

*FIELD NOTES FROM HERE AND THERE*_____

Possible Bald Eagle Predation of a Piping Plover Nest

On June 23, 1996, on Race Point Beach in Provincetown, I observed an immature Bald Eagle that had just come up from the center of a predator enclosure that surrounded a Piping Plover nest. When I first observed the eagle, it appeared to be holding on to the enclosure's net top with its talons while flapping its wings. At first, I believed the eagle may have been entangled in the top of the enclosure. However, as I moved closer to the enclosure, the eagle removed its talons from the netting and immediately perched on the edge of the enclosure. After several minutes, the eagle flew to a nearby dune.

Three of the four eggs on the plover nest were completely shattered, and the fourth was left partially intact. The enclosure's net top had two small tears, each approximately 6-7 centimeters in diameter, and a larger tear, approximately 12-15 centimeters in diameter.

To the best of my knowledge, no incident of a Bald Eagle attempting to enter a predator enclosure has been recorded. Whether the eagle entered the enclosure seeking to predate the nest or for some other unknown reason is not clear. This nest had been abandoned a week earlier.

As part of the Piping Plover recovery program predator enclosures, which are circular metal fences (2 x 4 inch mesh), are built around most plover nests. Each predator enclosure is at least three feet tall, ten feet in diameter, and supported by five wooden posts. To prevent avian predation, enclosure tops are covered with three-quarter-inch mesh bird netting. Ideally, this design allows the plovers to enter and exit the nest, while at the same time excluding mammalian and avian predators.

Most of the nests are monitored daily, which is one of my duties as a student resource assistant for the National Park Service at Cape Cod National Seashore.

Jill A. Seale, Merrillville, Indiana

Observations on Killdeers and Starlings

I coordinate a charitable farm at the University of Massachusetts Extension, 240 Beaver Street, Waltham, known as Waltham Fields Community Farm. I am interested in birds and thus watch and listen when I work there. It is pretty urban, so mostly one sees House Sparrows, House Finches, American Robins, Common Grackles, Mourning Doves, European Starlings, and American Crows. There are resident Red-tailed Hawks, and last year in the fall a Northern Harrier sailed through. Turkey Vultures have soared by a number of times. In the spring

there were two American Kestrels flying about. In the winter a gardener and dog walker reported to me that she saw a flock of sandpiper-like birds. I suggested Snow Buntings, and when she looked them up in the book, that is what they were.

There are also resident Killdeers, and one day in early July I heard quite a commotion from the Killdeers. Looking over I saw a flock of starlings, about fifteen birds, chasing a pair of Killdeer. They seemed quite determined, and the Killdeer were trying various aerial maneuvers to escape. And again a few days later I saw perhaps five starlings start to harass a Killdeer. I had always heard starlings were very aggressive, but I had never read that they would coordinate an attack in a flock like that.

Oakes Plimpton, Arlington, Massachusetts

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