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### SUCCESSFUL NESTING BY REDDISH EGRETS AT OSLO ISLAND, INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA

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The Florida population of the Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*) has been slow to recover from the impact of plume-hunting, which caused the near extirpation of the species by 1890 (Robertson 1978). Still a rather rare species throughout its range (Robertson 1978, Hancock and Kushlan 1984), the Reddish Egret has only recently begun to expand its Florida nesting range from Everglades National Park and the Lower Florida Keys west to Marco Island and north to Tampa Bay (Bancroft 1971, Paul et al. 1975, Paul et al. 1979, Paul 1982, Hancock and Kushlan 1984). The gradual recolonization of its former breeding

range along Florida's southwest Gulf coast during the past 20 years (Paul et al. 1975, Robertson 1978) has not been documented along the Atlantic coast (Paul et al. 1979), except in the Haulover Island heronry where Paul (1986) reported a substantial increase of Reddish Egret numbers with counts of as many as 41 fledglings.

Only three confirmed Reddish Egret nest sites have been reported for Florida's east coast north of Arsenicker Keys in Biscayne Bay (Kale 1976). Reddish Egret nests have occurred rather regularly on Haulover Island in Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Brevard County (Paul et al. 1979, Paul 1982); Pelican Island in Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, Indian River County (Paul 1982, Rodgers and Schwikert 1986); and Riomar Island, Indian River County (Maxwell and Kale 1974, Paul 1982, pers. observ.).

This note reports successful nesting by Reddish Egrets at Oslo Island (designated as "IR 38" in the Fla. Dept. of Nat. Res. Spoil Island Mgmt. Plan) in Indian River County. Oslo Island is a 1.54 ha Indian River Lagoon spoil island located about 6.0 km south of Riomar Island in Vero Beach.

During the spring and summer of 1990, I monitored nesting colonial waterbirds on Oslo Island (Table 1). Nest counts were accomplished by (1) using a boat to drift along the island's perimeter about 20 m from the mangrove fringe, and (2) slowly entering the interior

**Table 1. Population estimate of breeding pairs of colonial waterbirds on Oslo Island, Indian River County, Florida in 1990.**

Species	No. pairs	Relative abundance (%)
Brown Pelican <i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	180	21.0
Double-crested Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>	50	5.8
Anhinga <i>Anhinga anhinga</i>	5	0.6
Great Blue Heron <i>Ardea herodias</i>	14	1.6
Great Egret <i>Casmerodius albus</i>	100	11.6
Reddish Egret <i>Egretta rufescens</i>	1	0.1
Snowy Egret <i>Egretta thula</i>	100	11.6
Little Blue Heron <i>Egretta caerulea</i>	50	5.8
Tricolored Heron <i>Egretta tricolor</i>	125	14.5
Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	150	17.4
Black-crowned Night-Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	65	7.5
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron <i>Nycticorax violaceus</i>	1	0.1
White Ibis <i>Eudocimus albus</i>	20	2.3
Total	861	99.9

of the colony by foot. Entry was from the unoccupied section of the island during late incubation and early nestling stages so as to minimize disturbance-related nesting failures (Frederick and Collopy 1989). Approximately 60% of the island's area was used by the 861 pairs of 13 species comprising the nesting colony (density = 936 pairs/ha).

In mid-April, I discovered a pair of adult Reddish Egrets in brilliant breeding plumage (Meyerriecks 1960). On 2 May 1990, I located the nest about 3 m high in a white mangrove (*Laguncularia racemosa*). One adult was on the nest exhibiting incubation posture, while its mate perched nearby. The nest contained three nestlings about two weeks of age on 3 June. On 16 June the three nestlings were perching on the edge of the nest and supporting branches. I found the three young Reddish Egrets perched together in the mangroves approximately 20 m from the nest on 24 June. Both adults and the three juvenile Reddish Egrets remained together in the colony through the end of June.

During July 1990, I surveyed the islands from Riomar (IR 33) to Oslo (IR 38) and located Reddish Egrets on all seven islands, including five adults, two yearlings, and eight juveniles. The juveniles were distributed in three cohesive groups of three, three, and two; each group was accompanied by a single adult. The associations of adults and apparent juvenile brood mates are indicative of additional Reddish Egret nests in the near vicinity (R. Paul, pers. comm.). These observations suggest that Reddish Egrets may now be reoccupying more of their former Atlantic coast breeding range.

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