

Cawson  
1934

## Chipping Sparrow Nest Report

An July 3, 1931 a Chipping Sparrow's nest was found on the full back of camp about a quarter of a mile south west of the flag pole. The nest was situated about seven feet from the ground near the end of a limb of a Red Pine. It was composed of grass and small rootlets and well lined with black horse hair. The measurements were: - outside diameter 3 inches; inside diameter 1 5/8 inches; outside depth 2 3/8 inches; inside depth 1 1/4 inches. The little structure was neatly made and loosely attached to the pine needles.

When the nest was found at about noon on July 3 there was one Chipping Sparrow's egg which I marked. The following morning at nine o'clock there was neither Chipping Sparrow's egg and one Cowbird's egg. No more eggs were laid. The Chipping Sparrow egg was bluish green dotted with blackish. The Cowbird egg was whitish thickly specked with brown.

During the incubation period the nest was observed from behind a clump of bushes about fifteen feet from the nest. It was apparently only the female who incubated. The longest period she was on the nest was two hours and five minutes, this was in the morning on a cool cloudy day, but the usual length of time was from one hour to one and one-half hours. The eggs were left uncovered.

from ten to forty-seven minutes, but the usual time was about twenty minutes. The mate did not approach the nest when the other bird was on it. Much of the time he was not seen or heard near the nest. Three times he came to the bushes about twelve feet from the nest and gave a few dry claps, then flew away.

The bird always sat on the nest facing the south-east and approached the nest from the same direction. When disturbed or voluntarily left the nest she always flew southward to the bushes or beneath the bushes. I was unable to determine the reason why she always faced the south-east but it may have been that when in this position she was directly parallel with the main part of the limb beneath the nest, or that from this position she was able to see for a great distance over the hill and territory beneath. The bird became quite unfeeling and on two occasions stood directly beneath the nest and she did not move until the branches were disturbed.

When the nest was visited on the evening of July 14<sup>th</sup> the first Clipping Sparrow egg laid had hatched and the shell was still in the nest. By the next morning at 5:45 the Cowbird egg had hatched and all shells and the unhatched Clipping Sparrow egg had been removed from the nest.

At this time a blind was erected about three feet from the nest.

The two birds (parents) were very

similar in appearance, but by observing their conduct and noting their markings carefully it seemed that the male was slightly smaller and that the black line through the eye was a little more prominent on this bird than the other.

Both parents took part in feeding the young, but only the female brooded the babies, arranged and cleaned the nest usually after each feeding. The male was often seen on top of the nest when she flew away with it in her mouth.

The young were fed at intervals varying from one to thirty minutes. Usually the length of the intervals alternated - a long interval averaging about twenty minutes and the next feeding averaging about six minutes later. As the birds grew older they were fed more often than just after having hatched. The food consisted chiefly of green worm-like larvae. On only two occasions did the two parents feed the young together, this taking place when the young were two days old. The female was nestling when the male arrived with food. She got up and stood on the opposite side of the nest from the male. He passed the worm to her, then pulled on it and fed his portion to the cowbird after which he took the other portion from the female's beak and fed it to the Clippy.

The parents did not stimulate the young to open their mouths by chirping. The babies either had their mouths open <sup>or</sup> were checked up - stretched before the parent arrived or immediately did so when the food arrived. The food was given by dropping it into the mouth and taking it out two or three times before the young swallowed it. Each time before

it was dropped in the parent crushed the worm between the mandibles.

The female usually approached the babies from the south side of the nest and the male from the west side. When hovering the birds should always faced the southwest. Several times she did not nestle the young after the feeding, but usually she did for period of from four to twenty-five minutes - yet longer nesting periods being between the longer intervals between the feedings. On the very warm days she did not sit on the bird, but straddled them with wings held upward and outward only for a short time.

