

## NOTES ON TWO NESTS OF THE EASTERN MOURNING DOVE

BY MARGARET MORSE NICE

FROM April 3 to 14, 1928, a pair of *Zenaidura macroura carolinensis* had been noted 'nest-calling' in various trees on our grounds at Columbus, Ohio. On the 17th I found that they had a bulky nest in an apple tree in which I had never heard them nest-calling. I watched them on this date from 10.19 a. m. to 1.34 p. m.; in the three and a quarter hours the male made eighty-two trips with material,—usually a single piece of dead grass,—while his mate remained on the nest. At about a third of the trips he stepped on her back and laid his offering before her, but the rest of the time he merely placed it on the rim. During the first hour he made nineteen trips, during the second thirty-two, and in the third, twenty-one. He worked steadily bringing loads at from one- to three-minute intervals with a single exception of a thirteen-minute recess from 12.54 to 1.07 p. m. At 1.34 p. m., the female flew away and no more work was done that day, nor so far as I know, afterward. The nest was an unusually substantial affair.

The first egg was laid after 5 p. m. on April 19. The next day the male relieved his incubating mate at 9.01 a. m., and on the following day fully an hour later. That afternoon the nest was empty; I suspected a Blue Jay as the culprit.

It was not until 1934 that the opportunity again presented itself of watching doves from the house; this time a pair nested outside my study window. Due to my preoccupation with other birds, it was not possible to keep more than a few notes on their activities; my chief interest was to determine the times at which the birds changed places on the nest, as this was a point on which I had obtained almost no data when studying this species in Oklahoma (Nice, 1922-23).

On April 23 a pair was nest-hunting in a large honey-locust. The male gave the nest-call in a crotch, constantly flipping his wings; his mate came and preened him, then got into the crotch herself and flipped her wings, but gave no note. He preened her and soon was back in the crotch. At noon there were three straws there, but they soon blew away, and the next day much the same thing happened. On the 25th they started to build in earnest, practically finishing the nest the following morning. On the 28th the first egg was laid, and on the 30th the second. Both hatched May 14. Curiously enough, on the 13th the male brought a dozen loads of material to the nest between 6.00 and 6.15 a. m. The young left the nest May 26, but stayed in the home tree for six more days.

Craig (1911) says in regard to this species, "Male and female take regular daily turns in sitting on the eggs or young: the female sits from evening

till morning, the male from morning till evening, the exchanges taking place usually about 8.30 a. m. and 4.30 p. m." Snyder (1923) reports that a pair in Iowa changed "rather regularly between eight and nine o'clock in the morning, and five and six o'clock in the afternoon."

Somewhat to my surprise I found that the time of exchange might vary an hour or more both in the morning and in the afternoon, and this variation had no relation to the clearness or cloudiness of the day. Columbus is on Eastern Standard Time, which is twenty-eight minutes later than sun time. On five mornings during incubation (May 4, 5, 7, 9, 10) the male took his place on the nest at the following times: 10.07, 9.42, 9.29, 9.28, 10.20; on four mornings after the young had hatched (May 17, 20, 22, 23) he did so at 9.15, 9.20, 8.55, 10.19. The average of the first group is 9.54, of the second 9.27, or 9.26 and 8.59 respectively by sun time. The female was never noted as arriving before 5.00 p. m. during incubation; three definite records (May 9, 11, 12) were 5.38, 5.14 and 5.26 p. m. After hatching, the two instances noted came earlier,—4.35 p. m. on May 14, and 4.55 p. m. on May 20. Although the observations are few, they indicate an earlier arrival for both parents after the young hatched than before, an average advance of twenty-seven minutes for the male and nineteen for the female. On May 9 the male incubated from 9.28 a. m. to 5.38 p. m., a period of eight hours and ten minutes; on the 20th he brooded from 9.20 a. m. to 4.55 p. m. or seven hours and thirty-five minutes.

How many times are nestling Mourning Doves fed in a day? Apparently no one knows. Gates (1909) believed they were "not fed more than three times a day, generally but twice and often not more than once." This, however, is an error; from my scattered observations it seems probable to me that the female gives the young pigeon-milk at least twice in the morning, the male feeds them at least four times during his eight-hour session, and the female at least twice in the evening. It would be of interest to watch a dove's nest throughout two whole days, once soon after the young hatched, and again later in their history.

#### SUMMARY

One pair of Mourning Doves was watched for three and a quarter hours during nest building; in this time the male worked almost without a break, making eighty-two trips with material to the nest. With another pair the male took his turn on the nest at hours ranging from 8.55 to 10.30 in the morning, while the female returned from 4.35 to 5.38 in the afternoon.

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