

RESPONSE — DISTURBANCE FOR RESEARCH WAS MINIMAL

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I appreciate Paul M. Brown's concerns over the intrusions to the nesting Least Bittern, but what my article does not convey is that the work reported was part of a research project. I am a wildlife biologist by profession and at the time I was working for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in the Bureau of Wildlife.

I was conducting research on marsh birds to assess the populations of several species and to analyze their nesting habitat. In order to maintain or create suitable habitats for certain species, intensive field work needs to be done right in the habitat. Such nest site investigations have helped us understand what Black Terns find desirable as nesting habitat. Many professionally acceptable field techniques may seem invasive but all are good for the population and the species in the long run.

The adult bittern was lifted off the nest to reveal the eggs for both data collection and to make them visible to a video camera. An educational documentary is being made from the footage obtained. I have worked on nesting studies since 1991 and I have never found a nest to have been lost due to my data collection or monitoring. As a result of the bittern work, we have a better understanding of how to manage emergent marshes to benefit a wide diversity of species far beyond just waterfowl.

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