

OBJECTS INCORPORATED WITHIN CLUTCHES OF THE CANADA GOOSE

R. L. KNIGHT, Washington Department of Game, 509 Fairview N., Seattle, Washington 98109

A. W. ERICKSON, Wildlife Science Group, College of Fisheries, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195

While conducting studies of nesting Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis moffitti*) during 1975 and 1976 along the Columbia River in Okanogan and Douglas counties, Washington, we located six nests in which stones or pine cones (*Pinus ponderosa*) had been incorporated within the clutches. During a 20 year study along the Columbia River, Hanson and Eberhardt (Wildl. Mon. No. 28, 1971) located two Canada Goose nests which consisted entirely of rocks and reported that geese incubated these objects. We have been unable to find any literature reference reporting rocks or other objects incorporated within clutches of Canada Geese.

During the 1975 and 1976 nesting seasons, four goose nests, located on a cobblestone substrate, contained smooth egg-sized rocks within the clutches (Figure 1). Three of these nests contained a single rock, whereas the fourth contained two rocks. At a different location, on an island with a pine needle-littered substrate, two nests containing pine cones were located. One nest (1975) at first contained two pine cones and one egg; subsequently the pine cones were removed, presumably by the geese, and four additional eggs were laid. The following season a nest containing eight pine cones and no eggs was found on the same island.

One nest which had 5 eggs and one rock in it on 20 April 1975 had 5 eggs and 2 rocks in it on 6 May 1975. This was the only nest for which even a partial order of incorporation could be determined.

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Figure 1. Canada Goose nest with one rock incorporated within a clutch of six eggs, Columbia River, Washington, 1975.

Photo by R. L. Knight