

Nest Report of the Towhee.

Helen Cherry.

1932

~~When I was identifying the nest it~~
was found to be in the Dr. Blomquist's
Nelson house. It is thought to belong
to the Towhee from the description
of the nest.

When I went to Miss Nelson and I were
at the house of a friend, a brown owl
was perched on the roof to a
highly interesting bird. This proved the
nest to be a Towhee.

The nest was secured a blind from
the bird's eye. It was very well
concealed and was not touched.

Towhee's Nest.

It was on the evening of June 27, 1932 while returning to camp after searching for a bird nest that I came upon a Towhee's nest back of the sandpit near the Ornithology Laboratory and over looking the Biological Station on Douglas Lake. The nest was located in four young Birch saplings growing at the base of a White Birch tree. It was about two and one half feet from the ground. This is a bit unusual as the Towhee ^{usually} is a ground resting bird according to Chapman and Lorbusch. The nest was rather loosely put together. It was made of grasses and weeds and having a lining of finer grasses.

The nest contained three eggs, two belonging to the Towhee and a third and smaller Cowbird egg. The two Towhee eggs were oval in shape, white, dotted over the entire surface with reddish brown to lilac spots.

I did not identify the nest at first but upon reporting it to Dr. Blanchard and Miss Nelson was told it might belong to a Towhee. This they decided from my description of the nest and eggs.

After dinner Miss Nelson and I went to the nest. On our approach a brown and white bird flushed from the nest to a bush near by calling "chee-ick". This proved the bird to be a Towhee.

The next day I secured a blind from the Ornithology Laboratory to be used in further study of the birds and nest. The blind was a white canvas tent which when placed in the proper position enabled me to stand in an upright position. An opening in one end, covered with fine mesh enabled me to view the bird unnoticed.

The measurements of the

nest and eggs are as follows.

Nest:

Outside diameter - - - 6.5 inches
Inside diameter - - - 3.5 inches
Outside depth - - - 3 inches
Inside depth - - - 2 inches

Eggs:

Towhee

1 - 2.3 mm. long.
- 1.9 mm. wide

2. - 2.25 mm. long
1.8 mm. wide

Cowbird -

June: 27, Evening - Removed the Cowbird egg from the nest.

June 28. I placed the canvas tent on the ground near the nest so the bird would get used to seeing it around.

June 30. Late in the evening, I set up the white canvas tent about ten feet from the nest. This took about thirty minutes. I left the nest immediately as the parents were much disturbed calling Che-wick from a near by bush or shrub.

July 1: Observations: 5:15 P.M. to 6:00 P.M.

Weather - Wind - slight breeze from North
Sky: - Clear.

My room mate and I went to the bird blind. As we neared the blind

the male called an alarm note "che-wink" from a tree some distance from the nest. We both entered the blind, then my room mate left. As we came near the nest the female flew to a shrub near by. Half a minute after I was alone, the female entered the nest coming around the edge of the Birch from the North east ^{up} on the right hand side of the tree. She settled on the nest with head away from the blind in a North east-South west position. From 5:20 to 6:00 o'clock the female turned the eggs (three times) keeping the same position. She settled down and seemed at ease. At a slight stir in the tent, when ^{I was} getting ready to leave, the bird turned and faced the blind. The male was nowhere in sight when I left the blind at 6:00 o'clock.

July 2. 6:45. I approached the nest to measure it and the eggs. The female left the nest and the male called "che-wink" near by, all the time I was at the nest. I entered the blind and in a few minutes the male entered the nest from around the Birch and inspected the nest thoroughly. He stood on the edge of the nest for about five minutes, called "che-wink" and left the nest, ^{from a tree} the female entered the nest from the North east.

July 3. Observations 2:45 P.M. to 5:00 P.M.
Weather: Wind - none. Sky - Clear ^{air} warm.

As I climbed the stairs, ^{stairs back of the library} I heard the male lowly sing "se tow. Pee e" from a high perch. When I came in sight he called "che-wink". The female did not leave the nest as I entered the blind so she had done on the other days.

