

DEAD YELLOW-SHAFTED EJECTED FROM NEST CAVITY

By Kenneth W. Prescott

For several days during the second week of June, 1970 I observed a pair of Yellow-shafted Flickers (*Colaptes auratus*) removing old debris and new chips from a nest hole approximately 18 feet above the ground in a dead elm tree, DBH approximately 18 inches. The nest hole had been used successfully by a pair of flickers the previous summer. Moreover, it seemed to be an overwintering home for three flickers during the period of November - March when one to three were frequently seen flying to and leaving the nest hole. When two of these fed in my potter traps, they were captured and banded.

Late in the afternoon of 13 June 1970, I watched two flickers working on the entrance hole rim and heard them pecking inside the cavity. I saw no unusual materials at the base of the tree which is approximately 2-3 feet from a netlane which I was using that weekend and, therefore, I frequently walked past the tree. The next morning my daughter Trudy called my attention to some fresh chips on top of the grass at the base of the tree which, because of the fresh whitish edges, I assume had been very recently chiseled out of the tree. In the midst of 13-18 of these we found the dried-out carcass of a female Yellow-shafted Flicker. It had been long dead with no remaining odor or other evidence of recent decomposition.

From this circumstantial evidence, I conclude that the pair of flickers were cleaning and enlarging a previously used nest cavity and that the dead flicker was removed, unobserved by me, early the morning of 14 June. The emaciated carcass, it seemed to me, was not so heavy but that it could have been lifted up to the edge of the nest cavity by one of the flickers. Its position on the ground was directly under the entrance as were the chips. The pair of flickers subsequently built a nest in the cavity and fledged two or more young. One of the pair was a female, No. 963-81738, banded 7 September 1967; its official return dates were 14 June 1968, 9 April 1969 and 12 April 1970 in addition to other retrappings. - Kenneth W. Prescott, New Jersey State Museum, Cultural Center, Trenton, New Jersey 08625.

