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Abstracts

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

EARLY ONSET OF INCUBATION BY WOOD DUCKS

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Abstract. I examined onset of incubation in Wood Ducks (*Aix sponsa*) and evaluated the hypotheses that early onset improves hatchability, reduces brood parasitism, and shortens incubation periods. Most (21 of 22) females began incubating at night, a median of 4 days before egg laying ended. Nocturnal incubation bouts began 18 min before sunset, ended 15 min before sunrise, lasted 732 min each night, and totaled 47.2 hr before egg-laying ended (means). Nocturnal incubation did not begin earlier in the egg-laying period as the breeding season progressed, as would be expected if it improved hatchability of first-laid eggs. Early onset of incubation did not reduce brood parasitism. Females ended nocturnal incubation 35 min before egg laying began, the number of nights of incubation was not related to the number of parasitic eggs laid, and most (83%) nests were parasitized. In support of the third hypothesis, egg-laying females spending more nights incubating had somewhat shorter incubation periods.

Key words: *Aix sponsa*, *Anatidae*, *brood parasitism*, *egg laying*, *egg viability*, *incubation period*, *Wood Duck*.