

which marks the beginning of the Partridge Island Trail. There should be a sign marking it, because it is a joint project of the Conservation Commission and the High School, but the sign gets knocked down every once in a while. You can find the path, anyway. It goes through a quarter mile of wet woods out to Partridge Island (the trail has been bridged and cleared), which commands an excellent view of the marsh.

Let me close with a few observations about marsh birding. These may not be scientific, and some people whose opinions I respect don't agree, but they are based on frequent trips to this marsh over the last thirty-five years.

1) The earlier in the day, the better. You will hear five times as many rails, bitterns, marsh wrens, and others at 5:30 on a May morning as you will at 7:30. The birds stay active later--you will see them as frequently at 9:00 as at 5:30--but you don't actually see them often at any time.

2) Weather is important. I have my best luck on a still, damp, cloudy morning. Rain is not good, sunshine is bad, and wind is terrible.

3) The birds will change their location in the marsh to respond to differences in water table. Normally the best area for rails is in the railroad tracks-power line area, but in a dry spring or in late summer, look around the open water behind the motel or where the brook crosses Walnut Street.

4) It helps to be lucky!

WANTED: A used or new B and L Balscope Sr. spotting scope to replace stolen one. Contact Robert H. Stymeist, 54 Banks St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

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WANTED: Copy of Birds of the World by Singer. Write to Bird Observer or call Paula Butler, 484-2148.

AN AVIAN DOUBLE-CROSS

It's well known that Blue Jays can imitate the calls of several other species. When the Red-shouldered Hawk was a common summer resident, the jays would mimic its "kee-you" cry; now they have switched to the peewee-like whistle of the Broad-winged. So, whenever I hear a call that doesn't "fit," I first think of Blue Jay.

In April a bird gave repeatedly four of the short, harsh calls of the jay, but followed by a pair of two-note phrases that should have come from a Northern Oriole. A Blue Jay? No, an American Robin! Later, this bird sometimes followed the jay motif with a couple of normal robin phrases.

All of this recalled the celebrated Mt. Auburn robin of a few years ago, who could imitate Whip-poor-will to perfection. We should pay more attention to the songs of the thrushes; they may sometimes be as provocative as they are beautiful.

L. J. Robinson