

Immature Cooper's Hawks Nest in Chicago

by Paul R. Clyne

A remarkable success story was played out the summer of 1994, when two first-year Cooper's Hawks (*Accipiter cooperii*) successfully reared three young in an urban Chicago lakefront park. Cooper's Hawks typically begin breeding at two years of age, but a small percentage of females breed in their first year. First-year breeding males are quite unusual, and pairs in which both sexes are immatures are almost unknown. I know of only three previous records of paired immatures, with one record each for California, Indiana, and Wisconsin (Palmer 1988, Rosenfield and Bielefeldt 1993).

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Almost as surprising as this Illinois record for nesting first-year Cooper's Hawks is the nesting location - a half-mile wide urban park sandwiched between Chicago's busy Lake Shore Drive and Hyde Park's residential/business neighborhood. This species nests annually in forest preserves in Chicago's outskirts, but only one record from 1909 exists of Cooper's Hawks nesting in the city limits (Cory 1909).

The summer 1994 nesting occurred in Jackson Park, at about 6100 South on the Chicago lakefront on the Wooded Island designed for the Columbian Exposition of 1893. This man-made island is essentially an unmanicured park surrounded by la-

goons. Pedestrian traffic by birders, fishermen, joggers, and others occurs daily here. The nest-tree was at the intersection of the main paved path and one of the most heavily trafficked unpaved paths.

The nest was in a white mulberry, 41'8" (12.7 m) above ground, in a crook of the main trunk just below the canopy. The tree diameter at the

nest site was 11.5" (29 cm). The nest was a rather flat, oblong construction of twigs; height, 10" (25 cm), width 32" x 14" (81 cm x 36 cm). The nest cavity was a shallow depression (1.5" (4 cm deep), lined with bark frag-

ments, and measured 10" x 7" (25 cm x 18 cm). The oblong shape was dictated by the branching structure at the nest site. Compared with synoptic data given in Rosenfield and Bielefeldt (1993), the nest placement was typical for the species, but the structure was flatter than normal for nests in deciduous trees, unusually elliptical, and with a notably shallow cavity. The birds were seen sporadically building nests at two adjacent sites during April. The chronology of nesting events is listed at right.

Size contrasts in the grown young indicated sex composition of the clutch as two males and one female. The Cooper's Hawks were found taking their usual toll of medium-sized

NESTING EVENTS

- 12 March - Female arrives.
- 30 March - Pair carries nesting material. Male is first detected.
- 1 April - Pair copulates (noted again 9 and 17 April).
- 1 May - Incubation begins. Sightings of male become increasingly infrequent. Only female incubates.
- 5 June - Young hatch (based on data on incubation period, typically 34-36 days and on cessation of incubation of nestlings at about 14 days; see Rosenfield and Bielefeldt 1993).
- 12 June - First visible evidence of brood success. Both parents are perched at nest while female apparently tears food.
- 19 June - Two downy young visible. Last incubation date.
- 20 June - Three downy young seen in nest.
- 7 July - One young ventures 2 feet out of nest.
- 11 July - Two young fledge.
- 12 July - Third young fledges.