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Notes

Eds. Comment: One aspect of *Ontario Birds* with which we, as Editors, are disappointed is the Notes section. We would like to see more Notes submitted to *Ontario Birds.* Notes make an important contribution to provincial ornithology, are relatively easy to write and are usually very interesting—often more so than longer articles. In this issue's Guest Editorial, Martin McNicholl, the author of dozens of notes, has commented on their value. We would like to try to further stimulate our readers to contribute to the Notes section. Toward this end we will be designating a "Topic of Note" for each of the three issues of *Ontario Birds* in 1985. The Topic of Note will be a bird related subject which we hope will help our members focus their attention on a specific topic when trying to recall or when searching their field notes for a particular observation. As well, the Topic of Note will be a subject such that members can go out into the field looking for observational material.

Because the deadline for submissions for the April 1985 issue of *Ontario Birds* will be fast approaching by the time most of you receive this issue we are announcing Topics of Note for the next two issues. They are 1) for April: Unusual Nesting Holes, Behaviour and/or Damage Caused by Woodpeckers and 2) for October: Interactions Between Snakes and Birds. If you have made interesting or unusual observations on either of these topics, please write them up in note form and send them to us. Be sure to include date and location of observation (or as close as possible), what the observation was, who saw it and whatever other details seem appropriate. Notes need not be long, a paragraph or two will suffice for most and they need not be typed, though we would prefer them that way. If you miss the deadline for any given topic, submit it anyway and we will consider it for the next issue. Of course, we still welcome Notes on all other topics as well.

Two Incidents of Small Passerine Entanglement in Spider Webs

by
W.J. Crins, J.D. Reynolds, M.J. Oldham,
M.W.P. Runtz and R.D. McRae

Interactions between birds and spiders generally culminate with birds as the clear victors, with spiders included as a small but regular percentage of the many invertebrates that comprise the diets of many species of birds (e.g., flycatchers, Bent 1942; warblers, Bent 1953; sparrows, Judd 1901, Bent 1968). However, we have made two observations which suggest that the tables are occasionally turned.

The first incident involved an adult male Golden-winged Warbler *(Vermivora chrysoptera)* along the Woodland Nature Trail in Point Pelee National Park, Essex County, Ontario. On 16 May 1982, WJC, MJO and MWPR observed this warbler sitting in a small spicebush *(Lindera benzoin)*, when it suddenly dropped from its perch into a web and became suspended by one wing. It hung motionless for at least 15 seconds before struggling and breaking free as the three observers approached it. It flew to a nearby bush where it preened its wing for about one minute before flying off without any noticeable ill effects.

The second case involved an after-hatch-year male Golden-crowned Kinglet *(Regulus satrapa)*.

On 10 October 1983, JDR and RDM noticed the kinglet struggling on the ground at the base of a large Norway spruce *(Picea abies)* at the edge of a thicket between the Visitor's Centre and the lighthouse in Presqu'ile Provincial Park, Northumberland County, Ontario. All of the primaries and a few secondaries of its left wing were tangled and matted in sticky web material. A few tail feathers were also entangled, pulling the tail toward the left wing, and the left foot was pulled forward and immobilized against the primaries by web material. The web also contained spruce needles, insects, and other detritus. The kinglet was photographed and the web was removed from it, whereupon the bird flew away fairly strongly.

Other kinglets were seen hovering and flitting about near the base of the spruce, where several large webs were suspended. This is consistent with a report by Hespenheide (1962) of opportunistic foraging by a Ruby-crowned Kinglet *(Regulus calendula)*. Hespenheide observed a kinglet flitting along the base of a wall, jabbing its bill into recesses in the stonework, and perching on the rough surface as it explored depressions. Some of these recesses contained spider webs in which there were the remains of insects. The kinglet also had bits of web on its feet and face.

Most reports of spiders killing birds come from the tropics. Large spiders, mainly in the family *Theraphosidae,* which includes the North American "tarantulas", have been known to take hummingbirds (Savory 1928). Theraphosids are cursorial predators which pounce directly upon their prey, rather than netting them in webs (Cloudsley-Thompson 1968). In addition to theraphosids, web-producing spiders have also been known to prey upon hummingbirds (Skutch 1973).

In Illinois, Coale (1912) reported a case of a Yellow warbler *(Dendroica petechia)* being captured in the web of a garden spider *(Argiope* sp., *Araneidae)*. The spider was successful in binding the bird with silken strands, and it appears the spider would have eaten it had it not been for human intervention. Terres (1980) states that hummingbirds, bushtits, kinglets, sparrows, goldfinches, and other small birds have been accidentally caught in webs.

It is difficult to assess the overall importance of spiders as hazards to birds in temperate North America. The silk draglines of some spiders, such as *Araneus diadematus* (a common orb-weaver) can support almost as much weight as high-tenacity nylon fibres of the same mass, and are twice as extensible (Witt *et al.* 1968). Webs may therefore constitute reasonably efficient mist-nets to small birds under some circumstances, particularly during the kind of opportunistic foraging noted for kinglets. However, most webs would be destroyed when birds collided with them, so actual predation by spiders is likely very rare.

Since reports of this phenomenon are scarce, particularly in temperate regions, we encourage anyone with related observation to

submit them to the editors of *Ontario Birds.*

Acknowledgement:
We thank Dan Brunton of Ottawa for bringing certain references to our attention.

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Unusual Feeding Behaviour of Ruby-crowned Kinglet

On the afternoon of 14 October 1984, while sailing on Lake Ontario about 2.5 km south of Bonnibrae Point, Oshawa, Durham R.M., we observed a small bird fluttering apparently helplessly close to the surface of the water. It was an overcast, humid

day with little wind and we were able to approach the bird at a slow speed. It became obvious that the bird, far from consigning itself to a watery grave, was actively feeding on clouds of tiny flying insects hanging in the still air. The bird was fluttering constantly, sometimes very low but sometimes as much as five metres above the water, and for several brief moments it rested on the rigging of the sailboat, where it was clearly seen to be a Ruby-crowned Kinglet *(Regulus calendula)*.

No other passerines were observed on the lake that day, but on more than one occasion previously I have observed a Ruby-crowned Kinglet reaching the north shore of Lake Ontario in an almost exhausted state, having obviously flown directly across the lake in migration. I would assume that this southbound bird had delayed its journey to profit by an easy food supply or had encountered the insects en route. Its jerky, active, fluttering flight continued unabated as we lost sight of it some ten to fifteen minutes later.

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Book Review

Toronto Region Bird Chart. 1983. By *Bruce D. Parker.* Toronto Field Naturalists, 83 Joicey Blvd., Toronto M5M 2T4. ii & 30 pp. $2.00 & $0.50 postage.

The *Toronto Region Bird Chart* represents a compilation of a large amount of data on the occurrence of birds within 48 kilometres of the Royal Ontario Museum in downtown Toronto. I have found similar charts to be very useful for indicating what birds to expect when visiting new areas, and I expect that this chart will serve the same function for visitors to the Toronto region. Unfortunately, the introductory section preceding the actual chart, is very brief. There is a very limited section dealing with the location and some general features of the Toronto region. However, a visitor unfamiliar with the region would gain virtually nothing from this section. At the very least, a map showing the location of the region, along with some of the major features in it, should have been included here. The other introductory sections, dealing with notekeeping and birding ethics, are useful for both visitors and residents of the region. It is important that we document our records properly, and we must continually remind ourselves about respecting the property rights of others. The section on notekeeping should have acknowledged the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas project, from which the breeding