

1987

## News, Notes and Comments

North American Bird Bander

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# News, Notes and Comments

## Western Kingbird Nestlings Entangled in Nesting Material

Since the 1980 breeding season, I have banded from two to five clutches of Western Kingbird nestlings in Collin County, Texas each year. I have always found the adults to be very defensive of their nest sites. The nests are typically bowl like and compact and made out of grasses and other fibre like materials woven together. They are most often placed in the crotch or on a branch of a live oak. In addition to those clutches I have banded, I have monitored many other nests of this species where it was impossible to reach the nest.

It was not until the 1987 breeding season that I encountered a problem with nestlings becoming entangled in nesting material and there were two separate occurrences which are discussed below.

Nest #1 was in a live oak in a residential area approximately 9½' above ground. Both nestlings were well feathered and probably only a few days away from leaving the nest. One nestling attempted to leave the nest when I climbed the ladder to reach it. It fell over the edge of the nest and hung there with its foot and leg tightly wrapped with fine string that was, in turn, woven into the nest structure. The other nestling was also trapped by a similar piece of string. Both had to be freed before they could be banded and returned to the nest. That was on June 26. A week later the nest was empty and the young are presumed to have fledged successfully.

Nest #2 contained three nestlings and was also in a live oak along a main residential street about 11' above ground. When I approached this nest on July 4, one nestling flew off and into a nearby tree. The other two tried to fly but appeared to be restrained. When I took them off the nest I found one leg of each nestling wrapped together with a fine piece of what appeared to be monofilament line. Like siamese twins, the two nestlings were locked together with the right leg of one bird bound to the left of the other, and that line then woven into the structure of the nest itself. It was necessary to cut the line in several places to free the birds. One nestling's foot was badly bruised and swollen but appeared to be unbroken. Both nestlings were subsequently banded and returned to the nest. Ten days later the nest was empty and I assumed the young fledged successfully.

Bird banders sometimes have cause to wonder about the disturbance their activity brings to birds in the wild, but the incidents cited above are at least some indication that such disturbance can be beneficial and, in these cases at least, saved nestlings that would surely have perished.

Allen E. Valentine  
Dallas, TX  
July 28, 1987

## SWAN CONFERENCE

**11th Trumpeter Swan Society Conference**  
**Everett Pacific Hotel**  
**Everett, Washington**  
**3-6 February 1988**

**For further information, write or call: The Trumpeter Swan Society, 3800 County Road 24, Maple Plain, MN 55359 (612/476-4663).**