A Nearly Synchronous Hatching of Barn Owls

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In May 1978 I observed a nearly synchronous hatching of a large clutch of Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*) in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. The site was a wooden nest box installed inside the upper level of a two-story garage-utility building with the access hole leading out over a driveway and parking area, which were in regular use.

Bent (1938, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 170: 142) stated that "the eggs are laid at intervals of two or three days, and incubation begins soon after the first egg is laid; consequently the young hatch at similar intervals and vary greatly in size." According to Welty (1975, The Life of Birds, 2nd ed. Philadelphia, Saunders: 310) "In a brood of six young Barn Owls, the first to hatch will be about 15 days older than the last."

This year the adult owls took up residence in mid-March. The nest was not inspected in April for fear that early disturbance during egg-laying and incubation might jeopardize its success. The first inspection of the box on 9 May revealed 8 owlets all 1–2 days old, plus 3 eggs. Apparently a staggered hatching did not take place, as the chicks were of almost identical size and appearance. I believe these 8 chicks were the result of a nearly synchronous hatching, all within 48 h. On 14 May, 9 owlets plus 2 eggs were found. On 26 May and 4 June there were 10 owlets, but the egg was missing. On 25 June I visited the nest and banded all 10 owlets; the difference between the 8 first-hatched birds and the 2 that hatched later was still apparent. The 2 smaller chicks, although a bit thin, were lively, alert and healthy. On 7 July, 6 of the 10 had fledged, and on 13 July all had fledged.—*Received 5 September 1978, accepted 21 November 1978.*

Status of the Genus *Phalacrocorax* in Puerto Rico Including the First Records of *P. auritus*

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The only published record of a cormorant from Puerto Rico to date is one by Danforth (1926, J. Dept. Agric. P.R. 10: 35), who saw what he confidently felt was an Olivaceous Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax olivaceus*) flying over Cartagena Lagoon, southwestern Puerto Rico, on 17 October 1924.

On 17 January 1973 Roy Thomas and I observed a large, immature cormorant swimming on one of several fresh water ponds on the Cerromar Hotel golf course, approximately 6 km west of Dorado (Table 1, #2). Photographs were taken and sent to the Migratory Bird and Habitat Research Laboratory (MBHRL), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where Chandler S. Robbins and Jay M. Shepard identified the bird as a Double-crested Cormorant (*P. auritus*). This represents the first record of *P. auritus* for Puerto Rico. Two slides have been accessioned into the collection of the MBHRL (numbers 120-1Ta, 120-1Tb).

The mounted specimen of record #3 (Table 1) was found at a restaurant (Richard's Place) near Loíza Aldea. J. Phillip Angle and John C. Barber of the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) determined that this too was a Double-crested Cormorant, most probably an immature ♀ of *P. a. floridanus*. Its measurements were, bill length 54.0 mm, wing (chord) 280.0 mm, and tarsus (approximately) 56.0 mm. The specimen was returned to Richard's Place and three slides are in the collection of the MBHRL (120-2Ta, 120-2Tb, 120-2Tc).

This note contains eleven new cormorant records for Puerto Rico (Table 1). Sightings range from 25 July to 18 January, while months of peak occurrence are November through January. All individuals for which there are detailed descriptions were immature birds and apparently represent wanderers from

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TABLE 1. New cormorant records from Puerto Rico.

Record	Date	Observer	Species	Location	Reliability	Comments
1	Winter '72	Roy Thomas	?	Dorado Beach Hotel, Dorado	good	Seen on a large golf course lake (Mata Redonda)
2	17 Jan '73	H. Raffaele & Roy Thomas	*P. a.*	Cerromar and Dorado Beach Hotels, Dorado	excellent; photos taken and identification confirmed; photos in MBHRL	Seen at close range with a 25× scope on fresh water golf course ponds including Mata Redonda
3	Dec '73		*P. a.*	Loíza Aldea	excellent; photos taken and identification confirmed; photos in MBHRL	A mounted immature specimen; shot in a flooded sand extraction pit by a hunter
4	18 Jan '75	Wm. J. Bolte	?	Boquerón Refuge	good	Seen in mangroves on edge of Rincón Lagoon and in flight
5	25 Jul '76	Jim Williams	?	Cabo Rojo	good	Seen with head up and wings spread near a fresh water shrimp pond
6	9 Nov '76	Jim Sedgwick	*P. a.*	Lago Ponceña, Juana Díaz	good	An immature; seen swimming and in flight; appeared enormous next to 2 Pied-billed Grebes (*Podilymbus podiceps*) on the lake
7	11 Nov '76	Jim Sedgwick	*P. o.*	Dorado Beach Hotel	good	2 immatures on Mata Redonda; appeared not much larger than an American Wigeon (*Anas americana*) nearby
8	12 Nov '76	H. Raffaele	*P. o.*	Dorado Beach Hotel	good	2 immatures on Mata Redonda
9	29 Nov '76	Jim Sedgwick	*P. o.*	Lake #2, Juana Díaz	good	An immature; seen only 1.2 km from where he observed a *P. a.* on 11/9, but this seemed a smaller bird
10	4 Dec '76	Game Wardens of the P.R. Dept. of Natural Resources	?	Lago Ponceña, Juana Díaz	good	Shot by hunters, 2 birds seen a day or two before; measurements taken by hunters were: length 22″ (56 cm) and weight 6 lbs. (2.7 kg); the specimen was reportedly eaten
11	Dec '76	Elizabeth Litovich	?	Dorado Beach Hotel	excellent	Immature; seen on golf course lake; photos taken