The cowbird was more active, made more noise and received more food, but in spite of this fact the Chipping growth rate was quite rapid as the accompanying table indicates. On July 20<sup>th</sup> when the nest was visited the Chipping Sparrow was gone. I judge that the Cowbird pushed it out of the nest and onto the ground where it was eaten by some rodent.

There was very little chirping about the nest by the parents except when I entered and left the blind. The male only on a few occasions sat in a clump of bushes and uttered a series of dry chips after feeding the young. He also gave three or three soft chips when he flew into the tree if the female was hovering. This was evidently a warning for her to depart.

The Cowbird remained in the nest until July 25<sup>th</sup>. When the blind was entered that morning the cowbird was on the limb a short distance from the nest. One of the parents came to the nest a few minutes later with food. When it

discovered that the nest was empty it flew to the ground then back up to the Cowbird, fed it and flew to the ground with the Cowbird fluttering after it. The Chipping Sparrow hopped away under the bushes with the baby hopping and attempting to fly after the Chippy. The nest was vacated twice during this same day and once the next morning, but nothing was seen or heard of the birds.

This nest was under observation for twenty-two days. During this time three eggs were incubated, two of which were Chipping Sparrow's eggs and the other a Cowbird's egg. The female apparently did all of the incubating for ten days. One Cowbird & one Chippy hatched. Both the parents cared for the young and fed them at intervals of varying length. The Chippy was crowded out of the nest by the Cowbird when six days old. The Cowbird remained in the nest for ten days and had grown in length from 3.6 mm. to 9.9 mm during this time.

Chipping Sparrow

July 15 July 17 July 20 July 22 July 24

Length	3.6 mm.	4.5 mm.	5.7 mm.		
Tail	none	.2 ..	.7 ..		
Bill	.4 ..	.5 ..	.6 ..		
Bill Eye	.5 ..	.75 ..	1.1 ..		
Bill Gape	.6 ..	.9 ..	1. ..		
Bill Nostril	.2 ..	.3 ..	.4 ..		
Eye Diam.	closed	.15 ..	.3 ..		
Extent	3.4 mm.	4.9 ..	9. ..		
Wing Right	1.2 ..	1.9 ..	3.35 ..		
Primary	.5 ..	.9 ..	3. ..		
Wing Body	1.6 ..	2.3 ..	5.1 ..		
Foot Body	2.1 ..	3. ..	4.4 ..		
Tarsus	1.1 ..	1.2 ..	1.7 ..		
Tarsus Toe	1.9 ..	2.2 ..	3.1 ..		
Foot	.8 ..	1. ..	1.4 ..		

Cowbird

Length	3.6 mm.	5.1 mm.	6.7 mm.	8.5 mm.	9.9 mm.
Tail	none	none	.4 ..	.8 ..	1.5 ..
Bill	.4 ..	.6 ..	.6 ..	.6 ..	1.4 ..
Bill Eye	.7 ..	1. ..	1.15 ..	1.3 ..	1.35 ..
Bill Gape	.8 ..	1. ..	1.4 ..	1.5 ..	1.6 ..
Bill Nostril	.25 ..	.35 ..	.5 ..	.6 ..	.6 ..
Eye Diam.	closed	closed	.2 ..	.3 ..	.35 ..
Extent	3.4 ..	5.2 ..	10.7 ..	15.9 ..	17.5 ..
Wing Right	1.3 ..	1.7 ..	3.9 ..	6. ..	6.7 ..
Primary	.5 ..	1.1 ..	3.4 ..	4.5 ..	5.7 ..
Wing Body	1.7 ..	2. ..	5.5 ..	7.2 ..	8.5 ..
Foot Body	1.9 ..	2.8 ..	5.2 ..	6. ..	7. ..
Tarsus	1. ..	1.2 ..	2.2 ..	2.5 ..	2.5 ..
Tarsus Toe	1.5 ..	1.8 ..	3.4 ..	3.9 ..	4.5 ..
Foot	.5 ..	.6 ..	1.2 ..	1.4 ..	2. ..