From my memory in the clinic I
 watched the remaining very nice and
 listless minute. The male uttered the
 first and peculiar soft twittering notes
 were uttered by both parents. The male
 took the place of the female and she
 flew away. The male faced the lake. He
 returned one-half hour after. I
 went to the nest as soon as he had
 gone. There was one bird. The remaining egg
 packed. The parents returned at this time
 and uttered some "she-wick" and
 listless sounds from bird to bird.
 The one bird had very little shape beyond
 all abdomen and neck. The body was
 quite bare except for a scabbard down.
 The eyes were closed. I was almost
 afraid to touch the bird for fear I would
 injure it in some way. I entered the
 nest and returned with interest the
 reaction of the parents. The male came
 to the nest almost immediately and
 looked at it from an angle. The impulsion
 time he gave a "she-wick" and flew away
 at which time the female uttered the
 note from the nest. The female has
 mated the impulsion from a bird
 without uttering a sound. She did not
 make a sound as she entered the nest
 and uttered in it facing the lake.
 In other minutes later the male returned
 to the nest, took birds further and uttered
 soft notes for one minute. The male flew
 to a short bush just away from the nest. He
 so he now passed near the nest. The
 female flew through narrow away
 twenty-five minutes. Ten minutes after
 the female returned. The male came to
 a bush. He took from the nest first.

twice, flew to the nest, gave the female something which she dropped in nest, picked up crushed and put in the young's mouth. She picked at the nest then settled facing the lake. The male flew to a patch of briars by the blind and began scratching. Twice he carried worms to the female and goes back for more. The female turned and faced the blind. This continued for thirty minutes. The female is puzzled about the egg.
7:30 P.M. I moved the blind ^{to within} four feet ^{egg} of the nest.

July 5: Observation: 5:00 P.M. to 6:10 P.M.

Weather ^{- Warm} Wind - moderate, sky clear.

As I approached the nest the male was singing "se tow he ee" from the top of a tree about twenty feet from the nest. When I came into view he flew to a low shrub and called "che wink" twice. I entered the blind and observed the nest. The female seemed unaware of my presence. She was facing the lake. As I watched she gaped three times as if warm or tired or thirsty. Two boys passed within thirty feet of the nest. The bird did not leave but was very watchful. Female stood up in the nest picked at the unhatched egg and rolled it around then settled brightly on the nest. I did not see any food brought to the nest.

7:10 P.M. I returned to the blind without any signals from the parent. ^{to where} being given. At 7:15 the female entered the nest from the North East and faced the lake. She had evidently been off for some time. The young opened its mouth several times as she entered the nest but the female did not feed it. At 7:45 the female left

the nest and two minutes later the male entered from the North and pushed his beak into that of the young. I did not see any worm or beetle in the mouth of the parent. The male perched on the side of the nest, watched the young. The male then ate the foecal sac given off by the young. The male remained at the nest for a few minutes then flew to a shrub near by - calling "che-wink" as he landed. The female entered the nest at 8:05 as usual. She did not feed the young.

July 6. Observations 7:15^{pm} to 8:45 P.M. Weather - Calm Clear day.

I entered the blind without alarming the female. She faced the lake in the usual position. At 7:30 she left the nest and the male entered with a large green caterpillar which he pushed far down into the opened mouth of the young. Immediately foecal sac was given from the young bird which the male ate as the caterpillar passed from the anal opening. The male then flew away. I measured the young. It is more thickly covered with down than I have seen elsewhere. The chipped egg remains in the nest. At 7:45 the female returned to the nest entered and faced blind. She did not feed the young. At 7:55 the male returned with another large green worm which he put far down into the opened mouth of the young. It was too big a bite for one so small. The female took the caterpillar out of the young's mouth crushed it in her beak then fed the young. She ate a part of the caterpillar. The male ate the foeces then left the nest. At 8:20 the male called "che-wink" from a nearby bush. The female left

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The nest and the male entered ^{with a green caterpillar} This time he crushed the worm with his beak before giving it to the young. The male ate the caterpillar and flew away. At 8:40 the female returned to the nest.

