

MULTIPLE PARASITISM OF BREWER'S BLACKBIRD NEST

VIC HARPER, R.R. 2, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 3V5

Brewer's Blackbirds nest freely in our hedges and windbreaks, mostly in deciduous shrubs but occasionally in young spruce. About 10% of the nests contain a cowbird egg.

The Prairie Nest Records Scheme data up to mid-1975 reveals that of the records of 371 nests of Brewer's Blackbirds there were 85 instances or 22.9% of parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds.

On 3 June 1979 I found a Brewer's

Blackbird nest 1.5 m from the ground in a High-bush Cranberry. It contained one egg. The next day there were three, one of which was a cowbird's. Next day there were six, three of which were cowbirds' and next day I found ten, six of them being cowbird eggs. The blackbird had started incubation.

Thinking this very unusual I monitored the nest every second day and the count remained the same. On the 13th day of incubation I found them all hatched. Eight days later I had to remove some chicks in order to take the census — they were all accounted for and looked healthy and happy. The nest was so full that I refrained from further enumeration for fear that some might fledge prematurely. I feel that all eventually fledged successfully.



Brewer's Blackbird nest

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