

The incubation of eggs by the
whip-poor-will. 1931

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On July 9th, 1931, of our my first bird pair - well

nest and eggs and also had my first "close up" of an

adult. To say the word nest is to give the wrong impression

for the egg nested flat on the ground on two large flat

leaves. The two eggs were white with rather variegated

coloration of faint lavender and buff. Of course you think

right feet from the nest in order to observe unobscured

by the adult and then visited daily thru the seven

ten days until they were hatched.

Of no time did of either one or from the male bird.

The female can be told from the male by her more

fully more ring and buffly tipped tail feathers. The bird

on the nest always had three colorations. The

female apparently was on the nest most of the day

eight hours, for no matter what time of the day

night (until dark) of visited, she was present. For

an incubating bird she was very tame and after

the bird was set up would let me enter or leave

it without flying away. However if approached

too near the nest she would leave immediately.

She would go only a short distance and hop up

and down with much fluttering of ~~feathers~~

wings, evidently trying to entice me in her direction.

Of of followed the would go further away, always

regarding up the wing fluttering and hopping.

Unless she were in a great hurry and ~~disturb~~

the position of the eggs, they were always side by side with their long axes parallel to each other and to the long axis of the female's body. No matter which way she was facing the eggs were always so.

The few times I observed her come to the nest showed that she never flew directly to it. She would fly down a little distance off, making the noise that movement of her wings always made, and then silently crawl thru the brush to the eggs. She progressed forward with an awkward, waddling like walk but with no sound. She approached the eggs in the direction in which they were lying and settled herself on them without disturbing their position at all. Once she walked off the nest instead of flying and went at least ten feet away before she used her wings to fly.

While incubating she sat with her body fluffed out and very flat on the ground. The tail and wings varied in position, sometimes elevated, sometimes lowered. She showed no preference as to direction and was found facing any of the points of the compass. She would sit motionless for an hour or less of time. A Hermit Thrush hopping almost on her left her undisturbed. Her eyes were almost always closed. Occasionally she would open them and wiggle her throat rapidly, the rest of the body remaining immovable. At times

she would continue this for five to ten minute periods often repeated, and again she would not ^{begin} repeat the movement for several days.

At intervals she turned the eggs by rocking the body vigorously from side to side. In doing this she often kept the same position but again orientated the body entirely around and often back again. As she moved she used both feet and bill to change the eggs and to keep them under her. On some occasions she moved the eggs as frequently as every minute and at other times she remained motionless for over an hour. At first it seemed as if she was stimulated to greater activity by the sun shining directly on her, but her behavior was the same in sun or shade.

On the afternoon of the seventeenth day the nest site was found deserted with the egg shells scattered in different directions about one and one and one-half feet from it. One was broken about one-third from the end so evenly in most places it looked as if it had been cut. The other was more jaggedly broken near the center. I knew the young were nearly because of the unusual excitement shown by the female. She jumped up and down with wings outstretched much more than usual and almost seemed pugacious. The young were soon found because of their

buffy color. One was four feet from the old nest site, the other one foot away from this one. Both were rather flat on the ground and she seemed not thoroughly dry. Each performed a queer back and forth balancing or breathing movement. Both were most active and while being photographed were very restless and constantly made attempts to go to the female who whittled to the nearby. Because the female refused to return to the young while I was near, I placed them in front of the blind in order to observe them. They were very still but constantly gave a weak bitter like call. After seeing them shiver and yawn for a short time I left to let the female return.

The following morning the female was brooding the young where they were left the night before. She flew away as usual and I put the young in front of the blind window. They both crunched low on the ground and did not move. Soon each began to give the low mewling sound. The head bobbed up and down with each cry. After one-half hour I heard the female fly near by and she settled down about four feet from them. She began to make a coarse clucking sound and immediately both chicks showed activity and went to her. Their movement was more of a hop than a walk or flight but it was accomplished with much stretching of wings and neck. The female did not move rather me tall

the way and nestled under her. The young were motionless even with the female audibly flying near but the instant she began clucking both chicks moved toward her. As further observation was impossible from the blind I left them. That afternoon there was no trace of the family anywhere in the vicinity of the nest.

Description of young. - Entirely covered with buffy natal down with the exception of bare places on the back, and under the wing and knee. Down on front side of tarsus to the foot, back of tarsus bare. Warbler above with lighter spots on crown and a lighter line across the throat. Tube like nostrils, ^{lighter than} darker bill, white egg tooth at tip of upper mandible.

Young A.	weight	12.8 gms.?
Young B.	weight	11.0 gms.
Young C.	length	65 m.m.
	bill	2 1/2 m.m.
	extent	75 m.m.
	tarsus toe	22 1/2 m.m.

Bottom foot



Nest observed - 17.

Nest discovered - July 9th, 1931.

Young chicks hatched - July 24th, 1931.

Incubation period

14 days Audubon

17 " Burns

19 " Atwell