

begging food. No feeding took place at this time. However, I returned later and observed an adult carrying in and feeding the chick what appeared to be the remains of a European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*).

The adults were seen by several observers during the following weeks, attending to the chick, which eventually fledged. I last observed the juvenile on 29 July, as it flew about the island with the adults.

This successful nesting of the Great Black-backed Gull represents the first breeding record for Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Municipality. Observers are encouraged to continue to watch for future nesting involving this species, particularly in suitable southwestern sites on the north shores of Lakes Ontario and Erie.

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An Unusual Nesting of the American Robin

by

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The American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) is one of the most common and widespread breeding birds in Ontario. Indeed, during the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas project it was found in 86 per cent of the 137 blocks in the province, including 98 per cent of the 1824 atlas squares of southern Ontario. It was confirmed in 89 per cent of these atlas squares. Of the regular southern Ontario breeding birds, only the European Starling (*Sturnus*

vulgaris), at 90 per cent, had a greater rate of confirmed breeding (Cadman et al. 1987).

On 15 April 1989, I was birding from my car at the south end of Lakeshore Road, in Rondeau Provincial Park. I noted some movement at the base of a small tree near the road, and identified the source of the movement to be an American Robin. At first, I believed it to be gathering nesting material, until I realized that it was

twisting and turning in the grasses and leaves as if it were shaping a nest. When it briefly flew away after a few minutes, I approached the spot and saw, at the base of a small black oak tree (*Quercus velutina*), a partially constructed nest. It already had balls of fresh mud, and quite a few grasses pressed into place. Because of the nest's proximity to the roadway and parking lot, I did not expect this nest to be successful.

On 22 April, I again visited the site, at 0930 h. No adult robins were present in the immediate vicinity and I was surprised to see two eggs in the nest. By 1330 h, when I had returned to the area, I saw an adult female on the nest. I photographed the bird and nest quickly from my car before another car passing by caused the bird to flush from the nest. I again examined the contents and this time noted three eggs.

When I next visited the area, on 29 April, the nest was empty, and there had been some disturbance to the grasses and leaves immediately adjacent to the nest, although not obviously to the nest structure itself. However, the eggs were gone. Given the high numbers of raccoons in the park, and the proximity of the nest to a fairly busy roadway and parking lot thus exposing it to vehicles, people and pets, it was not surprising that this ground-nesting attempt was unsuccessful.

The Royal Ontario Museum has accumulated, up to the end of the 1994 season, more than 105,000 nest record cards of Ontario breeding birds under the Ontario Nest Records Scheme (Peck 1995). As of 1987, a total of 6358 nest cards were on file for the American Robin. A wide variety of nest sites have been recorded, most often in trees, shrubs and vines or fallen trees and roots. Man-made structures are also popular choices for nest sites. However, only three of those records (0.048 per cent) were nests built right on the ground (Peck and James 1987). Bent (1949) and Harrison (1975) also state that the American Robin only rarely nests on the ground. This note documents one of those extremely rare occasions.

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