

NOTES

PIPING PLOVER IN MONTANA

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On 29 April 1974 Carlson found four or five Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*) on sand flats above the west end of the Fort Peck Dam, Valley County, Montana. The birds were engaged in courtship activities. Numerous color photographs were taken in the succeeding weeks as courtship activities continued (Figure 1). By the third week of May only two birds remained and were seen consistently in one small area along the shoreline. On 1 June Terry P. McEneaney and Carlson found a clutch of four eggs on wet sand (Figure 2). The following morning the eggs were found floating in the Missouri River floodwater, which fills the reservoir rapidly at this time of the year. Two of the eggs were retrieved and are now in the Vertebrate Museum at Montana State University, Bozeman. One of the eggs was cracked during salvage operations. Embryo development within the eggs was minimal. The birds were not seen after this date.

The first report of Piping Plovers in Montana is of a nest photographed at Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge, Phillips County, Montana in 1967 by Kenneth Carmichael of Agincourt, Ontario (Aud. Field Notes 22:55, 1968). Skaar has been unable to locate the photograph or photographer but has learned (through J. R. Foster, Bowdoin Refuge Manager) that W. V. Crick of Toronto and Gordon Jaux of Scanboro, Ontario, also were involved in the finding. Other Montana records are: 2 May to about 9 May 1970, two at Bowdoin NWR, Phillips County, J. R. Akin (pers. comm.); 14 June 1972, at least five behaving as if breeding at an



Figure 1. Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*) in courtship posture photographed 11 May 1974 at west end of Fort Peck Dam, Valley Co., Montana. Canon 35 mm SLR camera, 600 mm lens, at a distance of about 12 m.

Photo by C. M. Carlson

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Figure 2. Nest of Piping Plover with wet sand showing under the eggs. Photographed 1 June 1974 at west end of Fort Peck Dam, Valley Co., Montana.

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alkaline pothole 8 km due east of Dagmar, Sheridan County, by Skaar (Am. Birds 26:870, 1972); 13 May 1973, at least five birds again found at the preceding site by E. T. and R. A. Hays and Skaar (Am. Birds 27:786, 1973); 29 May 1973, one at the south end of Canyon Ferry Reservoir, Broadwater County (R. L. Eng in Am. Birds 27:797, 1973). At the Fort Peck Dam site, Carlson saw two from 23 April to about 15 June 1976, and a third individual which arrived about 9 June; one of the three was seen scratching out nest scrapes and posturing on the edge of the scrapes. He also observed one bird in winter plumage in the same area from 30 August to about 10 September 1976.

The Piping Plover is also included on the 1966 list for the Medicine Lake NWR, Sheridan County, but refuge personnel were unable to supply the specific observations upon which this inclusion was based.