

ANOTHER UNUSUAL LAYING OF THE FLICKER.

(*Colaptes auratus luteus*.)

BY B. R. BALES, M.D.

The records of the laying of a large number of eggs by the Flicker have always been of great interest to me, and I had often determined, should the occasion present itself, to try to "break the record." Not until the present year did I find a nest favorable for observation. On May 2d, 1917, my son and I found a nest, which consisted of a hole, excavated by the birds, but six feet from the ground, in a dead limb of an apple tree, which was standing in an orchard, some distance from the road, and in a place not likely to be disturbed by inquisitive boys.

On the date discovered, it contained one egg. It was again examined on May 4th, at which time there were three eggs in the nest, two of which were taken and one left in the nest for a "nest egg." Each day thereafter, one egg was taken, leaving one in the nest.

On May 10th, a "nest egg" was left as usual, but when the nest was examined on the 11th, the "nest egg" was gone, but the bird was seen about the tree. To facilitate the removal of the eggs quickly and to avoid disturbing the birds by being about the tree for any length of time, we had removed the top from the stub wherein the nest was located, thus making a rather large hole, and a skulking crow, seen in the neighborhood of the tree, could probably have told us of the fate of the "nest egg."

On May 13th, we noticed the bird near a natural cavity in the living wood in the same tree, but about ten feet higher than the original nest. May 14th, we cut out a block of wood near the base of the cavity, and found it to contain three eggs, two of which were taken, again leaving a "nest egg."

Each day thereafter, one egg was taken and one left, until May 26th, when my son (who did the climbing) discov-

ered three eggs in the nest instead of the customary two. He was sure that there had never been more than two in the nest since May 14th, but it is possible and very like that the extra egg was laid on the 11th and had rolled to one side of the cavity or had been covered by the debris at the bottom, and not discovered until this date, as it is very unlikely that the bird laid two eggs in one day.

One egg was laid each day until June 11th, when examination revealed only the "nest egg." Each day for the three following days, the nest was examined, but no new eggs were found, during which time the bird was incubating and was always found on the nest.

This egg was taken, as we judged that the bird had finished laying. The measurements of the eggs are as follows:—

May 4—No.	1—1.03x.86.	
May 4—No.	2—1.04x.85.	
May 5—No.	3—1.03x.84.	
May 6—No.	4—1.05x.81.	
May 7—No.	5—1.07x.83.	
May 8—No.	6—1.05x.84.	
May 9—No.	7—1.07x.83.	
May 10—No.	8—1.09x.84.	
May 10—No.	9—"Nest egg," which disappeared.	
May 14—No.	10—1.07x.82.	
May 14—No.	11—1.05x.83.	
May 15—No.	12—1.06x.85.	
May 16—No.	13—1.08x.84.	
May 17—No.	14—1.05x.84.	
May 18—No.	15—1.02x.82.	
May 19—No.	16—1.05x.84.	
May 20—No.	17—1.08x.84.	
May 21—No.	18—1.04x.86.	
May 22—No.	19—1.04x.84.	Weight—112 grains Av.
May 23—No.	20—1.07x.84.	Weight—115 grains Av.
May 24—No.	21—1.06x.83.	Weight—111 grains Av.
May 25—No.	22—1.03x.82.	Weight—112 grains Av.
May 26—No.	23—1.07x.85.	Weight—115 grains Av.
May 26—No.	24—1.01x.84.	Weight—105 grains Av.
May 27—No.	25—1.08x.84.	Weight—116 grains Av.

May 28—No. 26—1.06x.84.	Weight—110 grains Av.
May 29—No. 27—1.08x.87.	Weight—120 grains Av.
May 30—No. 28—1.03x.85.	Weight—110 grains Av.
May 31—No. 29—1.07x.85.	Weight—115 grains Av.
June 1—No. 30—1.06x.85.	Weight—113 grains Av.
June 2—No. 31—1.03x.83.	Weight—103 grains Av.
June 3—No. 32—1.08x.86.	Weight—118 grains Av.
June 4—No. 33—1.07x.85.	Weight—116 grains Av.
June 5—No. 34—1.09x.86.	Weight—120 grains Av.
June 6—No. 35—1.09x.86.	Weight—118 grains Av.
June 7—No. 36—1.06x.85.	Weight—116 grains Av.
June 8—No. 37—1.06x.84.	Weight—114 grains Av.
June 9—No. 38—1.09x.85.	Weight—114 grains Av.
June 10—No. 39—1.05x.82.	Weight—104 grains Av.

Summary:—

Number of eggs laid—39.

Number of days laying—39.

Lightest egg—104 grains.

Heaviest egg—120 grains.

Average weight of 21 eggs—113 grains.

Total average weight of 39 eggs— $10\frac{7}{10}$ ounces av.

It will be noted that, with the exception of the last egg laid (and it no doubt lost some weight through incubation), the eggs averaged a slight increase in size and weight during the latter part of the time the eggs were laid, rather than a decrease, as would naturally be expected. However, the uniformity in size is rather remarkable, varying in the long diameter between 1.02 and 1.09, and in the short diameter, between .81 and .87.

Wishing to ascertain how near we came to "breaking the record," a letter from Frank L. Burns of Berwyn, Pa., who is probably the greatest living authority on the Flicker, gave us the information in regard to sets of the same size, or larger, as follows:—

Vermont—39 eggs and young (15+8+8 eggs +8 young)
—Oologist, Utica, N. Y., Vol. I, pp. 56.

Texas—40 eggs in 40 days, no nest egg—Scheer, Oologist,
Vol. XI, pp. 55.

North Carolina—48 eggs in 65 days, no nest egg—Armstrong Mss.

Massachusetts—71 eggs in 73 days, nest egg—Phillips, *Young Oologist*, Vol. I, pp. 26.

Thus it will be seen that while we did not “break the record,” we were equalled by one, and came within three of the largest number taken.

The behavior of the bird was practically the same at all times; almost every time we visited the nest, she was in the nesting hole, but flew to a nearby tree and “sang” to us while we were there. On one or two occasions, she flew to the tree while my son was climbing to the nest, but flew away before he had reached the nesting hole.

It would be interesting to know just how many insects were consumed during the period of laying, to nourish the bird, for lime for the shells and to furnish ten and one-tenth ounces, avoirdupois, of eggs, which is considerably more than the weight of the bird itself.

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