

habit is not without a parallel among the other birds of prey.—GEORGE MIKSCH SURTON, *Pennsylvania State Game Commission, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.*

Crow Alighting on the Water.—While on a Duck hunting trip on December 19, 1925, on Seneca Lake, an unusual incident occurred which was witnessed by myself and my two friends who were in the blind at the time.

We had watched the Crows from a nearby roost flying over the blind to the western shore of the lake and in the afternoon when the Crows returned we took passing shots at those which came within range. While looking out over the water for one which might prove a suitable target our attention was attracted to a bird flying very low over the surface and straight towards us. We were all certain it was a Crow but it suddenly stiffened its wings and dropped into the lake! About ten seconds elapsed before it took flight again and continued on its course coming directly for our blind as before. During the time the bird was in the water I did not take my eyes from it. As it drew nearer we all prepared to shoot and not until it had flown directly over the stools and around one side of the blind did we realize that it *was* a Crow and not a Scoter or a Cormorant or any of the many other things we had thought when we saw it drop into the water.

I have endeavored to explain the incident to myself in many ways—that the bird might have lit on a log or some other piece of floating debris; that he might have been flying all of the time and only appeared to have been resting on the water; or that he might have been one of the water birds already mentioned—but all my theories are unconvincing. The water was not rough enough to prevent him from being in view all the time and if he had alighted on some floating object it would have been apparent. As for the identification I can only say that I have studied birds for fifteen years.

I have since talked with Mr. Louis A. Fuertes and he has told me of twice seeing a Great Blue Heron alight in deep water. I would be glad to hear from any observers who have had similar experiences or who can offer any other explanations to my observation.—R. M. CHASE, *Sigma Phi Place, Ithaca, N. Y.*

The Blue Jay in eastern Massachusetts.—I cannot do better than begin this screed with a quotation from Mr. Burleigh's article on "Breeding Habits of Georgia Birds" in the last July 'Auk.' In commenting on the Blue Jay Mr. Burleigh says that "in the North it is a bird of the woods, with a natural curiosity in the ways of man but suspicious of any intimacy and during the breeding season shunning civilization as much as possible." He goes on to say that the Jay in the South apparently has lost "this shyness" and is as much a bird of the town and even cities as the English Sparrow. Well, this, too, is just what the Blue Jay is in this section of

the North (at least some individuals) although there are still plenty of Jays here which stay "wild as hawks" within their native wild-wood and breed there.

It was not ever thus. An apparent change of habit has happened to the Blue Jay in these parts, and it has come about largely within the memory of the older ornithologists. Far from "shunning civilization as much as possible" in the breeding season, the Blue Jay (at least some of the tribe) is then the boldest, or tamest, or most familiar (as you choose) of birds, and makes its nest close to our houses or even on them—as over doorways, around cornices, etc.

I am an old man; and I find in an old notebook this entry for Dec. 30, 1875: "Today a Blue Jay rendered bold by hunger came into the yard and searched for food in a heap of straw." (The winter of 1874-75 will be recalled as an unusually hard winter, with low temperatures and much snow, when we had with us many Snowy Owls, Crossbills, Grosbeaks, etc.) In other words, I, a very young ornithologist, thought that the visit of this wild woodland bird to the yard, even on a bitter winter's day, was worthy of note. And yet we lived in those days at the "South End" of Worcester—a sufficiently countrified section of the city, where in spring the migrating Sparrows filled the bushes, and in summer the Kingbirds nested in the orchards. (I recall that once I saw in my father's yard a wild Cardinal.)

Today the Blue Jay in this part of the state, at least, is almost as much a bird of the town as of the woods. I cannot say how extensive this change of habit is. I speak only for eastern Massachusetts, and not for all, even, of that. I hope that this will bring forth information from other of the older ornithologists.

Mention of the familiarity of the Blue Jay is made as far back as 1881 in an editorial in the 'Ornithologist and Oölogist.' The nesting of a very tame Jay in Uxbridge, this state, is described. The nest was in an evergreen at the very office door of the local woolen mill. Mention is also made of other nests of tame Jays—one in plain sight in a small evergreen by a roadside "almost in a public thoroughfare"; and of [another, near a greenhouse door, the old bird meanwhile sitting indifferent on her eggs. The editorial says that there is something remarkable about the nesting habits of the Blue Jays, for it is not uncommon for them to build close to houses, and concludes: "Out of the breeding season they are decidedly the wildest bird in New England."

This is decidedly not true of the Blue Jay of to-day, of many of our towns in eastern Massachusetts—in or out of the breeding season. The bird, usually screaming at the top of his voice, impudently sits around on roofs and fences, or investigates our garbage barrels, as if to the "manner born," as indeed he often is. But except for this familiarity about our houses, he is the same old Jay—impudent, curious, prying, jeering, hollering, the same old rascal, but so gay with his beautiful blues that even the enraged ornithologist cannot withhold his meed of admiration.

I find in an old notebook for 1906, under date of May 9, in Georgetown, the story of a Blue Jay's nest (with five eggs of the beautiful buffy style) which was built out in the open, away from the woods, in a willow tree near a house. Another rather unusual situation was in May, 1910, in Plymouth, where I found a Jay's nest in a hedgerow close to houses on Summer street, just over the fence, in fact, from the sidewalk where people were continually passing. Miss Frances Vibert, writing in June, 1911, from Hartford, Conn., describes a Jay's nest "with young birds about big enough to fly" on Beacon Street in that city, which was built "on the turn of the gutter pipe just below the eaves of the verandah roof." Aaron C. Bagg writes from the western part of our state (Holyoke, April 18, 1925) that "a pair of Blue Jays are nesting across the street in a neighbor's yard, high up in a cutleaf maple." In Ware, in the west-central section of Massachusetts, I have known of Jays nesting in the street trees or in yards close to houses; and Mr. F. C. Moulton, of Ware, tells me of a Blue Jay that built in a small tree close by the open window of the noisy loom-room of one of the large local mills. In the Dorchester section of Boston a Jay nested a year or so ago in the ornamental vines just over the front door of an occupied house. But why prolong the tale? Similar reports of the familiarity of the Blue Jay, in and out of the breeding season, come from New Bedford, Brockton, Quincy, Malden, Newton, and other places in thickly-settled eastern Massachusetts.—J. A. FARLEY, 52 Cedar St., Malden, Mass.

Changed Habits of Blue Jay at Philadelphia.—Mr. Farley's note prompts me to publish my similar experience in Germantown, one of the northern suburbs of Philadelphia. When studying birds in Wister's woods and vicinity from 1880 to 1897, the Blue Jay was a very wild species occurring only during autumn flights, but upon returning to reside in the old neighborhood after some twenty-five years absence I found the bird's habits totally changed. I was surprised to find a pair of Jays present about the end of May, 1922, acting as if they were located for the summer. Later, I detected them constructing a nest in a beech tree close to the railroad station about ten feet above a path along which hundreds of persons passed to and from the trains, and not over fifty feet from the tracks. Next year and the year following they nested again in the same spot but in different trees once only thirty feet from the railroad tracks, and showed no apparent fear of trains or passing passengers.—WITMER STONE, *Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.*

The English Starling at Chicago, Illinois.—On December 21, 1925, Mr. Roderick Van Trump described to me four "strange" birds that he and his brother had seen in Oak Park the day before. The birds in question had been observed feeding on the ground at close range and the size, actions and *yellow bills* placed them beyond doubt as English Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*). These boys are enthusiastic Boy Scouts and I know them to