

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

EGG COMPOSITION IN NORTHERN FLICKERS

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Abstract. There have been several studies on egg composition in birds, but none on woodpeckers. Woodpeckers (Picidae) have among the smallest eggs relative to their body size of any bird. I dissected Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) eggs into shell, yolk, and albumen components, and determined the lipid content of the yolk. The proportional size of the yolk in flicker eggs (16%) was among the smallest described for any bird. However, the yolk contained a similar amount of lipid (58%) as the yolks of other altricial species. The overall energy density in flicker eggs, 3.8 kJ g⁻¹, was also among the lowest reported in birds. The relative size of the yolk tended toward negative allometry with increasing total egg mass while the amount of albumen showed positive allometry, but the confidence intervals for the regression slopes showed that isometry of these components could not be excluded. These results demonstrate that flicker eggs contain relatively little energy and, compared to other species, eggs may be relatively cheap for flicker females to produce.

Key words: egg composition, Picidae, woodpecker.