

BLACK-AND-WHITE DISTRACTION

While birding in mid-July in the park behind the New Brunswick Museum in Saint John, I was set upon by a Black-and-white Warbler, who was protecting its fledgling nearby. The tiny parent pirouetted around me, looking up, unafraid of the human tower. Accompanying this distraction ballet, which included fluttering one wing while twirling in place, was a busy monotone chatter, something like a low-pitched Warbling Vireo, that alternated with a distinct insectival buzzing noise. I mused that the bird figured if buzzing worked for bugs....

I am wondering if any readers have experienced this buzzing sound in warblers or know of references to it in the literature. I would have liked to remain and have the song and dance continue longer, but the rocky area was littered with broken glass. I wished to avoid a possible "black-and-white-and-red-all-over" situation.

Dorothy Louise Case, Needham Heights

ACCIPITER INTERACTION AT A COOPER'S NEST

While checking on the status of a Cooper's Hawk's nest located in Essex County, I was witness to an encounter between a Cooper's and a Northern Goshawk.

On my approach to the nest, I became the target of the wrath of a pair of adult goshawks. They were evidently feeding their youngsters nearby and were not very pleased that I was walking by. The pair followed me for over a hundred yards before they apparently tired of the pursuit. At this point, I was still almost a quarter of a mile from the Cooper's nest. When I arrived at the nest, I found an adult Cooper's Hawk brooding young. The bird did not seem too concerned by my cautious approach, but after a few minutes, it did give a warning call. The bird left the nest and flew in for a closer look at me.

Suddenly, an adult goshawk entered the scene like a gray streak, screaming at full volume. The smaller accipiter immediately left its perch to intercept the intruder, which was flying directly at the nest. Both birds flew to a hardwood within thirty yards of the nest. My view was obstructed, but the ruckus that came to my ears indicated that considerable contact was made between them. The larger bird then flew away.

I immediately left the area in an awestruck state. As I moved, the goshawk flew back toward its own territory, leaving the Cooper's Hawk to its domestic duties. A check later in the month revealed two healthy Cooper's fledglings still in the nest. It is good to see these secretive forest raptors beginning to make a comeback here in the Northeast.

Tom Aversa, Somerville

AIRPORT SANDPIPERS

On June 1, 1990, a beautiful cloudless day, I stopped at the airport in Newburyport on my way to Plum Island to see if the Upland Sandpipers were in residence. I entered the dirt road near the east end of the runway, across from the old baseball field. Sure enough, there were two Upland Sandpipers in the tall grass directly opposite me, searching for food in a leisurely way. As I was feasting my eyes on them, a small Piper-Cub-type plane taxied down the runway toward the east end. The sandpipers could not have cared less and continued searching for food. The plane turned and at full throttle took off at a point just beyond the sandpipers. What I observed next was a first in my experience. The sandpipers rushed onto the runway, feeding frantically on things stirred up in the wake of the plane. The birds were momentarily successful in capturing objects that I could not identify. Then, nonchalantly, they came over to my side of the runway and "loafed" along in the mowed grassy border, again feeding quietly. The action was highly suggestive of Cattle Egret behavior and an interesting opportunistic activity, exploiting a special feature of airport habitat.

Phillips Hallowell, Dover

OUTDOOR WORK: THE BIRD FINDER'S ADVANTAGE

To a birder any time out of doors is time to relax and observe. But time spent in physical labor during the heat of summer does not seem the proper setting for bird finding. I am a teacher in the Boston Public Schools from September until June and a house painter during July and August. Since 1975, I have worked during the summer, 7:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. painting houses in the suburbs as far as twenty-five miles from Boston. I was introduced to bird finding by a good friend in 1986. Since then, my summer labors have been enhanced, and I have made several interesting observations. Because I am usually facing the house, I hear more birds than I see, but this has helped to improve my vocal identification skills. The nesting activity of House Finches in hanging plants and House Sparrows in eaves has been very closely observed and sometimes unavoidably disturbed. Completion of one house averages four or five days. Being in one location for this time period allowed me to make an inventory of the birds and to note their daily activities. Each house and its immediate surroundings became a microcosmic survey area. Birds nesting in the area and passing birds were both observed. The topography (small ponds, streams, pine stands, brush piles, etc.) gave clues as to what birds to expect to see or hear. The call of young birds begging food and adult territorial displays

helped to establish the location of nest sites. Bird counts to establish numbers and species for each area plus working in many different locations for the summer gave a good cross section of the resident birds. Driving through these communities helped to locate woodlots for further investigation. All things considered, working outdoors was a boon to my bird-finding hobby.

My bird list while house painting comprises fifty-six species—not bad for on-the-job birdwatching.

Chuck Aversa, West Roxbury

FALL HAWK WATCH



The Eastern Massachusetts Hawk Watch (EMHW) will maintain a consecutive-day count on the summit of Wachusett Mountain in Princeton from September 1 through October 8 and continue on weekends through November 19—if the number of volunteer observers permits. Help is especially critical for weekdays during the peak accipiter and falcon migration, from September 20 through October 8.

EMHW will also conduct coordinated weekend watches on September 8-9, September 15-16, September 22-23, and October 27-28. Volunteers are needed to report the level of hawk activity from any site on any of the coordinated weekend dates. Select a site near your home or contact the EMHW coordinator for recommendations as to the best sites for coverage.

You do not have to be an expert to participate. If you wish, the EMHW coordinator can team you with a more experienced hawkwatcher at any of a number of sites across the eastern half of the state, from Cape Cod to the Connecticut River. Volunteers are needed for all dates. We would also appreciate reports for any other dates or sites in eastern Massachusetts or Rhode Island. If you would like to participate or seek additional information, please contact Paul Roberts, 254 Arlington Street, Medford, MA 02155. Telephone 617-483-4263 after 8 P.M.

If you want more information on hawkwatching in eastern Massachusetts, including a copy of the *Fall 1989 EMHW Report*, please write to Paul Roberts at the address above, and include \$1.50 to help defray costs. The information includes two fliers: "Why People Watch Hawks" and a revised "Where and When to Watch Hawks in Eastern Massachusetts."