

**Nest attentiveness by Florida Sandhill Cranes.**—Few observations have been made of nest attentiveness of Sandhill Cranes primarily because nests are difficult to observe without disturbance. In February-March 1984 I had an opportunity to observe a roadside nest of Florida Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis pratensis*). The nest was 8 km west of Lake Hatchineha, Polk County, Florida (Sec. 20, T28S, R28E), amongst vegetation in a roadside pond. The vegetation was predominantly arrowhead (*Sagittaria lancifolia*) with several low buttonbushes (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) protruding above the arrowhead while a lone 10 m leafless tree draped with Spanish moss stood about 20 m to the west. The arrowhead patch was about 20 m wide and 30 m long. The remainder of the pond was chiefly maiden cane (*Panicum hemitimum*), the water appearing to be up to 30-40 cm deep.

I first observed the nest, with A. G. Dowding, on 23 February 1984. On 2 March Miles Pealle and I watched the nest all day. It was observed again on 13, 19 and 22 March at which time the adults were accompanying and feeding two newly hatched chicks.

On 2 March 1984 I watched the pair from 0615 until 1310; M. Pealle watched them from 1310 until 1410 when I continued until dark at 1835. The watch was made from our cars along the roadside. The highway was rather busy. Between 0800 and 1830, 616 vehicles went by of which 48 were heavy trucks and 120 smaller trucks. The cranes paid no attention to the traffic nor to our cars about 200 m from the nest. The sky was clear except for a few cumulus clouds. At break of day the temperature was 0°C with a light frost whereas the high that day was 18°C at Lake Wales.

The larger bird, apparently the male, roosted only a few meters from the nest while the female incubated the eggs. At 0715 the pair silently changed places at the nest. She walked away into the pond feeding. At 0842 the male stood up, worked with the nest and eggs, stepped into the water and began pulling vegetation throwing it back with a sidewise motion toward the nest. Much of it landed in the water beside the nest. He continued this until 0847, then he hurried back to the eggs at 0848. At 1034 the female waded from the west in the direction of the nest. The male stood up. He instigated a "Unison Call". The birds gave it three times, male with head up, secondaries slightly raised; the female with wings tight against her sides. The female then sat down on the eggs. At 1040 the male was 18 m from the nest still throwing vegetation in its direction. He then walked 45 m away, then flew, circling the pond but landed in an open spot 90 m from the nest in taller vegetation. At 1135 she worked with the nest and eggs while at 1244 the male flew in from the south. He landed 20 m from the nest and began wading in its direction. When 10 m away he stopped and preened returning to the nest at 1250. At 1255 the female stood up; then both birds began pulling vegetation with their beaks swinging it with a sidewise motion back onto the nest or close to it in the water. At 1305 the male fed 3 m from the nest while the female sat down again. At 1307 she stood up and left the nest wading to the east where she disappeared into taller vegetation. The male silently climbed onto the nest and began incubating. At 1320 he stood up and worked with the eggs 3 minutes. At 1446 he worked with the eggs for one minute and again for two minutes at 1523. At 1644 the female flew in from

the south, landing 5 m south of the nest. She waded around a little then stopped 4 m from the nest, came closer and preened. At 1651 the male stood up and walked off the nest. The female climbed up and sat down. The male began tossing vegetation back toward the nest then went on foot to the southeast end of the pond. At 1835 he flew back eventually ending up 9 m from the nest at the edge of the *Sagittaria*. As it got dark the female continued to incubate as the male stood motionless 9 m away.

During the 12 hours we observed this nest, the female incubated during three periods: (1) probably all night 1-2 March 1984 until 0715 2 March (with the known period of 0638-0715 hrs); (2) from 1034 until 1307 (153 minutes) and (3) from 1651 until 1838 then probably the entire night of 2-3 March. During daylight hours she incubated during periods of 37, 153 and 107 minutes, totaling 297 minutes. The male incubated 0715 until 1034 (199 minutes) and from 1307 until 1651 (224 minutes), a total of 423 minutes. The female worked with the nest and eggs for 9 periods of 20 minutes while the male worked with them for 7 periods or 19 minutes. Thus during the daytime there were 39 minutes during which the birds did not incubate.—Lawrence H. Walkinshaw, 5230 Timberlane Road, Lake Wales, Florida 33853.

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**Alligator with young threatens Great Blue Heron.**—I know of no reports of an alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) threatening or attacking a Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*). In this note I report an observation of an alligator driving a heron away from her young, estimated to be 8-9 months of age, by a waterhole on the Hendrie ranch, 24 km south of Lake Placid, Highlands County, Florida. The waterhole, a pool 8 x 20 m, was free of vegetation. Also favoring observations was the tameness of the alligators and heron resulting from my daily visits to the ranch. The alligators moved into the pool on 9 April following several days of rain, preceded by months of drought. Fourteen young alligators, about 36 cm in length, arrived irregularly over the next 3 days. The smaller of the adults (ca 2.3 m in length) was probably a female, as judged by her size and the way she guarded the young (Kushlan 1973, *Herpetologica* 29: 256-257). Also, on 17 April I watched her rub her throat three times on the back of the head of the larger alligator (length ca 3.3 m), which appeared to be a male, then sink under water on top of him, a form of courtship described by Garrick (1975, *Animal Kingdom* 78(2):2-8).

On a number of mornings the young climbed onto the grass of a spoil bank to sun themselves, followed by the smaller adult and, to one side, the larger adult. The alligators were in these positions on 18 April when a Great Blue Heron alighted 3 m away, then started walking toward them. The female alligator, rising high on her legs, rushed at the heron with jaws open. The heron, seemingly not much disturbed, turned and moved to the end of the waterhole where it fed by Walking Slowly (Kushlan 1976, *Auk* 93: 86-94). After returning to her young, the smaller adult alligator slipped down the bank, with head pointed toward the heron, and disappeared under the water. The heron, as if anticipating the alligator's arrival, stood on the shore (Fig. 1a), looking in its direction. After 1-2 min the submerged alligator suddenly made an open-mouthed lunge at the heron (Fig. 1b). Because the alligator did not come very close, I think that she was trying to scare the heron rather than to catch it.