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NESTS OF MOURNING DOVES WITH THREE YOUNG

By MARGARET MORSE NICE

WITH TWO PHOTOS

THIS SPRING we have had the rare experience of following the course of two Mourning Dove's nests, each of which contained three eggs, and all of the eggs hatching. Although we have examined nearly 150 nests of the Western Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura marginella*) here in central Oklahoma, in only one other instance have we found more than two eggs or young. This was a nest containing two small doves and one egg, discovered by my daughter Constance, May 25, 1917. Unfortunately we did not revisit this nest.

The first of the three-egg sets found in 1921 was located in a new Robin's nest that had been built in a box elder fifteen feet from the ground. It was found April 15 with three Robin's eggs in it, but on April 20 it was empty and deserted. On April 30 we saw a Dove placidly in possession, and on Constance's climbing the tree she made the exciting discovery that the nest contained three Dove's eggs, one of which looked slightly smaller than the others. On May 12 there were still three eggs; but on May 14 there was one egg and two young, one a day old and the other a few hours old; this last was under the egg. On May 18 there were three little birds; the smallest from its degree of development must have been one day younger than the middle bird.

On May 19 the six-day-old dove weighed 41 grams, the five-day-old 21.8 grams, and the four-day-old 17 grams. The weights of the two younger birds are lower than others of the same age, the average of two other five-day-old squabs being 36 grams and of two four-day-olds 30.5 grams. Apparently the three were not getting quite enough food. All, however, were well advanced as to feather development. On May 21 Dr. Joseph M. Thuringer ascended the tree and photographed the birds in their nest. After this we did not disturb them for fear of frightening them out prematurely. They left the nest at an average age for Oklahoma Mourning Doves, the oldest when 13 days old and the others the following day when 12 and 13 days old.

The second nest was situated in a crotch of an elm ten feet from the

ground; it was fairly substantial, being largely built of twigs. On May 3 there were two eggs in it. It was not examined again until May 9 when it was found to contain three eggs, one of which looked slightly yellowish. The first bird hatched May 16, the second May 17, and the third not until May 22. Therefore the nest mates of the latter had a great start, one being six days old and weighing 40.3 grams, and the other five days old and weighing 37.8 grams, while the poor infant weighed only 4.4 grams. The next day it had hardly gained at all, weighing only 4.8 grams, and the day after it was dead; it had been too tiny to compete with the big squabs. These latter birds left the nest when 12 and 13 days old.



FIG. 26. THREE YOUNG MOURNING DOVES IN A ROBIN'S NEST, 8, 6 AND 7 DAYS OLD, RESPECTIVELY.

Photographed by Joseph M. Thuringer.

At least 35 sets of three eggs of Mourning Doves have been reported, but, as far as I can learn, only four instances* of three young in a nest. In only one of these is the comparative size of the young mentioned: They were "all of one size" (Wharram). In our two cases the only one that was entirely successful was placed in a robin's nest and the birds hatched within a day of each other; while in the other the third bird that hatched five and six days after its nest-mates lived only two days. These experiences suggest two possi-

*Fisher, A. K. Report on the Ornithology of the Death Valley Expedition of 1891. N. Amer. Fauna No. 7, 1893, p. 33; Semmes, Jr., T. The Mourning Dove. Oologist, XXIV, 1907, pp. 8-9; Wharram, S. V. Dove's Nest. Oologist, XXXII, 1915, p. 134.

ble reasons why three squabs in a nest are such unusual occurrences: First,



Fig. 27. THREE YOUNG MOURNING DOVES FROM ONE NEST, 6, 1 AND 7 DAYS OLD, RESPECTIVELY. THESE WERE TAKEN OUT OF THE ACTUAL NEST FOR PHOTOGRAPHING.

Photographed by Joseph M. Thuringer.

the ordinary dove nest is too frail to hold three birds to maturity, and secondly, the third bird may hatch so late that it is soon eliminated.

Norman, Oklahoma, July 15, 1921.

NOTES ON THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN JAY IN THE YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

By M. P. SKINNER, Park Naturalist

ALTHOUGH the Rocky Mountain Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis capitalis*) is known everywhere as the "camp robber", it shares this term with the Clark Nutcracker with which the former is thus confused; but the Nutcracker has markings of black and white on wings and tail not possessed by the jay, is a larger bird, and carries a much longer and stronger bill. After the differences are once recognized, it is not hard to distinguish these two camp birds. It is true also that the Nutcracker ranges through, and breeds in, a lower zone than the Jay.

While I have frequently found Rocky Mountain Jays in the smaller meadows and openings, still it is apparent they like the forests best. Forests of lodgepole pine, limber pine, fir, spruce, cedar, and even aspen groves and willow thickets constitute their chosen haunts. Their nests are in the lodgepole pine belt between the 7500 and 8000 foot levels. For some obscure reason these birds are rare about Mammoth, although common about Tower Falls at about the same altitude. Rummaging about the refuse of old camp sites, as well as about camps in actual use, they are distinctively a camp bird although I should think "camp scavenger" a rather more appropriate name than "camp