



A female plover broods one young while another explores the area.

On July 3, I drove up the Dempster again to kilometre 91, intending to search the area for more nests, including those of the Least Sandpiper. In the early hours of the morning, I discovered yet another Semi-palmated Plover nest not far from the one I had found on June 26. This one contained four newly hatched young. I waited until 9 A.M. to let them dry out and be warmed by their parents before I set up on them.

The location of the nest was fabulous. Tiny purple flowers dotted the area, which was carpeted by a layer of soft green plants. Again, the nest was only a slight depression in this carpet. Although I got several great shots of the young, which had become more active by now, the parents refused to come closer than ten feet. Instead, they called to the young to lure them away from the area. As the young began to wander away, I

Opposite: A young plover chick takes its first wobbly steps.

finally dismantled the blind and shot them out in the open.

Even in the bright daylight I had to be careful. It is so important to watch where you step around hatching shorebirds; the young will not move even as you step on them. After four hours I decided that I had enough good shots and left the young to their parents, who hustled them out of the area right away.

I was now left with the one plover nest that still contained four eggs. On July 16, I checked the plover nest at 1 A.M. to find two young and two eggs. Hatching had occurred, and I was there to see it! I let them dry out a bit and returned at 4 A.M. to photograph them. It was misty and wet, but I knew it was now or never. After taking about 50 exposures, I left them to it and returned to Dawson.

I hoped to continue shooting the plovers, so I returned that evening. I began shooting at 12:15 A.M. on July 17, and at that point there was one young and one egg left in the nest. The first two young had obviously gone off with the other parent and were nearby. I shot for an hour until I was too tired to continue and then decided to sleep in my car.

At 10 A.M. I roused myself from a fretful sleep and fought my way through the mosquitoes to the blind. The last egg had hatched during the night, and there were two fluffy young left. One was a little more vigorous than the other, probably because he had hatched first, and he began to wander around the female adult. I was able to get some shots of this chick beside her as she brooded the other chick.

One of the photographs I had hoped to capture was of the male and female both at the nest. This usually occurs when they switch incubation or brooding duties, and is tricky to photograph well. I was able to get a good shot of the male just behind the brooding female, however, when he passed the nest in his attempt to coax her into switching with him. She didn't seem to want to trade places though and soldiered on with her brooding. It was the last shot of



the plovers I took.

When the final young trundled off at 11 A.M., I decided not to try squeezing in a few more shots but to let nature take its course. I was gratified that all four young were well and on their way to independence.

Even though I photographed three different nests of the same bird, I would leap at the chance to shoot the Semi-palmated Plover again, for it is a truly charming little shorebird.