

Helpful Hints to Successful Nest Monitoring:

Nest finding:

Carefully watch adult birds to see if they pick up nesting material such as dead leaves, spider webbing, plastic strips, moss, or small twigs. If a bird does pick up nesting material, put down your binoculars and observe it with your eyes until it flies. Note the direction and exactly where it flies. Does it fly into a bush, under the eave, into the bar-be-cue? You may be able to follow it to the nest site. If a nest is already active, watch for adult birds carrying food material such insects or worms or even the sound of peeping of nestlings.

If you are able to distinguish between the male and female (e.g. Northern Cardinals), following the female can lead to finding a nest location more quickly. Sometimes the male will follow along or even actively chase the female to the nest area. Again, look for where adults apparently disappear then make a quick perusal of the area after they leave. If you can't find the nest, back off and try tracking them again. Be patient!

Nest-monitoring:

When to visit: Check nests in the afternoon. Do not check nests in the early morning, because most females lay their eggs in the morning. Eggs or young nestlings can also quickly become cold if left alone in the morning. Also avoid checking nests at or after dusk, because females may be returning to the nest for the night.

Visitation frequency: The most sensitive periods during a nest attempt are nest-building and incubation. During these periods limit visits to the nest site to **once every three days**. During the nestling stage visit **once every two days**.

Duration of visit: Make visits as brief as possible, preferably when adults are off the nest, using different routes for approaching and leaving the nest site. This guards against leaving human scent trails which nest predators might utilize. Spend as little time as possible once you arrive at the nest.

How long to monitor: Try as much as possible to follow a nesting attempt through to its fate. If a nest has made it to the late nestling stage try at least to make visits at or as close to the estimated fledge date as possible. We want enough recorded information to determine if a nest has definitely failed or successfully fledged young.

A nest is considered successful if it produces at least one young which fledged the nest. Parasitized nests are those in which Brown-headed cowbirds have laid eggs. Nestlings and fledglings from these eggs are reared by the host parents and can result in the death of some or all of the host nestlings.

Online data entry:

Reporting your nest observations as well as re-sightings of color-banded birds can be done through the Nestwatch website (address on other side). Entering nest observations does not require a password whereas re-sightings does (see the Banding Visit Record sheet given to you at the end of the visit to your by Nestwatch staff).

As always, we accept paper forms mailed to us.