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## A Second Bald Eagle Nest in Nebraska

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#### A SECOND BALD EAGLE NEST IN NEBRASKA

The Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) in Nebraska is considered an uncommon migrant and locally common winter resident. Formerly, the species was a common breeder in eastern Nebraska (Johnsgard, 1986). The only previously known modern (1900s) nesting attempt took place in 1973 in Cedar Co., northeast of Crofton, Nebraska (Lock and Shuckman, 1973). This nest occurred along the Missouri River, downstream of Lewis and Clark Reservoir. Between the latter part of January and 25 March 1973, a pair of Eagles was observed while building a nest, copulating, perching near the nest, and sitting on the completed nest. Eventually, the nest was abandoned and it was believed that egg laying did not take place.

A second Bald Eagle nest attempt was documented during March and April 1987, in Garden Co., west of Lewellen, Nebraska. John Davis, of Alliance, Nebraska, initially observed the nest and subsequently reported it to the Alliance office of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC). Mr. Davis, while driving a sales route along highway 26 through the Panhandle,

was able to make weekly observations at the nest site. He initially observed an adult carrying material to the nest on 2 March, then sitting on the nest 12 March. The pair was also observed on and around the nest by Don Hunt, Conservation Officer, NGPC, and by Paul Jeske, whose 1 April sighting was the last before the nest was abandoned.

When I visited the nest site 15 April no Eagles were present. The nest occurs in a mature cottonwood approximately 50 to 55 feet tall, and sits within 10 feet of the tree's top. The tree lies 150 yards north of the North Platte River, and 450 yards south of highway 26. An old gravel pit lake lies between the highway and the nest tree. My attempt to climb the branch leading to the nest failed. When I was finally able to check the nest for its contents, during an aerial survey 19 May 1987, the nest was empty. Over six weeks had elapsed since the Eagles were last sighted, so it is impossible to be positive that no egg had been laid.

During March 1988 the nest was occupied again. On 8 March, Hunt reported that the birds had been around the nest for nearly a week. Subsequent visits by NGPC personnel (Dan Klammer, Hunt, Jeske, R. L. Nelson, and G. Wingfield) throughout the following month frequently found one Eagle sitting on the nest. During seven hours of total observation on 9-11 March a bird was sitting on the nest for 4.5 hours, was off the nest but in the nest tree for 1.5 hours, and was away from the site for the remaining 1 hour.

Every effort was made to prevent disturbance of the area. Through an agreement with the landowner, we posted the area with No Access signs, and had padlocked the pasture's gate. The frequent visits by NGPC personnel were also intended to prevent harassment. The Eagles did not appear to be bothered by traffic along the highway. Despite these efforts, the nest was abandoned as it had been in 1987. The Eagles were last seen on 30 March 1988. A 13 April aerial survey again found the nest empty.

#### LITERATURE CITED

- Johnsgard, Paul A., 1986. *A Revised List of Birds of Nebraska and Adjacent Plains States*. Occ. Pap. Nebr. Ornith. Union., No. 6, 3rd Printing, 113 pp.
- Lock, Ross A., and Schuckman, J., 1973. A Bald Eagle Nest in Nebraska. *NBR* 41:76-77.

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