

2003
SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH AND PARKS
WILDLIFE DIVISION
SMALL GRANTS REPORT

Name ROBERT F SCHENCK Date April 25, 2003

Affiliation SOUTH DAKOTA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION Position PAST PRESIDENT

Mailing Address 800 N WEBER AV

City SIOUX FALLS

State SD Zip 57103

FAX 605-335-6653

E-mail rschenck@qwest.net

Phone 605-332-4442 Project Title BIG SIOUX RIVER: BALD EAGLE

NESTING ANALYSIS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Traveled by aircraft in the morning hours from Sioux Falls South Dakota to Castlewood South Dakota following the Big Sioux River and returned to Sioux Falls following the river. Traveled by aircraft in the afternoon from Sioux Falls to the Missouri River following the Big Sioux River and returned to Sioux Falls following the river. Total time in the air was approximately six hours. Elevation of flight was 500 feet.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Document all Bald Eagle nests along the Big Sioux River through photographs and GPS. Provide a base line of Bald Eagles nesting along the Big Sioux River.

PROJECT RESULTS

Three Bald Eagle nests were observed along the Big Sioux River.

Nest #1

Location: N 43.6090; W 96.6430 North of Pathfinder Power Plant Sioux Falls, SD

Nest Description: Approximately 6 feet in Diameter by 2 feet deep; made of tree limbs 1-1/2" to 1/2" in diameter; nest cup lined with large blades of grass.

Nest Tree Species: Cottonwood

Eggs: None

Young: None

Birds Observed: Two Adult Bald Eagles

Nest #2

Location: N 42.8893; W 96.5318 Approximately two miles south of Chatsworth, IA

Nest Description: Approximately 6 feet in Diameter by 2 feet deep; made of tree limbs 1-1/2" to 1/2" in diameter; nest cup lined with large blades of grass.

Nest Tree Species: Cottonwood

Eggs: None

Young: None

Birds Observed: One Adult Bald Eagle

Nest #3

Location: N 42.6745; W 96.5774 Approximately six miles south of Westfield, IA

Nest Description: Approximately 6 feet in Diameter by 5 feet deep; made of tree limbs 1-1/2" to 1/2" in diameter; nest cup lined with large blades of grass.

Nest Tree Species: Cottonwood

Eggs: None

Young: None

Birds Observed: No birds observed but nest lining looked fresh

COMMENTS ON PROJECT TIMING

Project was conducted on April 25, 2003. At this date Peach Leaf Willow and Box Elder trees were leafing out and appeared very green from the air. Maple trees were just starting to push leaves and had a reddish cast. Green Ash trees showed no flowers or leaves. Cottonwood trees showed some flowering but just in beginning stages. Net effect from the air was that the Cottonwood trees were very easy to pick out and therefore it was very easy for me to concentrate on them. This may have been great timing because it was so easy to see the Cottonwood Trees and concentrate effort on finding nests in these trees. It should be noted that plums were just ready to bloom in Sioux Falls and did the next day. South of Sioux Falls plums were blooming.

PROJECT CONCLUSIONS

Bald Eagles are utilizing the Big Sioux River for nesting from Sioux Falls south to the Missouri River. Three nests that appeared to be active were discovered. I might also add that sighting nests is not easy. Nest #2 was observed traveling south and nest #3 was observed traveling north on the return trip. It is very possible that more nests are present since both of these nests were missed once.



Nest #1



Nest #2



Nest #2



Nest #3



Nest #3