

First Nest Records for Red-Breasted Nuthatch in North Dakota

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Observations of Red-breasted Nuthatches (*Sitta canadensis*) in the summer in North Dakota have been limited to a pair cleaning out a nest cavity and to sightings of individual birds (Stewart 1975). During June 1980, however, two separate sightings were made of Red-breasted Nuthatches nesting in ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) near the Burning Coal Vein in Slope County, southwestern North Dakota.

On 6 June, a male and female Red-breasted Nuthatch were observed carrying food into a nest cavity situated approximately 10 m high in a ponderosa pine. The nest cavity was located in a stub (1 m long) off the trunk of the tree. During a 30-minute observation period, one of the two birds entered the nest hole with food approximately every three minutes. One observation was made of an adult carrying a fecal sac from the nest hole.

On 8 June, a Red-breasted Nuthatch was observed entering a cavity in a 5 m high ponderosa pine stump approximately 4 km southwest of the 6 June observation. The cavity was 3 m above the ground and had a ring of resin smeared around the entrance hole. This resin coating is a characteristic of Red-breasted Nuthatch nest entrances (Bent 1948, Godfrey 1966, Harrison 1978). No eggs or young were observed. This site was revisited on 15 June and no birds were seen.

Breeding of the species occurs in Manitoba (Godfrey 1979), Minnesota (Green and Janssen 1975), western South Dakota (Whitney, et al. 1978), and throughout Montana (Skaar 1980).

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