

# MYSTERY PHOTO



## JUNE 2001 MYSTERY PHOTO

The object in the photo is less than 2.5 cm long and was found in a bog just north of the North Saskatchewan River in Prince Albert. What is it? (photograph submitted by Lewis Bevan).

## Answer for MARCH 2001 MYSTERY PHOTO

The oblong cases shown in the photo were made by the larvae of parasitic wasps that lived *inside a caterpillar*. The caterpillar was near this spot when the larvae living inside it crawled out to spin cocoons. When the adults emerge from the cocoons, the females seek out live caterpillars in which to lay eggs, repeating the cycle. Sometimes what emerges is not the adult of the larva that built the cocoon, but a different insect that parasitised this parasite.

The insect that made these cocoons is a wasp, known as a braconid wasp. In North America there are over 1700 species of braconids, most of which feed on caterpillars of moths and butterflies. The adult wasps are tiny - about as long as this line - . If you want to identify one to species, it helps to know what species of moth or butterfly it parasitises.

This would be hard to discover when the parasites live *inside* the caterpillar. These parasitic wasps are considered beneficial to humans and some species have been introduced into agricultural areas to control insect pests.

The editors would like to thank Murray Brown for identifying the insects that emerged from these cocoons and Cedric Gillott for much useful background information.







*Adult Downy Woodpecker about to enter a nest hole in an Aspen Poplar near  
Beaver Creek, SK.*

*Hans Dommasch*

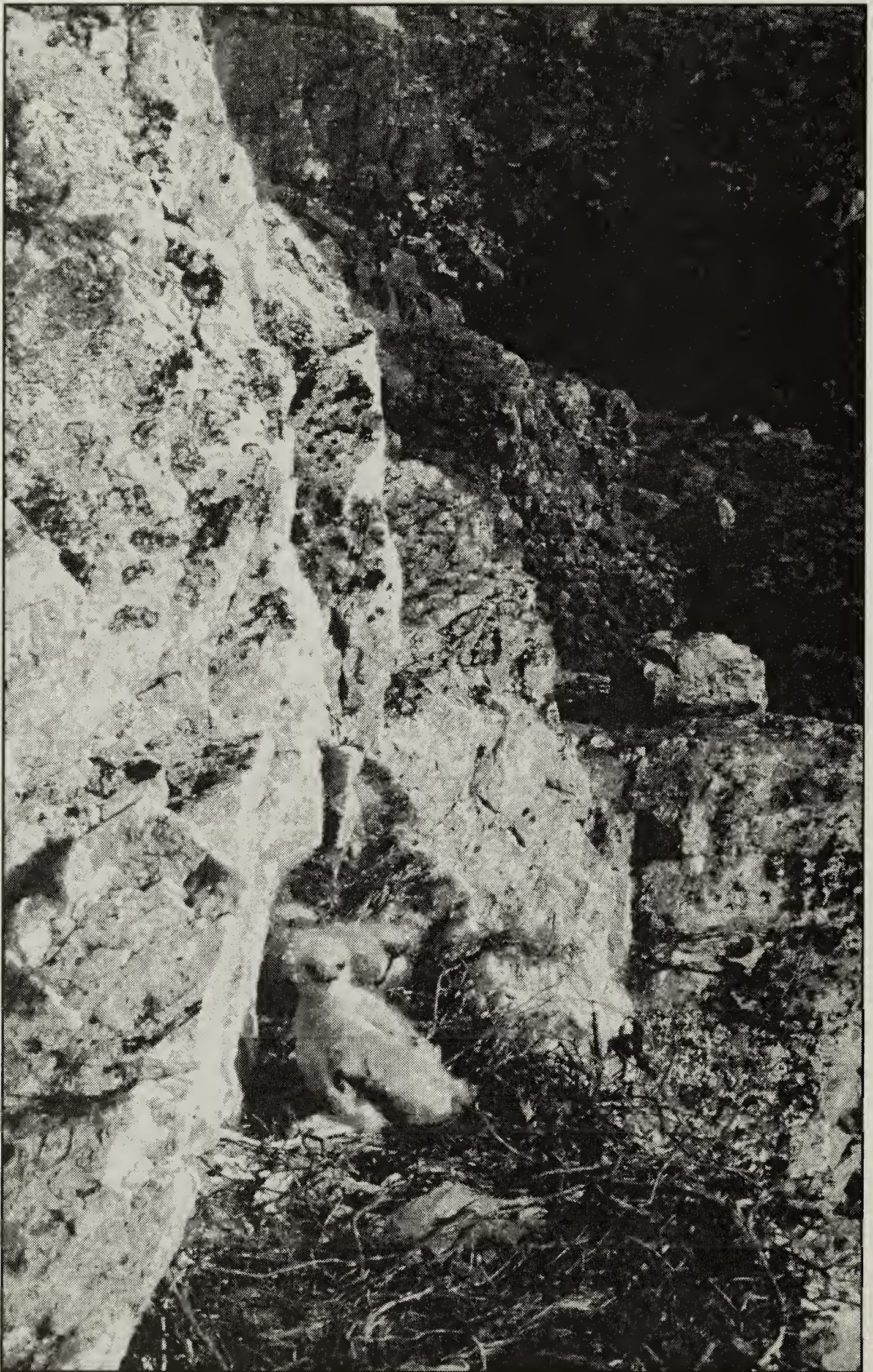




*A plexiglass window on the opposite side of the tree gives an inside view of the male feeding the young.*

*Hans Dommasch*





*Rough-legged Hawk nest with 2 young. Thelon River. 21 July 1975.*

*Wayne Renaud*