

NOTES

Successful nesting of Black-shouldered Kites in the Everglades of Broward County, Florida.—Since the late 1960's the Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*) has expanded its range in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Oklahoma (Gatz et al. 1986). Toups et al. (1985) documented the first appearance and nesting of this kite in Mississippi in 1983. Due to the kite's regular fall and winter sightings in Florida, Hoffman (1985) suggested its eventual recolonization. Kale (1974) reported 11 observations from 1961 to 1973, including one immature bird. Stevenson (pers. comm.) recorded 14 observations since 1974. From 21 September to 25 October 1984 an adult kite frequented ranch land west of Ft. Lauderdale (Atherton and Atherton 1985). A kite was observed over Margate during the 1985 Ft. Lauderdale Christman Bird Count (Bolte 1986). Although there are three records of previous nesting attempts in Florida, the last on 4 February 1910, none were successful (Sprunt 1954).

On 27 March 1986, I discovered a pair of nesting Black-shouldered Kites in the north end of Water Conservation Area 3A (CA3A), Broward County. Two more nesting pairs were located in the same vicinity on 5 and 30 April. By mid-June seven kites had fledged from these three nests. A photograph of one of these nestlings will be deposited in the Florida State Museum.

All three nests consisted of small twigs and were built in living wax myrtles (*Myrica cerifera*). The first nest was located 3.08 m high in a 3.50 m tall wax myrtle. The nest was constructed of sticks and was 30-35 cm in diameter and 7-10 cm deep. On 27 March 1986 the water level near this nest was at natural ground level and continually decreased during the nesting period. During the first inspection (2 April) the nest contained three young and one egg. By 14 April there were two young and one egg. On 19 April three young kites were in the nest. By 26 April one nestling remained; on 28 April it fledged. On 5 May five kites were observed in the vicinity of the nest. These were assumed to be the three immatures and two adults from this nest. The last egg did not hatch.

The second and third nests were 4.0 and 1.9 km east of the first nest. They also were constructed of sticks in wax myrtles; 4.9 and 3.2 m above the ground, respectively. The second nest was 30.5-38.1 cm in diameter; the third was more oblong, 50.8 cm long and 30.5 cm wide. On 12 April the second nest contained one egg. Two young were seen in this nest on 16 May. On 24 May each adult was seen flying to the nest, and on 26 May both adults were seen in the area. A grackle (*Quiscalus* sp.) was seen on the nest tree on 30 May; two adult kites were seen 0.8 km from the nest. On 31 May no kites were seen in this area. One adult was seen south of the nest on 1 June, and on 2 June it was found to be abandoned. The third nest was located on 30 April; it contained at least four eggs on 1 May. On 15 May it contained five nestlings, three birds in the natal down stage and two in the early stages of juvenal plumage. On 28 May at least one (possibly two) of the five nestlings was on the verge of leaving the nest. Only one nestling was still in the natal down stage, and I believe it died sometime later. On 4 June a nestling was perched on a dead branch above the nest, and two more (in juvenal plumage) remained in the nest. On the final visit to this nest (10 June), one nestling was seen. Five other kites were seen perching and flying in the vicinity of the nest. Kites were seen in the area until mid-July.

Habitat in the vicinity of these nests is generally described as open and brushy. As the ground elevation increases in the north end of CA3A, there is a transition from a typical Everglades sawgrass (*Cladium jamaicensis*)/tree island association to a wax myrtle/salt bush (*Baccharis halimifolia*)/sawgrass association.

Hair samples from prey remains in the first nest were later identified as hispid cotton rat (*Sigmodon hispidus*) and rabbit (*Sylvilagus* spp.). My observations indicate that marsh

rabbits (*S. palustris*) and cotton rats are common in CA3A. Brown and Amadon (1968) state that Black-shouldered Kites select areas of heavy rodent concentration in which to nest.

Because there were three nests, I believe one or more of these breeding pairs may have nested here in the recent past. Anticipating their return I began to "glass" the area periodically with a spotting scope. As of 25 January 1987 I had not seen any returning kites. On 20 and 23 February Lance McLellan and myself observed a kite perched on dead wax myrtles separated by approximately 2.0 km. Because only one kite was seen on each day, I believe it was the first potential nesting bird of the season. Brown and Amadon (1968) reported that in California the onset of the breeding season is shown when a male selects a perch where he sits daily at certain hours. On 9 and 20 April I did not see any kites in the area.

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Robert L. King, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, P. O. Box 840837, Pembroke Pines, Florida 33084.

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Great Blue Heron eats gray squirrel.—The Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) is known to capture and eat a wide variety of prey including fish, reptiles, amphibians, insects, birds and rodents (R. S. Palmer 1962, *Handbook of North American birds*, Vol. I, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale Univ. Press). However, we have found no reference in the literature to the Great Blue Heron killing and eating adult gray squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*).

On 31 March 1987, Brooks heard the scream of a gray squirrel in her backyard, which is on a brackish lagoon in Ponte Vedra Beach, St. Johns County, Florida. When she looked