

UNUSUAL NESTING SITES OF THE AMERICAN
MERGANSER (*Merganser americanus*.)

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In all works on North American birds, nests and eggs the nesting situation of this species is given as being in a hole in a tree, after the manner of the hooded merganser, buffle-head, American golden-eye and wood duck. I was therefore very much surprised to find American mergansers nesting in holes under boulders on an island in Lake Winnipegosis, Manitoba, during June, 1903.

My son and I found about 30 pairs nesting on Gun Island on June 16th. All the nests that we could reach were built far back at the end of dark passages under boulders on the highest part of the island, some nests being from four to six feet back from the entrance and were hard to get at; in some cases my boy had to crawl between the boulders to reach the eggs and I had to pull him out by the feet. In one hole he caught a female on the nest, and afterwards my boy tied a fishing line to its leg and let it swim around the boat. It was astonishing with what speed it cut through the water using its wings and fairly flying under water, after which we gave it its liberty and it flew away. The nests contained from 8 to 12 eggs, one nest containing as many as 13. They are easily distinguished from other duck eggs by their very large size and pale buff tint, averaging 2.60 x 1.80. One nest contained eggs laid by two females as half the eggs were of a deeper tint and different size and shape than the others. The down is pale greyish-white after the fashion of all other ducks that nest in holes in trees or in the dark. The male mergansers flew away as our sail boat approached the island, but the females sat close dashing past our feet as we scrambled amongst the boulders where they were nesting. On this same island several red-breasted mergansers had nests containing 8 and 9 eggs each; their nests were not at the end of burrows, but in depressions under dense undergrowth. The eggs are smaller than those of the American merganser and of a darker tint, being yellowish-drab or warm drab; average size 2.50 x 1.70. The down is also