

**Phoebe dividing clutch between two nests.**—In the course of a study of aspects of the breeding ecology of the Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis phoebe*) in the area around New Haven, Connecticut, a series of about 50 nests are visited at frequent intervals by myself or an assistant. The nests studied are all under bridges where roads cross streams. In May 1967 a pair of phoebes, in their second nesting attempt, built two nests simultaneously under one of these bridges, and laid three eggs of a clutch in one nest and the other two eggs of the same clutch in the second nest, only just over two feet away but out of sight.

The first nest built at the bridge in 1967 (nest A) was near the south end of the bridge. One egg was laid between 27 and 29 April, but the whole nest had disappeared by 1 May, probably having been removed by humans. In the next ten days building occurred at two sites near the north end of the bridge (Fig. 1). The bridge is supported by 11 transverse girders of H-shaped cross-section and three sets of longitudinal spacing girders (parallel with the stream). The junctions of the transverse girders with the center longitudinal one form a series of corners on each side; the nests were built in two of these corners. Nest B was on the north side of the fourth girder from the north end, on a site which had not been used by phoebes in recent years, but the site of nest C—on the north side of the fifth girder—was occupied in 1966 and some nest material was still present at the time when building started there in 1967. On 11 May nests B and C both had deep cups and fresh green moss on the outside, but nest B was the more substantial.

At 0820 on 13 May nests B and C each contained one egg, and at 1025 on 15 May each contained two eggs. Phoebes nearly always lay one egg each day except early in the season, so that this female was evidently following a normal laying schedule but laying more-or-less alternately in the two nests. On 17 May nest B contained three warm eggs and nest C still had two cold ones. No more eggs were laid, and the clutch thus consisted of five eggs, by far the commonest number for members of this population. On several subsequent visits to the bridge (by A. Harkabus) the eggs in nest B only were found to be warm, and no development occurred in the two eggs in nest C. However, at 1630 on 27 May I found the eggs in nest C very warm and those in nest B slightly above air temperature. Some fishermen were in the area, and may have disturbed the incubating bird a short time previously. A few minutes later I flushed the bird from nest B, but when I remained at the north end of the bridge in order to watch the bird, she approached from the south, fluttering slowly along under the bridge inspecting each of the identical corners; on reaching the nearest nest (C) she settled down on it. Since both nests were on the north sides of transverse girders, a bird approaching from the south could see them only by looking up and back just after passing below them; thus the bird was not within sight of nest B at any time during the course of her approach to nest C. This pattern was repeated twice when I flushed the bird, but when I moved to the south end of the bridge the bird approached from the north and settled on the north nest (B). Although I was not able to keep the bird in view continuously from the time she left one nest until she returned to the other, there was not the slightest hint of the presence of a second female; in fact only one individual was seen on this occasion. Furthermore, at all later visits to the bridge only the eggs in nest B were being incubated. These observations, together with the normal clutch size and laying schedule, as well as the strong territoriality of the species, justify the assumption that only a single pair of birds was involved, even though the individuals were not marked.

Two of the eggs in nest B hatched on 4 June, but the third egg failed to hatch. The

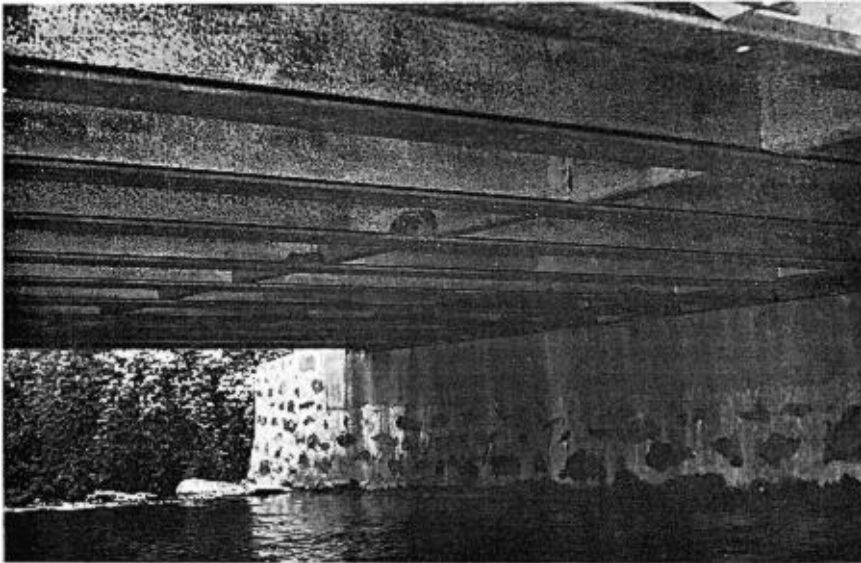


FIGURE 1.

two chicks fledged successfully, leaving the nest between 20 and 22 June, but nest C disappeared between 10 and 14 June. At about the time that the chicks left nest B some new building occurred at the south end of the bridge, and again some material was placed on each of two adjacent girders. Phoebes in this population often start building a new nest, and occasionally even start a new clutch, before the chicks of the previous brood have fledged, but in the present case building was soon discontinued and the final clutch of four eggs was laid in nest B, starting on 24 June.

The events at this bridge provide a dramatic example of the problems sometimes faced by birds nesting in repetitive man-made structures, which have previously been discussed by a number of ornithologists (see, for instance, F. H. Herrick, 1935. "Wild Birds at Home," and J. C. Welty, 1962. "The Life of Birds"). The confusion in the present case apparently resulted from the availability of two separate approach routes (from the two ends of the bridge), each leading to arrival at a different nest from which the other was invisible. One may deduce that during the building period the bird occasionally approached from the south, reached the nest remnant left from the previous year (C), mistook it for the new nest (B) and added material to it. During the laying and incubation periods the nest reached evidently depended on the direction of approach, but towards the end this was probably always from the north when the bird was undisturbed.—N. PHILIP ASIMOLE, *Department of Biology and Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut 06520, 6 July 1967.*

**A leucistic Pine Grosbeak.**—On 8 November 1965 a large pale finch, alive but weak, was found by a roadside in Ipswich, Essex County, Massachusetts and taken to Mr. and Mrs. Francis Wade of that town. They brought it to me for identification, and this *Pinicola enucleator eschatosus* is now No. 8913 in the Peabody Museum collection. It