

NOTES

Inland nesting of Black Skimmers.—At an inland site 73 km west of the Atlantic coast of Florida, we found a Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) incubating two eggs. This nest, found on 9 June 1985, was on a marl road beside a flooded field in an extensive agriculture area (Fig. 1) at Duda Farms near Belle Glade, Palm Beach County, Florida. The only known inland nesting of Black Skimmers in the USA was reported at Salton Sea, California (McCaskie 1972, *Am. Birds* 26:906).

From 9 June through 8 September the number of birds observed at the nesting location fluctuated from 58 to 270. The accuracy of the chronology and results of nesting observed in June through 3 October 1985 as shown in Table 1 was somewhat limited as observers tried to keep their visits brief so as to limit disturbing the skimmers as much as possible.

The use of flat gravel covered roofs near the coast by nesting skimmers in recent years appears to be a direct result of the loss of coastal beach habitat through increased encroachment on coastal areas by man-made structures and people (Fisk 1978, *Fla. Field Nat.* 6:1-8; Greene and Kale 1972, *Fla. Nat.* 4:15-17). The presence of this breeding colony at Duda Farms is another indication of the loss of natural nesting grounds in coastal areas. The ability of Black Skimmers to change colony sites readily (Clapp et al. 1983, *Marine birds of the southeastern U. S. and Gulf of Mexico*, Washington, DC: U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service) apparently provides skimmers the flexibility to experiment with different types of nesting habitat.



Figure 1. Inland nesting habitat of Black Skimmers.

Table 1. Nesting Chronology of the Duda Farms Black Skimmer Colony.

Date	Fresh scrapes	Nests	1e ¹	2e	3e	4e	Broken eggs	Young
9 Jun	9	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
29 Jun	10	6	1	3	0	0	2	0
6 Jun	10	7	1	2	3	1	0	0
13 Jul	0	8	2	0	5	1	0	0
27 Jul	16	15	4	6	5	0	0	0
3 Aug	1	6	0	5	0	1	0	0
17 Aug	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0
31 Aug	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	3 small, 2 dead
8 Sep	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	1 1/3 grown
3 Oct	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 flying

¹1e = one egg, 2e = two eggs, 3e = three eggs.

The unexplained loss of many nests, observations of broken eggs and flattened young, and our observing only two fledged young show the hazards faced by skimmers attempting to nest inland. Disturbance by field observers and others may have been a factor (Safina and Burger 1983, *Condor* 85:164-171) despite our efforts to discourage observers from using the nesting road by placing a large barrel in the middle of the road. However, the skimmers started using the parallel road across the canal as well, so our efforts to control access were fruitless. Two large dogs near the nesting colony on 29 June also could have presented problems for the skimmers.

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Prey handling by Anhingas.—The Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*) usually feeds underwater by impaling a fish with its mandibles. After surfacing, the Anhinga tosses its head backward, freeing the fish which it catches in mid-air and mouths to position for headfirst swallowing (Owre 1967, *Ornithol. Monogr.* 6: 1-38). We observed two Anhingas using trees to ready fish for swallowing. Each Anhinga used the tree differently, and we believe for a different purpose.

The first observation was made on 23 March 1984 at 1520 h EST at 'Ding' Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Florida. We saw a male Anhinga swimming with a laterally flattened fish, about 15 cm in length, held between its mandibles. The Anhinga swam about 30 m to a mangrove thicket, frequently tossing its head back. After submerging approximately 1 m from the thicket, the bird climbed onto a mangrove root about 0.5 m above the water and proceeded to strike the fish against a neighboring root 30 times in about 2 min. The Anhinga then tossed its head backward, releasing the fish from its bill. The fish was caught and swallowed headfirst. The bird proceeded to wingspread facing northwest. A. Margaret Elowson (pers. comm.) also saw this Anhinga and corroborates our observation.

The second observation took place on 26 March 1984 at 1151 h EST on Anhinga Trail, Everglades National Park, Florida. The Anhinga (its sex was not recorded) was perched about 0.3 m above the water surface on a branch of a fallen tree. A centrarchid-like fish, about 15 cm long, was impaled by the bird's upper and lower mandibles. The Anhinga