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SHORT NOTE

DUCK REMOVING EGG FROM NEST

On 28 September at 9 a.m., as I was driving along Benmorven Road, a country road 4½ km from Blenheim, I saw a Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) walk across the road in front of the car carrying an egg. Its lower mandible was pushed into a hole in the side of the egg, enabling the duck to carry it. The duck dropped the egg in the long grass at the roadside, pecking at it before walking back around the front of the car and settling under a small open gorse bush in long grass on the other side of the road. The bird flushed into a narrow open drain close by, revealing a nest with 10 unhatched eggs.

Inspecting the still warm egg removed by the duck, I found that part of the shell had broken away and part of the inner membrane was stained, suggesting that a piece of eggshell had been missing for some time. A tear on the inner lining revealed an actively moving duckling. The duckling was fully formed but still a few days away from hatching, judging by the size of the yolk sac, and the egg tooth was not fully formed.

Perhaps the Mallard hen had removed the egg because the collapsed portion of the egg was irritating her while incubating or made the eggs hard to roll.

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