

XII. SEPTEMBER NESTING OF MOURNING DOVES IN NORMAN IN 1925

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From August 1919 through September 1921 we made a special study of the nesting of Western Mourning Doves (*Zenaidura macroura marginella*) on the campus of the University of Oklahoma*; during this period we located 283 nests. Since then we have concentrated more on the fall nesting of these birds than on their spring and summer activities. During September 1925 we found an unprecedented number of Doves nesting—41 occupied nests and 3 other broods that had left the nest during this month. Our former records for September have been as follows: in 1919 31 nests, in 1920 14, in 1921 8, in 1922 12 and in 1923 8. The latest dates at which we have found young in the nest have been: Oct. 1, 1919; Sept. 17, 1920; Sept. 27, 1921; Sept. 13, 1922; Oct. 6, 1923 and Sept. 22, 1925.

Despite two heavy, cold rains the Doves had an unusually successful season, for of the 39 broods whose outcome we knew, 32 brought young to maturity—i. e. 82 per cent. In 1919 the proportion of successes was 68.2 per cent, in 1920 30.5 and in 1921 46.7. In nine of these nests in 1925 only one bird was raised, while the others had their full quota of two; this gives an average of 1.7 young for each successful nest—exactly the same result as obtained in 1920 and 1921. As to the failures, we had no clue to the cause in two cases; in one nest the eggs were found deserted, in another the half-grown squab was discovered dead on the ground as if it had been accidentally knocked out of the nest by a parent, while in the remaining three instances, scattered feathers and cat tracks in the mud revealed the villain.

In 1923 the Doves' favorite trees were severely pruned, consequently in 1924 and 1925 they had largely moved to a young grove in another part of the campus. Sixteen of the nests this fall were in hackberries, 13 in elms, 4 in locusts, 4 in mulberries, and one in the following: osage, black walnut, willow and silver maple. Although most of the trees chosen were considerably smaller than those in our former study, yet the average height from the ground of these nests was practically the same—14.9 feet in 1925, 13.3 in 1920 and 14 in 1921. Each year the highest nests were about 30 feet from the ground; in 1920 the lowest

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were at an elevation of only 3 feet, but in 1921 and 1925 none were placed lower than 7 feet.

The positions of the nests were also very similar to those in the other study; 25 on branches and 14 in crotches, i. e. 64 per cent of the former and 36 of the latter. In 1920 the percentages were 65.1 and 34.9, and in 1921 63.6 and 36.4. Moreover the percentage of nests built on top of other nests is almost precisely the same in the three years: 15.4 per cent in 1920, 15.1 in 1921 and 14.6 in 1925.

Thus the height and position of the nests of Mourning Doves here seem to be very uniform from year to year, also the proportion of successful nests—about one-third—in which only one young bird is raised. The way in which the results in September 1925 differed widely from other years was in the remarkable proportion of nests that brought young to maturity.