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## MORE ON BANDING LEAST BITTERNS AT TINICUM

By John C. Miller

This year the breeding habitat of the Least Bittern was greatly reduced by the overpopulation of carp in the Tinicum Wildlife Preserve. Last year there was an abundance of Great Bur-reed and Narrow-leaved Cattails to provide the Least Bitterns with nesting sites. This year, however, the carp have eaten the seeds in the mud and uprooted most of the bur-reed that came up. As a result the Least Bitterns were forced to breed in the Wild Rose Mallow and what little bur-reed they could find. They also nested in dead cattails that were killed by the high water in the marsh this spring. The breeding population still remained high: I found 35 nests in the Preserve, as compared with 27 last year. From most of these nests I banded 50 young, and one adult that was feigning injury near its nest. This year I found that the Bitterns which nest in the dried cattails and bur-reeds had trouble with the Marsh Wrens: I found several nests with eggs that had been punctured by Marsh Wrens. This can be assumed by the fact that on several occasions I observed Marsh Wrens in very close proximity to Least Bittern nests. I did not notice this last year. Also, a few heavy rainstorms blew some nests out of the Marsh Mallows.

The eggs of the Least Bittern are very pale blue and are elliptical in shape. The nest is a platform of dry twigs, or sometimes made of live bur-reed or cattails. I found one nest this year with six eggs, which is unusual. In two nests I found one egg about the size of a pen, but the rest of the eggs were normal; the small eggs never hatched.