

## Unusually Small Egg of the Brown Pelican

Because the occurrence of runt eggs in wild birds is rare (Rothstein, 1975, *Wilson Bulletin*, 85: 340-342), a report of my finding a small egg is appropriate. On 13 May 1972 in a large colony of Brown Pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) on Tarpon Key, Pinellas County, Florida, I marked a nest that was nearing completion. On 18 May this egg was still the only one present, so I collected it. By 28 May the nest had disappeared. The egg measured 50.48 x 38.77 mm, weighed 41.9 g (wet weight) and contained no yolk. During 1972 in the same colony mean external measurements of 51 other eggs were 75.52 x 48.68 mm and their initial weight was 97.82 g. The dry shell weight of the runt egg was 5.5 g or 59% of the average shell weight of 10 other eggs collected in 1972. The thickness index (10 x weight in g/length x breadth in cm: Ratcliffe, 1967, *Nature* 215: 208-210) of 4.997 indicates a thickness more than twice that of other Brown Pelican eggs as determined by Anderson and Hickey (1970, *Wilson Bulletin*, 82: 14-128).

Between 1969 and 1974 in this same colony I handled 2141 eggs in 800 nests without seeing any other runt eggs. Thus, the frequency of runt eggs is 0.05%. In addition, I have examined approximately 1000 other pelican nests in Florida and have not found any other obviously small eggs. Hence, the frequency reported here is probably higher than is normally the case.

Although the Brown Pelican is an endangered species that is subject to losses from eggshell thinning in addition to other "unnatural" mortality factors, the extremely low frequency of production of runt eggs suggests that this particular phenomenon is not a cause for additional concern.

Drs. H. W. Kale and M. F. McDiarmid made valuable comments on the manuscript.

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