

a large portion of shrimp boat dumpings in July were not represented in the prey sample.

My thanks to Ken Relyea for identification of the fishes. — Robert W. Loftin, *University of North Florida, Box 17074, Jacksonville, Florida 32216.*

Chick retrieval by Black Skimmer. — On 12 June 1976, while studying nesting behavior of Black Skimmers (*Rynchops nigra*), I observed an adult skimmer attempt to carry its nestling back to its scrape. Chick-carrying has been reported for various species: Clapper Rail (*Rallus longirostris*) and Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*) (Pettingill 1938, *Auk* 55: 411-415); Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*) (Lachner 1968, *Z. Tierpsychol.* 25: 666-667); African Jacana (*Actophilornis africanus*) and the Lotus-bird (*Irediparra gallinacea*) (Hopcraft 1968, *Living Bird* 7: 85-88). No mention of this behavior has appeared in the literature concerning the Black Skimmer.

Observations were made at a breeding colony of skimmers located along the western causeway of the Howard Frankland Bridge crossing Tampa Bay, Pinellas County, Florida. While watching a feeding attempt I saw the following behavior sequence. A female parent had been sitting on its scrape with its chick, which I estimated to be less than 5 days old, when the male parent landed beside the scrape with a fish in its bill. The chick struggled out of the scrape, having been prodded by the female as it climbed out, and approached the male. The chick began to stray when the male did not relinquish the fish. The chick was about ½ m from the scrape when the female walked over to it and picked it up by the neck. As the female turned back toward the scrape, it was interrupted by the aggressive advance of a skimmer on an adjacent scrape. The female dropped the chick in response to this attack, and retreated toward its own scrape. Soon, the female returned and picked up the chick by the neck, but was again blocked from returning to its scrape by the same neighbor. The female's third attempt to pick up the chick was also rebuffed by the same skimmer.

The chick, now about 1 m from its scrape, was joined by the male, which first offered the fish to the chick, but then suddenly turned away and ate the fish itself. The female, standing by its scrape, picked up a leaf and "chewed" it for a few moments before dropping it. This leaf-chewing is a displacement behavior that I have noted several times in skimmers that were thwarted from completing mating or chick-feeding attempts. The chick remained crouched under a small clump of vegetation during the remaining hour of my observation period and its eventual fate is unknown.

I have found that skimmer chicks often wander from their

scrapes. Chick-retrieval by parents could increase the chances of survival for nestling skimmers by protecting them from predation or exposure to the sun. However, territorial defense by neighboring adults can act to reduce any such benefits resulting from chick-retrieval behavior.

I thank A. J. Meyerriecks and Helen E. Groves for their suggestions concerning preparation of this paper. — Fred H. Groves, *Department of Biology, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida 33620.*

The status of the Screech Owl in the northern Florida Keys. — Howell (1932, Florida bird life, Tallahassee, Florida Dept. Game and Fresh Water Fish) reported the Screech Owl (*Otus asio*) as occurring on the Florida Keys, Monroe County, from Key Largo, Tavernier, Upper Matecumbe Key and Key West, without listing specimens or specific sight records south of the mainland. Since no one else has published a record of Screech Owls from the Florida Keys, Robertson and Kushlan (1974, pp 414-452 in *Environments of south Florida: Present and past* (P.J. Gleason, Ed.), Memoir 2, Miami Geological Society) concluded that this owl is one of 9 species known to nest "... south to the limit of suitable habitat on the southern mainland and not in the Florida Keys." They predicted, however, that the Screech Owl may yet be found nesting in the Keys.

Actually, the Screech Owl is a fairly common bird on the larger, northern Florida Keys, especially on Key Largo, as the following 14 previously unpublished records show.

1. About 1970: late spring. Northern Plantation Key, mile marker 89. An adult and four fledgling Screech Owls. Sandy Sprunt. Although Sprunt has lived in the Keys since 1957, these were the first Screech Owls seen by him in the Keys.
2. 1973: August. Key Largo Ranger Station, between mile markers 99-100. An owl heard calling on several nights. John C. Ogden.
3. 1974: 7 February. Key Largo, mile marker 102. 2 gray-phase adult owls in yard. Joanna Girardin.
4. 1974: 9 March. Northern Key Largo, south of Ocean Reef. One red-phase owl dead on road, specimen to U.M. (see below). J.G.
5. 1975: May. Northern Key Largo, near U.S. Army radar station. 2 adult owls in woods. Clive A. Petrovic.
6. 1975: 22 October. Plantation Key, between mile markers 86-87. One owl at dusk on utility wire. Rich T. Paul.
7. 1975: November. Key Largo Ranger Station. A bird calling during mid-morning. J.C.O.