## Eiders attracted to experimental nests

A.NCHORAGE-Sept. 2-Manmade nests have proved successful in attracting Pacific Eiders. the large northern sea ducks. on islands in the Beaufort Sea.

Expermental nests made of washed-up trees and logs, the same materials the ducks use to build their own nests, were placed on 25 sites last fall. Conducting the study is Angus Gaviti zoologist who has studied Vorth Slope wildlife for the past 10 vears for ARCO Oil and Gas Company

Purpose of the expermment was th see if the Eiders could be muluced to use the man-made nests. placed away from possible disturbance from ol driling and other operations.

Some of the nests were set out on islands already being heavily used for oil exploration, to see if the experimental nests would be as attractive to the sea birds as sites already in use. Others were set out at random along the chain of Barrier Islands from Stump Island to Long Island.

Of 15 nests set out on Stump Island, eight were occupied this spring. Gavin found, including seven by Eiders and one by a Glaucous Gull.
"This we considered to be quite successful."

On Egg Island. which Gavin said already has a fair nesting population. five new sites were
set up, in the hope that additional nesting birds might be attracted. " lt is possible that some of these might have been successful," Gavin said, "it is had not been for a Red fox that had established itself on this island and was playing havoc, not only among nesting Eiders but with the colony of nesting Glaucous Gulls."

Five other sites were set out on Long Island and none was used. Gavin said a number of sites that weren't successful were placed in the wrong position to prevailing winds and became drifted over with silt and sand. Others were too much out in the open, providing little or no shelter, with all the finer nesting material blown away.

Worn-out truck tires from Prudhoe Bay oilfield equipment will be used for more experimental nests, which will be placed this fall. according to Gavin. He
intends to cut the tires in two and use the half circles, as shelters for nesting materials.

There is no shortage of nestìng materials, Gavin points out. The wind flows from east to west and it is assumed that much of the debris washed up on the coastline and on the Barrier Islands comes form the Mackenzie River system in Canada. The Pacific Eiders nest among the debris, which not only provides shelter but camouflage.

However, some Eiders nest right out in the open, he said; their nest is just a hollow scraped in the sand or gravel and lined with down. Even out in the open they are often hard to see, he said, because their colors blend in so well.

While some of the islands are tundra covered, such as Pingok and Flaxman, the vast majority are composed of silt, sand and gravel. Most are low lying, with elevations of from three to four feet above sea level.