July 7, Observations: 9:30 to 11:30 - A strong wind blowing from the North. The sun is very hot.

On entering the blind I found the female on the nest, facing the blind. Her mouth was open and she seemed a bit warm. The male was not around, at least he did not call as I entered the blind. From 9:30 to 10:15 the female preened her feathers, stood up in the nest, picked at egg and rolled it about in the nest and took different positions on the nest. At 10:34 the female left the nest. I went to the nest to observe the young. Little quills were pushing out from the tail and wings. The eyes are just opening so I can see the pupil. They do not stay open. At 10:48 the male came to the nest with two caterpillars, one green and one brown. The young ate both without any difficulty. The male ate the greenest then flew off. The female returned at 11:10. As I left the blind 11:20 the male called "che wink" from a bush near the nest.

July 8, Observations 7:30 to 9:00 Very little wind. Sky is clear.

The female left the nest as I approached the blind. The egg is still in the nest. I wonder what they will do with it. The male entered the nest with two large caterpillars ^{which he} fed to the young after crushing them in his beak. He removed the greenest then flew away. Shortly after this the female

returned, settled on the nest and faced the blind. The bird left the nest on the approach of two people but returned almost immediately after they passed on. As she entered the nest she pecked at the egg. The male brought two large caterpillars at 8:30 which he fed to the young. He left and did not return while I was watching.

July 9, 1932. Observations 9:30^{AM} to 11:30 AM. Weather very hot. Slight breeze from west. Sky clear.

The female left the nest on my approach to the blind, called "Che-wink" several times and even after returning to the nest which she did almost immediately. The bird settled on the nest, facing the lake, mouth open. Within a few minutes she pecked the egg and rolled it around in the nest. From 9:40 to 11:30 the male brought five green caterpillars to the young. The female remained on the nest most of the time. She was restless and warm. From 10:00 to 11:00 I took five pictures.

7:30 P.M. - 8:30 P.M. The evening was very calm. The parent birds were nowhere to be seen. I measured the bird. It is now 72 mm. long. The feathers are showing on the wings and tail. They seem to have come out all of a sudden. At 7:40 the female called three times "Che-wink" from a bush then entered the nest, fed the young and cleaned the nest as usual. The unhatched egg was still in the nest.

