

Black Skimmers

by

Lou Newman

Hey! My name is “Jake.” I am a member of the class of '10 (Black Skimmers that hatched in 2010). I am now seven weeks of age and almost as large as my parents. I'm one of the lucky ones; only 25% of my class has made it this far. Since our parents nest in colonies on the beach by making a “scrape” in the sand,



we are very vulnerable to a host of perils, including high tide flooding, predation by crows and laughing gulls, infanticide by neighboring adults and sibling rivalry. It is a wonder any of us make it.

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The photographer taking the images that follow documented nestlings killing their siblings, adults chasing, mauling and taking off with chicks and gulls swooping in to grab chicks. And you would not believe the competition and squabbling within the colony. We grow fast and start to fly at four weeks. However, our lower bill does not start to grow longer than our upper bill until about 28 days, so we remain dependent on our parents until we can learn to skim for fish ourselves. I can't wait to be able to explore this crazy world. All the best, Jake

My dad skimming for fish



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That's me, Jake, two days after hatching.
I huddle under Mom until Dad comes back with a fish,
then the competition begins.



Fights break out and progress to aerial combat over nesting territory.



Infanticide as a result of competition within the colony.



Nice fish, Dad. I'll swallow it whole,
headfirst, of course.



Sibling rivalry and fratricide are common. The strongest get fed first.



It's getting late and I'm hungry. I thought you would never get back.



Watch out for that one; she's mean.



I'm just beginning to take my first tentative short flights as I crowd four weeks of age.



A big wing stretch.
Mom stays close to protect me.



Five weeks of age
and flying, but not too far.



Me, Jake, at seven weeks. I'm flying well, but still dependent upon my parents to feed me.



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Images are by Lou Newman, Sarasota, Florida, June and July, 2010. Images captured with a Canon EOS-1D Mark IV camera and a Canon 400mm f/4 IS DO lens.

Check out Lou's 2010 Art Gallery Exhibit "*Wild and Wonderful*" beginning August 14th at his web site www.lounewmanphotography.com

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