

UNSUCCESSFUL NESTING ATTEMPT OF THE SNOW GOOSE ON THE RED RIVER AT WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

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On 21 May 1978, as D. Wright was canoeing on the Red River just south of St. Norbert (in Winnipeg), he spotted the head of a goose amongst the surrounding willows. Upon closer inspection, the bird was found to be a blue-phase Snow Goose, sitting on a hastily-constructed nest. The nest did not resemble the large, well-constructed bowls typical of goose nests. It consisted only of a scrape in the ground surrounded by willow vegetation and was situated approximately 20 feet from the water's edge. The goose flushed, revealing 5 eggs.

On May 25, we set out by boat to observe the goose and nest for ourselves. As we approached the location where the bird had been seen previously, we caught sight of a goose in flight. A number of photographs were obtained using a Konica TC camera equipped with a 200mm lens and a 2X teleconverter. Upon arrival at the reported nest location, we went ashore and began looking for the nest. Extensive searching failed to locate it. We settled ourselves on the opposite shore of the river a few hundred feet upstream and waited for the goose to reappear. A short while later, the goose flew overhead, crossed the river and disappeared from view in the vegetation at the nest site. We went to where we had last seen the bird and when we were about 30 feet from the shore, it flushed from low-lying land, where it

had been sitting, which jugged out slightly into the river. Again we searched in vain for the nest and then left the area.

Further information was obtained from D. Wright as to the exact location of the nest; it appeared that we had been looking in the correct area. He also mentioned that, at the time he spotted the goose, two mink were also seen in the vicinity. With this in mind, the site was revisited on May 28. We went straight to the low-lying promontory where we had searched previously. However, heavy rains had caused the level of the river to rise and completely cover this area, including the nest site. Our inability to find the nest on the previous occasion may have been due to destruction by mammalian predators, such as the mink.

Whether the eggs were lost through flooding, predation or by some other means, the loss is unfortunate since the Snow Goose normally nests much farther north along the coast of Hudson Bay as far as Manitoba is concerned.¹ Had the eggs successfully hatched and the young survived to fledging, this sighting would have represented the southernmost successful natural breeding record for the species (H. Copland, pers. comm.).

¹GODFREY, W.E. 1966. The birds of Canada. Queen's Printer, Ottawa. 428 pp.