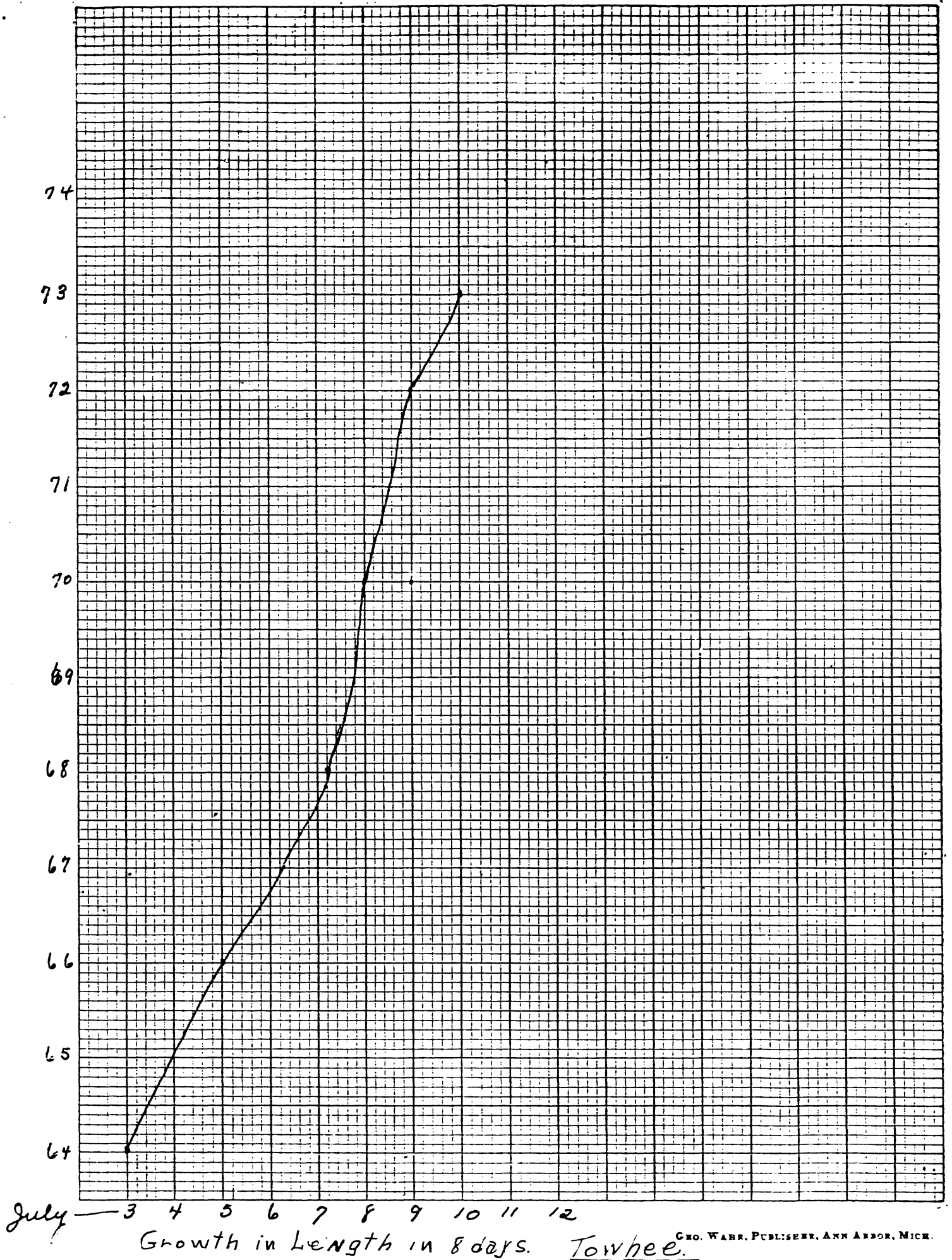
July 10, Observations: 7:30 P.M. Slight breeze - Sky cloudy.

The male gave an Alarm note "Che-wink" as I passed the flag pole. The female left the nest calling the same as the male. I tried to take the measurement at this time. The young bird began to pull and flutter in my hand. The parents were

very much concerned, coming close to the nest calling "che wick" all the time. I noticed the egg was gone. The feathers had come out on the bird much more than she had up to this time. I put the bird back in the nest holding my hand over it, trying to still it and keep it from jumping from the nest. As I drew my hand away it fluttered to the ground calling loudly at first, then a faint peep. I replaced it in the nest but it flew or jumped out and hopped into the bushes. The female came to it as soon as it was out of the nest and away from me. The female called "che wick" and the young answered with a faint "peep". I then left as it was getting dusk.

The next day I returned but was unable to find any trace of the adults or young.

From my observations I noticed this particular young grew very rapidly having grown nine millimeters in eight days. The male did most of the feeding. The type of food was caterpillars. I do not know what became of the egg shell or of the unhatched egg.



July — 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Growth in Length in 8 days. Towhee.

Date	Length	Tail	Bill	Bill-eye	Bill-gape	Bill Nostril	Eye Diameter	Extent	Wing Pt.	Foot body	Tarsus toe	Foot	
July 3	64 mm	0	5	9	15	3.9		67	28	25	26	20	
July 5	66 mm	0	5	9.2	16.2	4.1	INCORRECTLY TAKEN.	68.5	29	26	28	20	
July 6	67.3	0	5.1	9.5	17.5	4.2		69.5	31	27	28	21	
July 7	68.2	2	5.3	9.7	18.5	4.3		71.4	33	28	29	21.5	
July 8	70 mm	3.5	6	9.9	19	4.5		3.0	75	35	30	30	23
July 9	72	5	9	10	19	5		2.2	81	38	30	30	24
July 10	73	7	11	11	19	5.7		2.2	100	47	36	35	24

Measurements in ^{milli-} meters
Measurements of young towhee.