nearby breeding colonies, probably those in Cuba or the Bahamas. The large number of recent records suggest that cormorants either have long been overlooked in Puerto Rico or the degree to which they stray to the island and find suitable habitat has dramatically increased. Actually, it is probable that a combination of these two factors, the latter being more significant, account for the apparent change in status of these birds. All recent cormorant sightings, with the exception of that of Bolte, were from impounded or dredged fresh water lakes that weren't in existence a few decades ago, when most earlier observers studied the island's avifauna. Such localities, in addition to creating new and quite suitable habitat for cormorants, are more regularly surveyed by wildlife biologists than coastal mangrove lagoons, where a significant number of cormorants may occur annually but continue to go unnoticed. It is difficult, however, to conceive that this factor could account for such a substantial increase in cormorant numbers. These records could reflect increased cormorant populations in their source area.

Bond (1974, Nineteenth supplement to the check-list of the birds of the West Indies (1956), Philadelphia, Acad. Nat. Sci.) recently commented that "all cormorants reported from Puerto Rico, the Lesser Antilles and Tobago were probably vagrants of *P. olivaceus* from South America." This statement is in need of significant modification. It might be more accurate to say that although proof exists that *P. auritus* occur in Puerto Rico, there is little doubt that *P. olivaceus* also occurs as a stray (though this remains to be substantiated), both species apparently represented by wandering immatures from colonies in the Bahamas and Cuba. (Puerto Rico's Double-crested Cormorants probably come from the Bahamas or Cuba since this species is not known to breed in South America; therefore, it is likely that the island's Olivaceous Cormorants also derive from this area rather than South America.)—*Received 10 May 1977, accepted 27 November 1978.*

Observations at a Nest of a Partial Albino Red-headed Woodpecker

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Unusual individuals in a population always seem to arouse human curiosity, but too often that curiosity is quickly satisfied by preserving the specimen for posterity and future speculation as to its "fitness." We report here observations at a successful nest of an albinistic Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*). On 13 May 1977, M. Rogers discovered the partially albino Red-head (Fig. 1A) on the campus of the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. Its nest was in a partially dead sugarberry (*Celtis laevigata*) that stood in a parking lot 20 m from the nearest other tree. Live limbs of the tree extended to about 13 m, but the nest cavity was 8 m up in an 8.4-m dead stub of approximately 12 cm diameter. The albino bird's mate was normally pigmented (Fig. 1B).

When viewed with a 20× spotting scope at 20 m, the albino could be seen to have some color in primaries 4 through 9. The base of the bill was pink, the tip darker. The feet and legs were pink, though the eyes appeared dark. There were conspicuous black areas in the scapular region and along the rachis of the central rectrices. Other rectrices appeared nearly white and were quite worn. The albino bird's head was red, but when compared to that of its mate it appeared to be slightly pinker, as if the bases of the red feathers were whiter than normal.

Jackson climbed to the nest on 27 May and removed the three nestlings for banding. Their weight and physical development indicated their age to be approximately 8 days (Jackson 1970, Niobrara, Annual Report of the University of Kansas Museum of Natural History, 1968–69: 3–10). All three appeared normally pigmented.

On 27 May, Jackson and Schardien captured the normally-pigmented adult as it flew from the nest. The cloaca was swollen, suggesting that the normal bird was a male. On 28 May Jackson and Schardien found that the normally-pigmented bird was the parent roosting in the nest at night, further substantiating that it was the male and the albino the female (see Jackson 1977, Living Bird 15: 205–221).

During nest watches on 24 and 27 May and 5, 16, and 19 June we observed 16 of 42 feeding visits (38%) by the albino bird. This is within the range of variation found for the relative attentiveness of the