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Regional Director, Region 4, Atlanta, Georgia

March 22, 1966

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Eagles at the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, Cambridge, Maryland

At the request of Mr. C. W. Wallace, Refuge Manager, I went to Blackwater on March 20 to assist the personnel there in the identification of a large nest occupied by a raptor. The nest is roughly west of the Headquarters Pond. There had been a golden eagle about the area, and it was thought that possibly this nest was built by the eagle. Mr. Willey said the bird was quite large and slipped from the nest, never affording a view that aided in positive identification. Mr. Willey stationed me in a favorable location and went around to the east and flushed the nesting bird. It was a large female Horned Owl. I climbed to the nest (about 50 feet in a loblolly pine) and found one owlet about 3-4 days old, and an egg that was incubated, but quite cold. This was taken for possible use in Pesticide Research. A few crow feathers were on the nest, and three decapitated Norway rats.

Mr. Willey also showed me the three active bald eagle nests found in the survey conducted by Mr. Daly, Assistant Refuge Manager, and himself. These nests were observed through a spotting scope and binoculars from a distance so the eagles would not be disturbed. Two of these nests are definitely new nests, and it is important that they get the protection the men are giving them. Bird watchers, in all innocence, think that because they are armed with binoculars they can do no harm. On the Western Shore an eagle deserted its nest because of the attention it was given by overly zealous groups of these persons. Nearby was a dock and its owner going about his daily chores who never bothered the eagle and it had gotten quite used to him. After incubation is well along, or they have young, the eagles are not so easily disturbed to the point of desertion.

It is very heartening to me, having a lifelong interest in the birds of prey, to see the steps taken by the Refuge staff to give the eagles all the protection within their power. Back thirty years ago Blackwater was known for its eagle population, and it will, I hope, continue to be a refuge for them and the ones from the surrounding area. The two new nests seem to point up this fact. Unfortunately, the gun clubs in the vicinity pose a risk of the few trigger-happy characters always present among the hunting fraternity. This may be overcome through education by your Visitor's Center.

It was a pleasure to visit the Refuge again and see the work accomplished there.

cc: ✓ C.W. Wallace  
Paul Daly  
Guy Willey  
Director PWRC

enc: 3 photos of nest Fred Schmid  
Frederick C. Schmid  
Section of Upland Ecology



Great Horned Owl Nest near tower Blackwater Refuge  
- note brought in by adult bird

PATUXENT WILDLIFE RESEARCH CENTER  
BUREAU OF SPORTS FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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PHOTO BY FREDERICK C. SCHMID