

The Bald Eagle  
(*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)  
Its Nesting Success in Ohio  
In 1981 & 1982

Laurel Van Camp

This article updates my article in the Ohio Cardinal, Volume 3, No. 1 on the Ohio bald eagle. It's prompted by the unusual success of this species in Ohio in 1981 and 1982. Specifically, two new pairs appeared in 1981, nine young were fledged (3 implants) in 1981 and eight young (1 implant) in 1982. This means that 1981 and 1982 were the most successful years in terms of number of young fledged since 1959. It also means that the number of pairs present have increased (from 5 to 7) for the first time since 1973 when seven pairs were present and two young were fledged.

Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, Lucas County

This nest was built in the spring of 1978 in a cottonwood tree and was not successful that year. One young was raised in 1979 and two in 1980. Young were observed in the nest on April 14, 1981, and on May 25, 1981, three young were reported. On June 4, 1981, Jack Holt banded them. Refuge personnel reported them still in the nest June 19, 1981. One bird was in the nest and one on a limb as of June 30, 1981. All had fledged on July 5, 1981. This is the first time three young were fledged from a nest in this region since 1968. However, this nest was in a bad situation as the cottonwood tree supporting it was almost dead. The nest blew down March 31, 1982. By this time it had been abandoned by the birds who had built a new nest near the old site in the fall of 1981 and winter of 1982. In 1982 this new nest was the site of one fledged eaglet which was banded by Holt on June 7, 1982. This pair has been the most successful pair in the region with 12 young fledged (seven in the last four years) despite the facts that two new nests were built and a new mate obtained by the female.

One of the young from this site banded May 28, 1975, was captured and released by an eagle bander January 7, 1976, at Swan Lake NWR, Missouri.

Carroll Township, Ottawa County

This nest was first used in the spring of 1978 and one young fledged. One young was fledged in 1979. In 1980 nesting activity was observed but no egg-laying or incubation was observed. The female was incubating on April 4, 1981. One young bird from Patuxent Research Refuge was implanted on May 7, 1981, and an addled egg was collected for analysis. This bird was six weeks old on May 30, 1981. The foster parents accepted the young implant and the bird was banded by Jack Holt on June 4, 1981. The parents were very attentive. On June 22, 1981, the young bird appeared to be ready to fledge and was out of the nest on July 7, 1981. In 1982 this pair again fledged one eaglet which was banded by Holt on June 7, 1982. This nest has been built up over the years and has attained a huge size. This is not good as it will not withstand a strong wind (it is located in a cottonwood tree).

Ottawa Shooting Club, Sandusky County

This new nest was used for the first time in 1980 although this site has been used since 1969 by this "pair." One natural young and one implant were banded in 1980. Two young were in the nest on April 16, 1981, and were six weeks old on May 18, 1981. They were banded by Jack Holt on June 4, 1981, and

were out by June 19, 1981. In 1982 two eaglets were fledged from this nest. One was a transplant from Patuxent which was fostered into the nest on April 29, 1982. Both were banded by Holt on June 7, 1982. This nest is also in a cottonwood tree.

#### Rest Haven, Sandusky County

This pair did not return to either of the two nests they had built at this site but instead usurped the nest at White's Landing (see below). Thus, this site was unused in 1981 and 1982.

#### White's Landing, Sandusky County

The nest at this site had been inactive since 1978 when one of this pair was killed by hitting wires during flight. In 1981 the Rest Haven pair (see above) moved into this site. This area is adjacent to both of the old nests used by them at the Rest Haven site. One addled egg was collected and one young from the Cincinnati Zoo implanted on April 23, 1981. A second young from the Cincinnati Zoo was implanted on April 30, 1981. The parents accepted both of these implants. These birds were six weeks old on May 16, 1981. The male of this pair has a distorted call. This is the first record, for me, of one pair usurping another pair's nest. These implants were banded by Jack Holt on June 4, 1981. This pair was very attentive to their foster young, and by June 19, 1981, the young had fledged. In 1982 one natural eaglet was fledged by this pair and banded by Holt on June 7, 1982. One addled egg was also recovered for analysis.

#### Winous Point, Ottawa County

No active nest has existed on this site since 1977. However, a pair was observed during the winter of 1980-1981, by Robert Meeks, manager of Winous Point. There was no nesting activity during 1981 or 1982. No pair has nested successfully at this site since 1970. Two nests were started since then but no eggs were laid and no incubation was recorded, unless this is the pair that nested on the ground (predators destroyed the eggs) in Sandusky County in 1976. The ground nesting area was adjacent to this site.

#### Little Cedar Point Refuge, Lucas County

This nest was built in 1980 in a dead cottonwood. The female was an adult and the male was an immature. The nest was checked on May 7, 1981, to place an implant in it. Two natural young and one addled egg were in the nest at this time. The addled egg was taken in for analysis. These young would have been six weeks old on May 26, 1981, but the nest was blown out May 10, (Mother's Day), killing both young. In the fall of 1981 and winter of 1982 a new nest was built very near the old site. In 1982 three eaglets fledged and were banded by Holt on June 7.

#### Mosquito Creek, Trumbull County

To my knowledge, this is the first authentic record away from the Lake Erie region in over two decades. The nest was built in 1980 in a hard maple. One young was hatched on April 29, 1981, and will be six weeks old on June 8, 1981. It was banded by Denis Case on June 9, 1981. In 1982 this pair abandoned this nest after a severe storm in April. Two Canada goose eggs were placed into the nest on April 10 in an attempt to return the pair to incubating but the attempt failed.

### Pickrel Creek, Sandusky County

This "pair" has been observed in this area from 1954 through 1974. There was occasional incubation during this period but no young were observed. In 1969 the female was shot from the nest. The male remated. There has been no activity around the nest since 1973. A new nest was built in 1980. Possibly, at least one of the adults were from the pair that used this area for many years. (Probably this pair built the nest in the White's Landing area in 1975 as they appeared in White's Landing area at the same time the Pickrel Creek area was abandoned, used the White's Landing site until 1978 when one of the pair was killed by hitting wires and then remated and returned to this site in 1980. This area is adjacent to the White's Landing area.) No nesting activity was observed in this new nest in 1981. On February 23, 1982, this pair was seen copulating in this nest. The nest was also being relined. But by late February the nest was abandoned. The cause of the abandonment was thought to be firewood cutting activity by the local residents in the woodlot.

### Final Notes

Two new nests were built in 1982 (Ottawa NWR and Cedar Point division of Ottawa NWR). These two nests produced one-half of the young fledged in 1982. This is unusual in that quite often new eagle nests do not produce young the first year (the birds' "energies" have been dissipated by the nest building). For example, see the Ottawa pair in 1978.

Suitable tree nesting sites may become the critical problem of the future for Lake Erie eagles especially with an increase in pairs if it continues. I think we can provide bases for nests and that eagles can be encouraged to use them. At the least we should provide bases for pairs that have bad nesting sites and as alternate sites for other pairs. The fact that a pair nested on the ground in 1976 and that one pair used the old nest of another pair in 1981 is persuasive. Bases were constructed at both the Ottawa and Cedar Point sites but neither were selected. Since the birds instead chose sites near the old nest sites, perhaps the bases should have also been closer.

### Acknowledgments

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Note: New Number  
Toledo Rare Bird Alert  
1-419-867-9765