

HOW TO MAKE A KILLDEER NEST

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On our 5-acre place we have two adjacent lots on each side of the house, front and back lawns, a large fenced garden and about 2.5 acres in a hayfield behind a hedgerow on the backside of the garden. There are hedgerows along the side boundaries and large water and Southern red oak (*Quercus* sp.) trees. All, except the hayfield that a neighbor cuts for hay, is kept mowed during the growing season. I also mow wide strips along the boundaries.

In several years, we had a pair of Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferous*) nest and hatch broods on the back rows of the garden when they were idle. In the last several years, we had a pair to hatch a brood in our front lawn, and then for two years, hatch broods on one of our vacant lots. For the last two years, a pair hatched broods just beyond the spread of a huge water oak tree on the mowed strip adjacent to the hayfield. All nests, except in the garden, were regularly mowed until nests were discovered, then left un-mowed around them until broods left. All of the nests on lawn areas were placed beside dead, lichen-covered limbs from nearby oaks. The Killdeer used lichens, a little beard moss (*Usnea* sp.), and a few small twigs for decoration or camouflage around the nest scrape and eggs at all of the mowed nest sites.

On 27 February 1999, a neighbor helped me clean up and pile broken-off limbs under the large oak where the Killdeer nested nearby last year. We raked and piled all of the leaves and debris left by a December ice storm around where the

Killdeer last nested. On 1 March, I saw a pair of these birds near the old nest site. I placed some small lichen-covered, forked limbs near the nest site. The birds built a lichen-decorated nest between the forks of the limb I had placed near the nest site. On 2 March, the nest held 1 egg, on 4 March, 2 eggs; 6 March 3 eggs, and a completed set of 4 eggs on 8 March with the adult incubating.

Observation and previous experience with our nesting Killdeer enabled me to “make a Killdeer nest” with surprisingly quick results and very little effort - just thinking like a Killdeer.

¹ Deceased