

REPORT ON THE NESTING OF THE PHOEBE.

The phoebe's nest was found over the door of the Insectary on July 2. Reports as to the number of eggs on previous days was given me by Mr. Frank Hinz. The nest was beautifully constructed of dried grasses and green mosses, and perched precariously on a strip of wood above the door.

The conclusions of this brief study follow.

1. The phoebe is parasitised by cowbirds. Perhaps the removal of the two cowbird eggs from the nest, soon after the start of the incubation helped to cause the female to desert the nest, since she did not replace these two removed eggs, and only had two left to incubate. The reason those of the cowbird were removed was to see if the phoebe would lay two more to replace them.

2. The male sings to the female while she incubates the eggs.

3. The female easily leaves the nest, when people pass close to it. When she deserted, she flew always only a short distance to the shrubs on the hill-side across the road, where she and her mate would hold consultation.

4. This nest was unsafely built. If I had not tied it up, the incubating female would have gradually caused the nest to topple from its slim support to the ground.

5. When the female first showed signs of desertion, the male spent one whole day singing vociferously, probably trying to get her to mate with him again, or at least not desert the nest.

6. The male stayed in the neighborhood of the nest and sang after the female had deserted, perhaps following his natural instincts to keep other birds from his territory, and secure another mate.

The male was heard to utter a soft "put", "put" note as well as his loud "phoe-be" song.

These phoebes built their nest before the Biological Station students had come. When the students did come, the daily procession

past the nest and in and out of the Insectary door started.

cause to
Yet this did not stop the female from deserting the nest; she went ahead and laid her eggs in the nest. Later, then, she deserted. She probably laid her eggs and started to incubate them because her nesting instinct for a while overcame her fear of the students, but eventually even this instinct was broken. The persistence of the bird was remarkable in this respect.

So far as I know, this pair of ploebes did not nest again in the vicinity of the camp.

FIELD NOTES ON THE NESTING OF THE PHOEBE.

W. B. D. 1937

June 27. Nest contained no eggs.

June 28. Nest with one egg.

July 2. Four phoebe eggs.

July 3. Two phoebe and two cowbird eggs. Cowbird eggs removed.

July 5. Nest tied up to keep it from collapsing. Eggs incubated some today.

July 6. Male heard singing very enthusiastically practically all day.

July 7. 2:30 P.M. Start to observe nest from the trees on the side of the hill opposite the nest. No bird on the eggs.

2:33. Flies to another tree, preens, "put", pants with open bill. Stretches wings.

2:35-2:45 Sits on branch, in tree on side of hill near me.

2:45-2:50 Preens more. 2:50 Flies out of neighborhood.

2:55 Eggs felt; they are warm.

July 8. 5:52 A.M. Start observing from side of hill. Male singing. No bird

5:58. Another phoebe sings far off to the east. (on the nest.

6:15 Stops singing (the nesting bird, close at hand).

6:17 Sings again.

6:24 Stops singing, flies on wire, preens.

6:24 plus Sings and preens.

6:29 plus Stops singing.

6:30 Sings once.

6:30 plus Starts to sing steadily again.

6:33 Stops singing.

6:41 plus Starts singing again.

6:46 plus Still singing. I stop observing.

6:50 Eggs felt; they are cold!

From July 2 to July 5, the female phoebe was often flushed from her nest by people passing down the road. She flushed very easily.