

UNUSUAL NESTING SITES

By DR. STUART HOUSTON, Yorkton
(Photos from Kodachrome by the author)



Crow nest. Last Mountain Lake

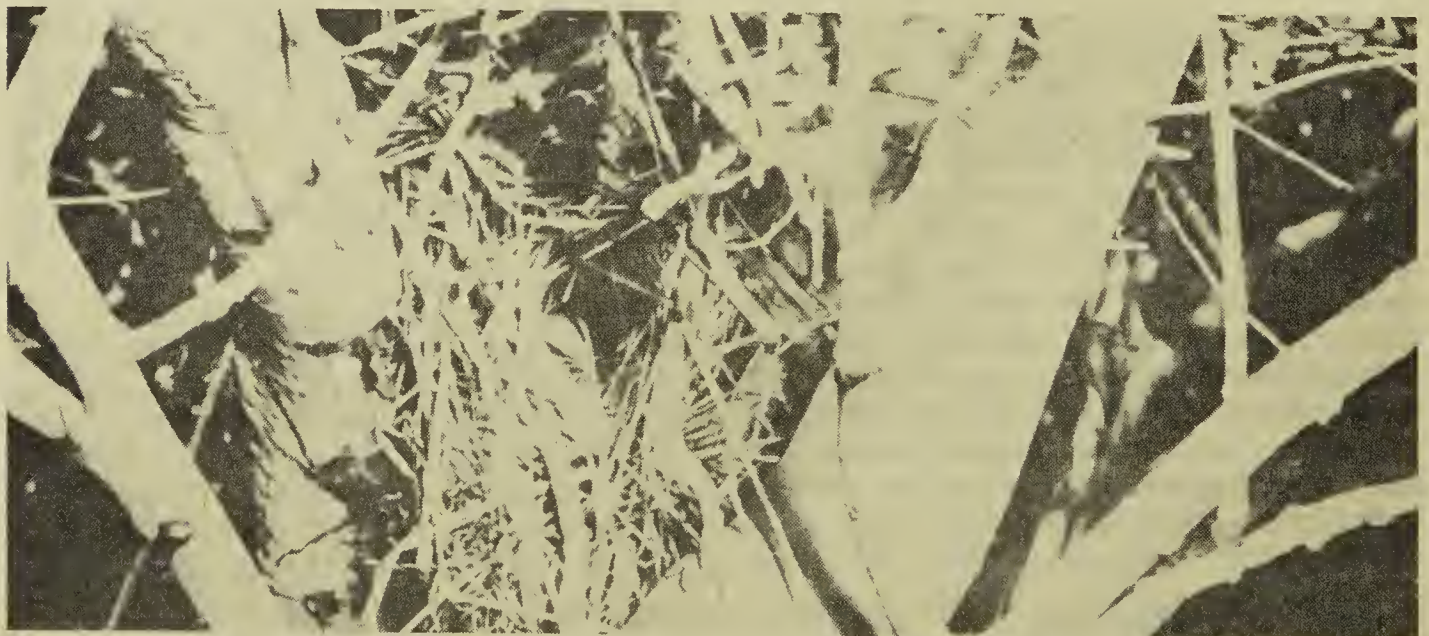
The ever-present prospect of seeing something unusual makes every nature excursion an exciting game. While holidaying on the farm near Dilke, we were intrigued to find three species of birds nesting in unusual locations; each was an adaptation to local circumstances.

The flickers at Henry McArton's last year drilled a hole in the barn wall and nested just inside. This year they apparently were molested by the cat and because of a shortage of suitable trees, chose a hollow log lying on the ground! Actually, the bottom of the log had rotted away and when seen on June 22, one young flicker and two infertile eggs were actually reposed in a depression in the ground. The entrance hole was

almost directly above this. The heavy rain on June 24 which poured in upon the nestling proved the folly of such a nesting site, for the young bird was dead when I next visited the nest.

I have frequently found English Sparrows attaching their nests immediately beneath the bulky nest of a Red-tailed or Swainson's Hawk. However, this year for the first time I found an English Sparrow nest containing one egg and several young built in the lower part of a Crow nest. On top of the nest about twelve inches above was a young Crow not quite old enough to leave the nest.

Rising waters on Last Mountain Lake flooded a clump of trees which



English Sparrow nest, beneath occupied Crow's nest. Dilke.



Hollow log on ground occupied by Flicker. Dilke.

previously had constituted a small island several hundred yards from shore. This practically converted one pair of crows into mariners, for their nest had three feet of water beneath it. On June 28, we anchored the boat at the base of the tree and climbed up to band the almost full-grown young. One of them jumped overboard, but when he struck the water he became even more frightened. He did not swim in the conventional manner, but rather used his outstretched wings as oars. He apparently chose us as the lesser of the two evils and came directly back to the boat and clambered over the side. I placed a band on his leg and put him back on the nest.

A GALA YEAR

ELIZABETH HUBBARD, Grenfell

Wild flowers had a gala year here. Things ordinarily seen singly appeared as masses of bloom. In one or two places lilies made quite a show and they were to be seen along most roadsides. A small flowered white Aster is blooming profusely in my perennial border now. I think it is the Many-flowered. A Willow Aster also can be depended on for a big patch of colour there every fall.

An American Bittern which nests in a nearby slough, takes flights across our yard on the way to the dug-out. When he does the small birds evidently mistake him for a hawk and give him the works.

Observe the Hawk

By MRS. M. BROOKER
Grassy Lake, P.O. Love, Sask.

When the sound of the shot had faded and the few feathers settled slowly to the ground, we walked over to where the hawk sprawled face down, his wings spread as if in the last living moment he had prepared for flight into some other skies beyond.

He was a goshawk, powerful, splendidly beautiful. Surely the millions of years development in the making of this fierce flesh eater were not without purpose. Yet some people shoot hawks indiscriminately without first specifying what type of hawk they down.

The Redtail lines his nest with grey squirrel tails. We can safely agree that the tails of imperfect and diseased squirrels are among them.

The goshawk flushes or downs his prey in a flash of speed. The sick or maimed have no chance against this attack. Of course he gets the perfect ones too, but since he is partly responsible for their perfection, should he not enjoy his innings? So you will counterattack and ask, how does he happen to be so perfect? What natural enemy banishes the weak and maimed in his family? None that we know of. But providence takes care of that. If the hawk is not swift, sure, and ferocious at birth he will die shortly after the parent hawks stop feeding him, thus never able to propagate his imperfections.