

GENERAL NOTES

Homing Instinct in Cowbirds.—That the homing instinct during the nesting-period is firmly fixed in at least one member of the cowbird species (*Molothrus a. ater*) was established without doubt during the summer of 1929 at our banding station in Glenolden, Pennsylvania. At the time this Cowbird formed the trap habit, being captured nearly every day for over a month, sometimes four times a day, a pair of Yellow Warblers nesting close by suddenly deserted, and we placed the blame on the Cowbird. About six weeks later a Yellow Warbler was observed feeding an immature Cowbird, which would seem to verify our conclusions. This is the first time the writer has actually seen the Summer Yellowbird with a Cowbird "in tow."

The female Cowbird was observed one morning entering a cavity in which Crested Flycatchers appeared to be about ready to nest. Not wishing to have the Flycatchers driven away by the Cowbird, we decided to take her several miles away in the hope that she would not return. The following day our traps were not set, but the morning after that the Cowbird was recaptured. Her first excursion had been to the northeast, so we decided to take her in another direction, and several days later released her two miles to the south by the Delaware River. In three hours she was back in the trap partaking of some soda crackers, of which she seemed to be very fond.

The following day she was taken northeast to Philadelphia and released at a point eight miles distant in the heart of the city amid the skyscrapers. When last seen she was headed toward the east in the direction of the Delaware River and New Jersey, but Mrs. Gillespie telephoned me four hours later that, like a bad penny, she had come back.

She was next deported to Wilmington, Delaware, about twenty miles southwest, and we felt confident that we had at last got rid of her (but hoped we hadn't). At lunch-time, just four hours later, she again appeared at our banding station.

Arrangements were made to send her into Maryland the next day, fifty miles away, but we never saw the bird again, and the probabilities are that our neighbor's cat made away with her.

To the writer it appears rather unusual that the homing instinct should be so pronounced in a species having no nest, eggs, or young of its own to care for. A persistent craving for the particular food we offered seems to be the most plausible explanation for the actions of this bird.

That immature Cowbirds may possess the homing instinct was demonstrated several summers ago on Martha's Vineyard Island when two immature Cowbirds were released three miles from our banding station on the opposite side of the town of Oak Bluffs. One of them returned to the traps about seven hours later.—JOHN A. GILLESPIE, Glenolden, Pennsylvania, November 3, 1929.

A Saw-whet Owl Banded, and Other Experiences with this Species

—On the afternoon of Armistice Day a boy who had been following the trails of the Bird Sanctuary reported to me that he had seen a very small owl, and, though thinking it merely the common Screech Owl, I inquired where it had been found. "It is in a pine tree right near the entrance to that trail," he said, and so I accompanied him to the spot. There, perched close to the trunk on a low branch of a white pine, sat *Cryptoglaux acadica* staring at us with its bright yellow eyes.

Approaching slowly, I extended my hand to within a few inches of the bird, and almost grasped it as it flew to another pine close by. Asking the "discoverer" to watch it, I hurried for my insect net, and by holding this