. Also included are some census data for other birds occurring in Sandhill Crane habitat in Florida, Mississippi, and Cuba. For further information write to: *Librarian, Archbold Biological Station, Route 2, Box 180, Lake Placid, FL 33852.*