

Black
Red Rock Lake, Red Rock Refuge - Iowa

Spring 1973

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Red Rock Lake normal permanent pool is 9000 acres but we have 50,000 acres above + above permanent pool covered with water for the past 2 months

Most noticeable were the 150,000 Lesser Scaup and the 100,000 + Coot on our 59,000 Acres of water!

No Great Blue Herons returned to the Rookery in Red Rock Refuge. All of the 1972 nests, 40 in all, are standing in 50 ft. of water and only 12 are above water whereas in normal years they stand in 2 ft. of water.

In 1970, 1971, and 1972 the Herons suffered total nesting failures. Finally after 3 years of trying I got action in June 1972. Dr Larry Wing, Research Biologist, La State Univ., Ames Ia collected 3 eggs at hatching stage. The eggs were collected by helicopter. The following is the chemical analysis done by John Richard, Chemist, LSU. June 1972

	Heron Chick #1	chick #2	chick #3
dieldrin	15.3	16.9	13.3
Heptachlor Epoxide	2.4	2.0	1.9
OP' DDE	2.7	2.3	2.2
pp' DDE	254.	142.	115. ←
pp' DDD	5.6	5.9	4.9
P.C.B. 5	50.	50.	50.

The above is in Parts Per Million.
(Polychlorinated Biphenyls) As you can see the pp' DDE was extremely high and Dr Wing was concerned at the 50 ppm of PCB 5 why the Herons did not return this spring is unknown. did they die of the heavy pesticide load? Was the water too deep at the Rookery?

Lake Rathbun, 50 miles south of Lake Red Rock had 30 nests of Great Blues last summer of 1972. The outcome of these nestings is unknown. This year Rathbun has a Rookery of 50 nests and Dr Wing and his

Graduate student are doing research there,
 I noted that the Great Blues were removed from the
 Audubon Blue List this year. Unless all the Rookeries
 observed produced young birds in 1972, I would question
 that action. Often observers check the Rookeries in
 April & note they are again nesting and then do not
 return again to see if they hatched and the young
fledged. The Rookeries are usually located in inaccessible
 areas so that one trip suffices! I watched with
 Balscope & actually saw egg breakage and eating
 of eggs in 1970, 1971, and 1972.

I sent a report to U.S. F+W last year which was
 ignored altho this spring Mr Larry Wing was called
 to Wash DC to talk with EPA workers and after
 completing this year's study will go to Wash DC again
 to testify. It seems there is some concern about the
 damage done by Dieldrin (Aldrin is used here to control
 corn root worm & it breaks down to dieldrin) especially
 to wildlife.

I expected Woody Brown or someone else to send this
 report to you last year but I understand no one did.
 I realize it is too late to use but I wanted you
 to have this background as I will send you the
 results of Mr Wing's Rafter tests at the end of the
 summer season also tests done on birds, etc here at Red Rock.
 We have had 3 ^(3 nests) Great Horned Owl nestlings die
 for no apparent reason, a day or two after hatching in
 the Red Rock area. I collected 1 downy day old Owl and
 1 egg which Mr Wing picked up last Fri May 4. I will
 include the analysis with next report altho I
 really don't expect high pesticide content. Great Horned
 Owls & Red-tailed Hawks seem to be maintaining
 their population very well here. Have ~~5~~ nests of Red-tail
 under study right now and would have had

more but the gravel roads were not safe to travel for weeks this spring altho we started this study in late Feb. 3 nests were completed & photographed by Mar 3. I had hoped to find every nest of Red-tails on both sides, timbered bluffs, of Lake Red Rock and Red Rock Refuge but I didn't achieve my goal. No comprehensive study of Red-tails over a definite number of square miles has been done in southern Iowa for a number of years, if ever. I expect to have Dean Rassa band the young as he is interested in Hawk banding and has been doing that for several years in northern Ia.

Ospreys are always few and far between here so it was a nice surprise to find 2 perched in dead trees in one of the bays of Lake Red Rock on April 21 and 1 was observed on April 28 as I was conducting a bird tour of 80 teachers in the Red Rock area.

Sparrow Hawks, Eastern Bluebirds, and Purple Martins are definitely down this spring. We had a terrible blizzard here on April 9 and bird life suffered. I cannot be sure of the extent but received several reports of farmers finding dead birds inc. robins ~~in~~ open fields. There was heavy livestock loss, especially cattle too. One half grown Hognose was blown out of the nest & died in the blizzard. Chimney Swifts are down. With natural gas piped in to most small towns, the chimneys are closed and metal pipes installed so the Chimney Swifts are fast losing all their nest sites. Not many homes in small towns have fireplace chimneys.

I'm sorry this is such a long epistle with little you can use really. I'm including 2 recent articles printed in the Maines Sun Register.

Sincerely,
Gladys B Black