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into the reed bed. The trapped duckling was in good condition, was completely downy and its age was estimated to be about seven days.

The month of this observation falls outside the reported breeding period of this species in Nigeria, which is July-September (Serle cited by Elgood 1981, Brown *et al.* 1982, Madge & Burn 1989). This observation of downy ducklings in late January, which implies laying in December (assuming an incubation period of about three weeks), is apparently unusual for Nigeria. However, in Senegal, which lies in the same sahelian ecological zone as northeastern Nigeria, breeding activities of birds in breeding condition have been reported for the months of January-June, as well as in September and November (Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1970, Morel & Morel 1990), prompting a suggestion that breeding in this species may be aseasonal and opportunistic in Senegambia (Morel & Morel 1990, G.J. Morel *in litt.*). Although this record might suggest that aseasonal breeding occurs in a wider geographical area, including Nigeria, it might otherwise result from a very late reneesting after unsuccessful previous attempts.

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Augustine U. Ezealor
Dept of Biological Sciences,
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria

Albinism in Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis*

On 28 January 1990 in the Hadejia-Nguru wetlands in northeastern Nigeria, I observed a complete albino Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis* among a flock of about 120 normal conspecifics in a *sadama* (flood-retreat marshland) near Dunbari. The head, neck and breast were dirty white in colour probably due to foraging in muddy water, but

the rest of the body was whiter. A second sighting of an albino Spur-winged Goose with the same description was made on 17 January 1993 at a fadama pond near Damasa, about 9 km NW of the location of the previous sighting. About 500 other normal conspecifics and about 3000 Garganeys *Anas querquedula* were in the same pond. A game guard in the wetlands made similar observations in 1987 and 1993 while patrolling an area near Nguru lake, about 36 km NW of Damasa (H. Hassan pers. comm.). It is not known whether these records were of the same individual.

Although albinism is not unusual in birds, there is not, to my knowledge, any report of its occurrence in Spur-winged Geese.

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Augustine U. Ezealor

Dept of Biological Sciences,

Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria

On the laying period of the Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus* in the delta of the River Senegal

Brown *et al.* (1983) indicate that the laying period in Senegal of the Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus* extends from July to October, i.e. over the rainy season. However, in early 1993, we observed six different broods of this species, all in the delta of the River Senegal: a pair with one duckling about one week old on 18 January (Senegal); an adult with nine juveniles about three-quarters of the size of the adult on 17 January (Senegal); a pair with six juveniles about one third the size of the adults on 30 March (Senegal); a pair with four juveniles about half the size of adults on 22 January (Mauritania); a pair with four juveniles about half to two-thirds the size of the adults on 22 January (Mauritania); a pair with five juveniles about two-thirds the size of the adults on 24 January (Mauritania).

Assuming an incubation period of 28-30 days and a fledging period of 75-80 days (Brown *et al.* 1983), the laying dates of the January observations ranged from early October to around 10 December, and for the March observation the beginning of February.

Similar observations outside the period defined by Brown *et al.* (1983) have previously been made by Jarry (*in* Morel & Morel 1990) who discovered two nests in the Djoudj National Park in January 1975 while Dupuy (1976) and Roux *et al.* (1977) report families respectively from October to February and from 15 October to 15 February and till May, which indicate laying in February. We therefore conclude that the laying period is not limited to July-October but can continue until January or February, particularly when aquatic resources are not limited. With the artificial flood due to the Diama Dam, it is possible that the Egyptian Goose is now able to breed during a longer period than formerly.