

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

A Mourning Dove nest on a Long Island Sand Dune: On 15 July 1981, while walking on the flattened sand dunes at the Cupsogue County Park east of Moriches Inlet, I flushed a Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) from the sparse beach grass (*Ammophila breviligulata*). The bird behaved as an incubating bird might, by not flying until I was very close—about 15 feet away. Despite being surprised that a Mourning Dove might nest on the ground, I, nonetheless, looked for and immediately saw a nest with two white eggs. The nest was made of a few dried grasses placed in a very shallow depression.

Mourning Doves nesting on the ground seem to be uncommon but well documented. Gilbert Raynor of Manorville reports that many years ago he saw a few nests of Mourning Doves on the ground in scrub oak woods near his home. Eaton (1910) states that they nest "... sometimes even on the ground at the edge of a gravel pit or embankment" and Bent (1932) says "the bird frequently nests on the ground ...". Bull (1974) reports that "in this state [New York], ground nests are uncommon but not unusual, at least a dozen having been reported principally in open fields far from bushes or trees." Benton (*Kingbird* 1961, 11: 201) mentions one in a wheat field at Ira, Cayuga County. Harrison (1975) suggests the frequency of ground nesting when he reports on a Michigan study which recorded only one ground nest in 736 nests.

None of these accounts have recorded a successful ground nesting, so I watched this nest in hopes that young would fledge. There were two eggs in the nest on 19 July. On 26 July an adult was sitting tight and I did not flush the bird despite approaching to within nine feet. But on 30 July, again at about nine feet, I could see a young bird poking its head from under the parent's breast feathers. On 1 August, the nest was deserted, but undisturbed. Feces ringed one edge of the nest, two wings with primary feathers breaking out of the feather sheaths by about an inch, and a gizzard filled with seeds and quartz sand grains were all that remained of a single chick. While this nesting failed to provide a successful ground nesting, it nonetheless left an intriguing question about what caused the failure.

Bent, A. C. 1932. *Life Histories of North American Gallinaceous Birds*. U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull. 162.

Bull, J. 1974. *Birds of New York State*. Doubleday/Natural History Press, Garden City.

Eaton, E. H. 1910. *Birds of New York*. New York State Museum, Albany.

Harrison, H. 1975. *A Field Guide to Bird Nests*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

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