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Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*

The breeding range of the Ruddy Duck was once confined to the prairie states and central Canada, but numerous out-of-range breeding records now exist (Johnsgard 1975a, AOU 1983). East of Manitoba and the Great Plains, the species' presence as a breeder is irregular.

Habitat. Ruddy Ducks feed mostly on plant material obtained by diving, but aquatic insects, crustaceans, and mollusks are also consumed (Johnsgard 1975a).

Ruddy Ducks prefer densely vegetated marshes, ponds, and lakes for nesting. The nest is constructed of plant materials and built in tall vegetation. The 6 to 8 creamy white eggs are incubated for approximately 23 to 26 days, and the young are capable of flight at 42 to 48 days of age (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

It is interesting to note that 8 of the 10 breeding records of the Ruddy Duck in Florida occurred in human-made impoundments.

Seasonal Occurrence. The earliest recorded arrival date for fall migrant Ruddy Ducks is 13 September; spring departures occur primarily by mid-March.

Status. A fairly common wintering species throughout much of Florida, Ruddy Ducks have only recently bred in the state. Only 5 Florida breeding records existed prior to the Atlas project; 2 June 1964 in Duval County (Robinson and Stone in Stevenson 1964), 29 May 1976 in Columbia County (Menk and Stevenson 1977), 17 August 1977 in Palm Beach County (P. Sykes in Stevenson and Anderson 1994), 1979 in Hamilton County (Maehr in Ogden 1979), and 30 May 1984 in Hillsborough County (Woolfenden and Woolfenden 1984).

During the Atlas project, 6 additional confirmed breeding records were obtained, including 4 from the same site. The first Atlas record was located in Lake Munson in Leon County, when Henry Stevenson (1989) and Tom Mor found an orphaned young bird incapable of flight on 4 July 1986. On 13 June 1987, Paul Fellers (VRF 1987) photographed a pair with 5 young at Clear Springs Mine in Polk County. "At least three families" of Ruddy Duck were found by Fellers at Clear Springs Mine on 10 June 1989 (Paul 1989), with another breeding record that same year in Pasco County, where downy young were observed in a stormwater retention pond in Embassy Hill (R. and L. Thompson, pers. commun. to D. Goodwin).

Bill Pranty



Ruddy Duck

