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Abstracts

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

EASTERN BLUEBIRDS EJECT BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD EGGS

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Abstract. The relationship between the Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) and its cavity-nesting hosts has received little attention because of the assumption that cowbirds rarely parasitize these hosts. We tested the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*), a host that is sometimes heavily parasitized by cowbirds, for egg ejection behavior. Bluebirds ejected 65% of experimentally added cowbird eggs ($n = 20$), but ejected no experimentally added conspecific eggs ($n = 66$). This suggests that cowbird parasitism, not conspecific brood parasitism, is the selective pressure responsible for egg ejection in this species. This level of rejection may be conservative because bluebirds nest in dark cavities, which may make cowbird eggs difficult to detect by bluebirds.

Key words: *brood parasitism, Brown-headed Cowbird, Eastern Bluebird, egg rejection*, Molothrus ater, Sialia sialis.