

## Study of Nighthawk's Nest.

The nighthawk's nest was discovered Friday, July 3, in an open, slightly wooded spot a short distance south of the road running parallel to camp behind the hill. The nest itself was only a place on the ground. There were two eggs, elliptical in shape, with a creamy white and gray background, evenly and finely spotted with deep brown. They were so nearly the color of the ground that it was often necessary to look quite a while before they could be located.

The blind, consisting of stakes covered over with maple branches, was set up that evening. When we approached the bird played hurt and tried to lead us away.

Until Saturday, July 11, my observations consisted largely of watching the female, the only bird I saw, sit on her eggs. The angle at which she sat was by no means always the same, but on bright days she seemed to face the sun. Most of the time she sat perfectly still, opening her eyes about a quarter of the time.

On Sunday afternoon (July 5) I took Mrs. Steidtmann with me to scare the bird from the nest while I observed from the blind. The bird fluttered and played hurt, leading Mrs. Steidtmann 25 yards from the nest before settling down. 15 minutes later she circled back to the nest and landed about a foot from the eggs. After looking around in every direction she slowly walked, or waddled, to her eggs.

On the morning of July 11 I chased the bird off the nest. She made a much bigger fuss than usual <sup>pecking & running at me</sup> and stayed close by instead of leading me away. I found one egg still in the nest and the other shell lying nearby. There was no sign of a baby bird, but the condition of the shell seemed to indicate that the bird had hatched. I think it must have been eaten by some ground animal.

On Sunday, July 12, I brought a baby nighthawk, about a day old, from another

nest and put it beside the remaining egg. The chick was dark gray striped with white, a little ball of fuzz. It could walk around and as I carried it kept chucking very softly. The female immediately accepted it as her own, and sat on the nest with the egg and baby beneath her, the baby's head sticking out. Her throat quivered constantly, as it had never done before. This may have been due to the heat, although it had been very hot before, but I'm inclined to think it an expression of emotion. Very frequently the baby bird would seem to be uncomfortable and stir around. It was then that the mother made the only call I ever heard beside the hissing. It was a very faint chuck.

I made two sets of measurements, one the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup>, the second the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup>, about 20 hours later. The growth in length in that time was 14 mm., from 5.8 cm. to 7.2 cm.

Tuesday afternoon, July 14: I observed for two hours, and all during that time the adult brooded the baby chick and let the egg lie unprotected. That evening I returned to find the egg cold and the birds disappeared. It was the same the next night.

There were several very interesting features in this nest study. One was that I never saw the male bird. The same bird, with a huffy throat, always sat on the egg. Several times other night hawks groomed nearby, but I seriously doubt if they were connected with the nest.

The second interesting feature was the feeding, or lack of it. I sat for long periods of time, several times as long as three hours, and covered all times of day from 5:30 A.M. to 9:45 P.M., but not once did the female leave the nest to get food during incubation, and not once did she feed the chick. She might possibly have been living on stored energy, but the chick must certainly have been fed, since it grew

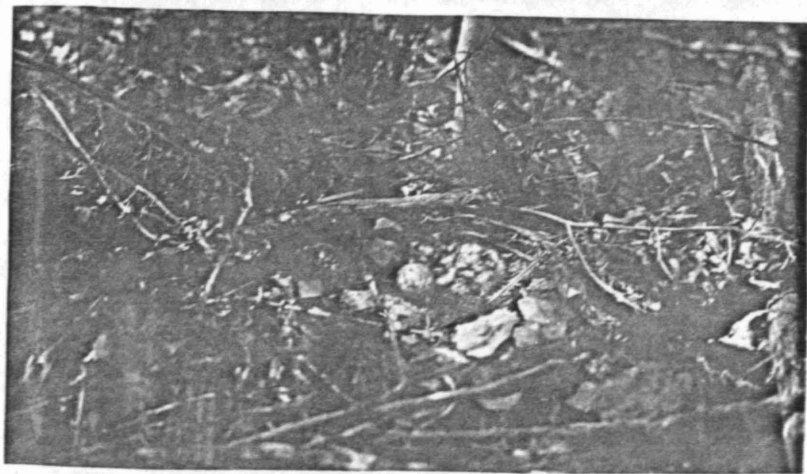
14 mm. in 20 hours.

The last interesting feature was the preference of a live chick over an unhatched egg. The egg had developed quite a way before it was deserted, but it apparently was much less important to its mother than her foster-child.

The nest was also an interesting study in protective coloration. As may be seen from the accompanying pictures, the female on the nest looked very much like a lichen. The eggs and young also were very close to ground color.



. Magpie on nest, chick's head showing at her right.



Baty chick and egg



Maggie at Peou



Maggie aroused



Maggie really angry.