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Nest Reuse by Wood Thrushes and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks

Lyle E. Friesen,^{1,2} Valerie E. Wyatt,¹ and Michael D. Cadman¹

ABSTRACT.—We report on two instances of nest reuse by Wood Thrushes (*Hylocichla mustelina*) within the same breeding season, and three cases of nest reuse in successive years, two by Wood Thrushes and one by Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*). In each of the five cases of nest reuse, host young were successfully fledged in the original nesting episode and in the second nesting episode. Although occasional nest reuse within a single breeding season has been reported before, our study is the first to document reuse of the same nest in successive years by Wood Thrushes and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. Received 29 April 1998, accepted 4 Oct. 1998.

Open nesting passerines, with the possible exception of tyrannid flycatchers (Curson et al. 1996), seldom reuse nests within and between breeding seasons (Briskie and Sealy 1988). Earlier authorities (Weaver 1949, Brackbill 1958) were unaware of nest reuse by Wood Thrushes (*Hylocichla mustelina*). Roth and coworkers (1996) documented oc-

casional nest reuse by Wood Thrushes during the same breeding season (three cases out of 389 first nests). However, they did not report any nest reuse between years, describing such an event as unlikely because nests usually disintegrate after the nesting season. We report on two cases of nest reuse by Wood Thrushes within a breeding season and three cases of nest reuse in successive years, two by Wood Thrushes and one by Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*).

Data presented in this study were gathered in the course of a larger study of the nesting success of Wood Thrushes and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks conducted in 1996 and 1997 in Waterloo Region, a fragmented agricultural landscape located in southwestern Ontario (see Friesen et al., in press for a description of the landscape). In these two years, 154 Wood Thrush nests and 63 Rose-breasted Grosbeak nests were found and regularly monitored to determine their outcome.

Two Wood Thrush nests (one each year) were reused during the same breeding season, with young successfully fledging in all four nesting attempts (see Wyatt 1997 for a de-

¹ Canadian Wildlife Service, 75 Farquhar Street, Guelph, ON, Canada N1H 3N4.

² Corresponding author;
E-mail: lyle.friesen@sympatico.ca

tailed account of one of the renests). Neither of these nesting attempts were parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*) although 47% of Wood Thrush nests on our study sites contained cowbird eggs or young (Friesen et al., in press). In 1996, 20 days elapsed between the fledging of the first brood and the initiation of the second clutch (June 20 to July 10); in 1997, this interval was 13 days (June 25 to July 8). Neither of the original nests appeared to have been relined or refurbished prior to its second use. It is likely that the same pairs reused each of the nests but this could not be confirmed because the birds were not color-banded. Studies of banded birds in Waterloo Region in 1998 showed that at least half of the pairs attempted two broods in a nesting season (Friesen, unpubl. data).

We mapped and marked all of the Wood Thrush nests found in 1996 ($n = 61$) and observed, through visits to the sites the following spring prior to the breeding season, that five (8%) of them survived the winter seemingly intact. Two of these nests were subsequently reused in 1997: one nest which fledged three Wood Thrushes and one cowbird in 1996, fledged four thrushes and two cowbirds the following year; the other nest fledged two thrushes and one cowbird in each of the years. Neither nest appeared to have been significantly renovated in the second year, although both were in poor repair by the time the young fledged in 1997.

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are typically single brooded in southern Ontario (Friesen et al., in press) and we found no evidence of nest reuse within the same breeding season. Three (12%) of the 24 grosbeak nests we found in 1996 survived the winter. One of these, in which three young were fledged in 1996, was reused in 1997 and again fledged three young.

Our results suggest that nest reuse is a con-

sistent, albeit infrequent, breeding strategy. The reuse of old nests may have resulted from a shortage of suitable nesting sites although it seemed to us that apparently suitable alternative sites were present nearby. It may also be that the birds reusing nests recognized the latter as being of high quality, borne out by the fact that all five nest reuses resulted in fledged host young. Our study is a reminder to researchers of the importance of monitoring the status of used nests both within and between breeding seasons.

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