

The fragile shell is never broken or abraded by the captor. The long, slender bill is used not as a hook but as a lancet or poniard. It is a feat of instinctive correlation as exact as that of the spider-paralyzing wasps.—ROBERT CUSHMAN MURPHY, *American Museum of Natural History, New York.*

**Possible Function of the Flicker's Black Breast Crescent.**—For periods of 75 and 20 minutes, on July 15, 1954, I watched a male Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) work over the lawn of a Baltimore park, accompanied by two juveniles. The latter were practically full-grown and on the verge of becoming independent; one, in particular, foraged much for itself, neither was ever fed without having solicited the feeding, and one or both were sometimes pecked at and driven away by the adult when they did solicit. The manner of their solicitation was, almost invariably, to nuzzle directly into the parent's breast, to run rapidly beneath his throat from one side to the other, or to stroke his breast with the bill. The performances suggested that the black crescent on the breast of this species functions as a directive marker, or "target," for such food solicitation; lying as it does over the lower part of the throat, pressure exerted on or near it in the ways observed might very well stimulate regurgitation, it seems—and, in fact, regurgitative feedings did sometimes follow immediately.

My notes on the food solicitation and feedings, made at the time, follow:

4:15 P.M. One of the juveniles nuzzles directly forward against the male's breast, and thereupon is fed briefly by regurgitation. Twice before, during the half-hour I have already watched, the juvenile that was closely accompanying the male had crawled rapidly across under his throat from one side to the other, but no feedings followed and I did not realize what now appears to be the case—that this was solicitation.

4:39. A juvenile rubs against the male's right side at the front of his body, then goes close directly in front of him and holds up its open bill, and is fed.

4:41. A juvenile goes in front of the male and, without touching him, holds its bill open and is fed.

4:48. A juvenile runs across, from right to left, directly or virtually under the male's black crescent; then, from the left, soon goes under the male and nibbles at his throat.

4:50. A juvenile again runs across under the male's throat, from his right to his left.

4:51. Both young repeatedly run under the male, simultaneously but in opposite directions, distinctly posterior to the crescent, and after some seconds the male feeds one.

4:53. A juvenile repeatedly nuzzles the male, first from his right, then from his left, then from directly in front with head low and finally motionless between the male's legs. All of this nuzzling was well posterior to the crescent (except that of course the juvenile's back must finally have been pressing against that) and all of it was vain; but may not the crescent still have been the "target"?

6:38 P.M. A juvenile goes up to the male and from directly in front rubs its bill up and down once or twice against his breast, crossing the crescent vertically. No feeding made.

6:49. The male passes in front of a juvenile, and as he does so it nibbles at his chin and breast. He does not feed it.—HERVEY BRACKBILL, 4608 Springdale Avenue, Baltimore 7, Maryland.