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PINE SISKIN NESTS AT WAYNE STATE COLLEGE

On 29 April 1976 I observed a number of Pine Siskins in the elm and blue spruce trees on the Wayne State College campus, Wayne, Nebraska. They were actively flying back and forth between the trees so I could not determine the exact number of them, but they would have numbered less than a dozen.

On 30 April I saw that a Pine Siskin appeared to be building a nest in a blue spruce tree, about five feet above the ground. I continued to watch from a safe distance for the next few days. By 5 May the nest appeared to be completed and occupied. It was occupied from 5 to 12 May. During this time there were varying numbers of other Pine Siskins in the area.

On 13 May the nest was vacant and no Pine Siskins were in the area. On 14 May I noted carefully that no Pine Siskins were in the area and then examined the nest closely for the first time. I found no indication that any eggs had ever been laid in the nest. On 17 May I noted that the nest had not been occupied since 13 May, and that no Pine Siskins had been seen in the area during the time, and that fairly strong winds were rapidly causing the deterioration of the nest. I was not aware of any record of nesting attempts by Pine Siskins in this area prior to this time, so I salvaged the nest on 17 May (with authority granted via Federal Fish and Wildlife Permit #PRT-7-151-C-KC, Amendment #2). The nest was placed in the collection at Wayne State College as evidence of Pine Siskin activity in this area.

On 13 May 1982 the temperature was 68-70°F, intermittent rain, wind 5 mph or less from the east. At 12:15 PM I saw two fledgling Pine Siskins on the campus, south of Benthack Hall. They were in a low bush, which was just under the outstretched branches on the north side of a blue spruce tree. No adult birds were seen, and no nest was seen. At 3 PM on the same day I returned to the site. No baby birds were seen, but as I inspected the site an adult Pine Siskin flew in. After a brief survey of the area it flew almost directly to a nest which I had not located earlier. The nest was in the blue spruce about six feet above ground, above the low bush. It was situated about 18 inches from the tip of the branch. An adult bird was on the nest but no young birds were visible. I assumed they were in the nest, being protected from the rain by the adult. On 19 May 2.5 inches of rain and some wind occurred during the night and early morning. At 12 noon the adult bird was still on the nest and everything appeared to be in proper condition. Heavy rain (1+ inch) and some hail and wind occurred that night and early morning, and at 12 noon 20 May an inspection of the nest site revealed all Pine Siskins gone and the nest destroyed. The nest lining materials were not wet, but were separated from the outer nest structure. It appeared that the nest site might have been the victim of a predator rather than the weather. Photographic record of the nesting Pine Siskins was made by Mr. Harland Pankratz, Biology Professor at Wayne State College.

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