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An Observation of Two Eastern Phoebes (*Sayornis phoebe*) Nesting in Close Proximity 3.25 m Apart From One Another on a Residential Deck

ABSTRACT

Two female Eastern Phoebes (*Sayornis phoebe*) built nests 3.25 m apart from one another in May 2016 within a span of less than two weeks under a roof overhang over a deck of a residential house in Queensbury, Warren Co., New York. One nest conventionally located over a wall-mounted light fixture fledged four young while the other nest located unconventionally among vegetation in a hanging flower planter had four eggs taken from it possibly by a mammal.

INTRODUCTION

Neither Bent (1942) in *Life Histories of North American Birds* series nor Weeks (2011) in *Birds of North America Online* make mention of spacing distances of individual nests of the Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis phoebe*). Much is written, however, about the unique variety of places where this species chooses to place a nest, many of them in close proximity to human activity (Bent 1942, Weeks 2011). Here we report the unusually close nesting of two female phoebes within 3.25 m of one another under a roof overhang of an outdoor deck of a residence: one a classic placement of a visible nest over a wall-mounted lighting fixture, the other concealed amid the flowers in a hanging flower planter.

OBSERVATIONS

Location. The nests were located on Woodridge Drive, Town of Queensbury, Warren Co., New York, in a wooded residential area, elevation 148 m, coordinates 431-0734. They were on a west face of the house with sliding access doors to a wooden deck facing west and south, the roof overhang 2.4 m above the deck floor extending 71 cm outward from the house. Adjacent the sliding doors leading to the deck were two wall-mounted light fixtures (see Fig. 1).

Nest Locations. Nest #1 (N1) was located atop the light fixture north (left side in Fig. 1) of the sliding doors tucked in between the top of the fixture and the house, 23 cm below the roof overhang and 20 cm from the adjoining wall of the house. It measured 14 cm wide by 7.6 cm deep, extending 10 cm out from the house. The nest cup was 3.8 cm deep. The nest was constructed of green moss and pine needles.

Nest #2 (N2) was in a flower planter hung from the roof overhang south of the sliding doors (right side in Fig. 1) 3.25 m from N1. It was 28 cm below the roof overhang concealed among hybrid *Calibrachoa* super bell flowers and measured 10 cm outer diameter, 7 cm inner diameter, 5.7 cm deep. It was constructed of fine rootlets and green moss lined with dried lawn grass clippings and deer hair.



**Fig. 1. Photograph of deck where Phoebe nests N1 and N2 occurred, 5 Jul 2016.
Photograph by William M. Blood**

N1 was discovered 2 May 2016 and successfully fledged four young on 18 Jun. On 5 Jul it had another clutch of four eggs. The planter containing N2 was put in place on 12 May and the nest discovered on either 17 or 18 May as the phoebe flushed from it when the planter was taken down for watering. On 23 or 24 May the planter was again taken down for watering, the nest contained four very lightly brown-speckled white eggs which were missing on 30 May. The condition of the slightly disheveled nest suggested it had been raided perhaps by a red squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) which could have accessed it via a roof drain pipe immediately adjacent the hanging planter. On 5 Jul the nest remained abandoned.

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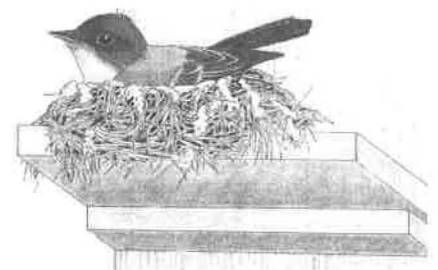
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Phoebe nest
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