

## GENERAL NOTES

**Early nesting and Cowbird parasitism of the Goldfinch in Michigan.**—The Eastern Goldfinch (*Spinus t. tristis*) is well known as a late nester, and few June nests have been recorded. In his study of the Goldfinch in southern Michigan, Walkinshaw (1938, *Jack-Pine Warbler*, 16 No. 4: 3-11) gives June 30 as the earliest date of nest building for 111 nests from 1919 through 1938 (p. 9). In other parts of the range, early nests have been recorded as follows: E. A. Samuels (1867, "Ornithology and Oölogy of New England," p. 289) states: "The earliest nest that I ever heard of was found June the 10th, and very few are found as early as the middle of that month." T.S. Roberts (1936, "The Birds of Minnesota," 2nd ed., vol. 2, p. 368) lists three early nests: May 20, 1930, 2 eggs; June 4, 1923, "nest"; June 23, 1928, building.

On June 11, 1947, I found a nest which, at first glance, I assumed to be a two-storied nest of the Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*). The nest appeared complete but contained no eggs; nor were the owners present. I saw nothing unusual about the nest other than its exceptional depth. On June 13, I found a female Goldfinch on the nest. She was reluctant to leave and did so only after I bent the nest tree slightly in order to observe the nest contents. Two Goldfinch eggs were present. Within two minutes the bird returned to the nest (while I was standing about 20 feet away).

Summer classes made it impossible to make more than scanty observations at the nest, but the following information was obtained: On June 28, the nest contained one nestling and three eggs. After this date I visited the nest almost daily at 5:00 p. m. On July 1, for the first time, I noticed a Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) egg in the bottom of the nest with only about a fifth of the egg protruding above the lining. I believe that during the 21-day interval since the discovery of the complete, empty nest, enough lining had been dislodged to expose the Cowbird egg. Since I had never removed the host eggs from the nest, they may have been covering the Cowbird egg for some time. I am positive, however, that the Cowbird egg was completely covered by nest lining on June 11, when I discovered the nest. On July 2, I removed and opened one of the three host eggs; there was no visible indication of development. The one young Goldfinch left the nest on July 10, 1947, before 5:00 p. m.

I removed and examined the nest on July 10. The two remaining host eggs showed no indication of development. Closer examination of the nest revealed a second Cowbird egg completely covered by a thin layer of lining; this egg had a hole in the upper surface about 5 mm. in diameter. A third Cowbird egg lay a little deeper in the lining between the other two, so that all three eggs were on the original nest floor.

The nest, which is now in the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology, measured when collected: outside diameter, 81 mm.; outside depth, 85 mm.; inside diameter, 53 mm.; inside depth of upper story, 35 mm. These figures correspond closely to averages found by Walkinshaw except for the outside depth, which is nearly 15 mm. greater and can be accounted for by the second story. The nest was 7 feet 11 inches from the ground in a four-way crotch of a box elder (*Acer Negundo*) 37 feet from Fuller Road near the northwest corner of the Arboretum, Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan.

On August 21, 1947, I found a second Goldfinch nest (now in the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology), containing three young, 22 yards east of the early nest. The young were fledged August 23, after which I removed the nest from its location 16 feet 7 inches from the ground in a box elder. This nest, too, proved to be a double-storied structure and contained one Cowbird egg in the lower story. Using Walkinshaw's data on the incubation and nestling period, I estimated that the Cowbird egg was laid about July 25—a notably late date.

Norris (1947. *Wils. Bull.*, 59:86-87), reporting on 96 Cowbird eggs laid during two seasons at Butler, Pennsylvania, gives July 12 as the latest laying date.

I have found only two previous records of a Goldfinch building over Cowbird eggs. J. L. Davison (1887. "Birds laying their Eggs in the Nests of Other Birds," *Auk*, 4:263-264), speaking of Cowbird eggs, writes: "I have found them covered up, except in this instance [*Sayornis phoebe*], only by the Goldfinch and the Summer Warbler." Samuels (p. 340) writes on the same subject: "I have in my collection a nest of the Yellow Warbler thus doubled, and another of the Goldfinch."

Walkinshaw (p. 10) states: "I have never observed a Cowbird's egg in any of the 111 nests which I have observed." W. B. Barrows (1912. "Michigan Bird Life") makes no mention of Cowbird parasitism of the Goldfinch. Alexander Wilson (1810. "American Ornithology," vol. 2, p. 158) quotes Nathaniel Potter, of Baltimore, who reported finding a Goldfinch nest with one host egg and one Cowbird egg. E. D. Wintle (1896. "The Birds of Montreal," p. 91) reports a nest at Montreal, July 25, 1886, containing one egg of the Goldfinch and five of the Cowbird. J. K. Jensen (1918. "Notes on the Nesting Birds of Wahpeton, North Dakota," *Auk*, 35: 344-349) reports a nest found on August 6, 1917, "with a set of four fresh Goldfinch eggs and one Cowbird's egg." Other references consist, for the most part, of a general statement that the Goldfinch is parasitized by the Cowbird, with no definite records.

The incidence of Cowbird parasitism in the immediate vicinity may be indicated by the following records: On May 23, 1947, a Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) nest about a half mile away contained four host eggs and four Cowbird eggs; a fifth Cowbird egg was on the ground behind the nest. On May 24, a Yellow Warbler nest in the same region contained three Cowbird eggs in the process of being covered over. On June 4, a Song Sparrow nest about 200 yards from the Goldfinch nest contained two host eggs and three of the Cowbird. And on June 9, another Song Sparrow nest, about 600 yards distant, contained one host egg and two Cowbird eggs; two additional Cowbird eggs were on the ground a few inches below the nest, which was on a grassy slope.—A. J. BERGER, *Department of Zoology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.*

**Bald Eagle eating shoat on highway.**—On April 24, 1947, while driving toward St. Mary's on Georgia Highway 40, I saw an adult Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) feeding on a freshly killed shoat in the middle of the highway. The eagle was undisturbed when I stopped the car not over 50 feet away, but trucks approaching from St. Mary's flushed it into a long-leaf pine at the edge of the right of way (here 100 feet wide). On my return about two hours later, the eagle flushed when I was still more than 100 feet away—but only into a long-leaf pine on the other side of the highway. The next morning all that remained of the shoat were the entrails and the skin.—FREDERICK V. HEBARD, *1500 Walnut Street Building, Philadelphia 2, Pennsylvania.*

**Bald Eagle captures tern.**—On December 16, 1947, at about 7:45 a.m., I was driving north between Daytona Beach and Marineland, Florida, when I saw a flock of Caspian Terns (*Hydroprogne caspia*) and Royal Terns (*Thalasseus maximus*) feeding in the breaker zone. An immature Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) was circling about 300 feet above the water a little farther offshore. Suddenly the eagle dove in the direction of the terns and caught one at the water surface just as the tern was rising with a fish. The eagle carried the tern (apparently a Royal) to the beach and alighted. I left the car and advanced over the dunes. This frightened the bird, and it flushed, carrying its prey about 75 yards farther down the beach.—G. W. NOELL, *Marine Studios, Marineland, Florida.*