

LATE NESTING OF A WILD TURKEY IN ALLEGANY COUNTY

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On 20 Jul 2002, I discovered a female Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) incubating eight eggs in a ground nest located under a 1m White Spruce tree in a mixed conifer managed Christmas tree plantation. The plantation is on the west side of the Pingrey Road in the town of Andover in Allegany County, New York. The female was still incubating eight eggs on 25 Jul, but on 31 Jul, the nest had been depredated, probably a result of recent mowing between the trees in the plantation, making the nest more visible.

The dates given for Wild Turkey nests with eggs in western New York are "April 30 to early July (approximation)" (Beardslee and Mitchell 1965). The latest date given in the Atlas Handbook for Workers (Federation of New York State Bird Clubs et al. 2002) for turkey nests with eggs is 9 Jul.

However, in research conducted by Stephen Eaton from 1969 to 1973 involving capturing turkeys in western New York, the latest egg date of captured poults was figured back to 27 Jul using methods described by Knoder (1959) (S. Eaton, pers. comm.). This date is consistent with the date of the nest I found.

Deep snow pack in late winter may delay the main nesting season and subsequently affect the timing of the late hatch. While the winter of 2001-02 was not exceptionally severe and snow depth would not have contributed to a delayed onset of nesting, the month of May was the fourth coldest and fourth wettest in 60 years (Morgante 2002). There may have been high numbers of nest failures and/or loss of poults during this period, resulting in a higher number of late nestings, and a later onset of those nestings.

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Literature Cited

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