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CATTLE EGRETS NESTING IN KEITH COUNTY

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On 6 August, 1994, we observed 31 Cattle Egrets perched in willows at the west end of Lake McConaughy, Keith County (NBR 62: 104, 128. 1994). The habitat and the birds' behavior suggested that they were nesting, which we confirmed the next morning when we waded to the area. Eleven adult egrets were present and we found five nests, three with three eggs each and the other two nests under construction. All of the nests were in live willows and were 4-6 feet above the water surface. The willow thicket used by the egrets was one of several in the shallow water (2-3 feet deep) along the old North Platte River channel at the upper end of Lake McConaughy. A single adult Snowy Egret was present on

6 August, but we found no evidence to suggest that it might have been nesting. We did not return to the colony to determine its fate, although heronries established so late in the season are probably seldom successful.

Cattle Egrets are rare breeders in Nebraska. There are three additional breeding records as follows: adults on a nest in the Marsh Lakes area of Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, Garden County, in 1981 (Ducey 1984); 22 adults and 6 nests at the same location on 21-22 June, 1984 (Ducey 1984); and 70+ nests in extreme northeast Garfield County in 1994 (NBR 62: 128. 1994). Breeding usually occurs when local habitat conditions are just right, as was the case at this location in 1994.

LITERATURE CITED

- Ducey, J. 1984. Cattle Egrets and White-faced Ibises nesting at Valentine Refuge. *The Nebraska Bird Review* 52:76.