

CONTINUOUS FEEDING FROM A SPIDER'S WEB BY A PROTHONOTARY WARBLER

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Abstract.—A male Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*) was observed to forage for 22 min on small dipterans as they became entangled in a spider's web. This is the first report of a bird using a spider's web as an active "insect trap" to facilitate the capture of live prey over an extended period of time.

ESPÉCIMEN DE *PROTONOTARIA CITREA* SE ALIMENTA DE INSECTOS ATRAPADOS EN TELA DE ARAÑA

Resumen.—Se observó por 22 minutos a un macho de *Protonotaria citrea* depredar sobre pequeños dípteros según estos se iban pegando a una tela de araña. Este es el primer informe de un ave que utiliza por un período de tiempo considerable, una tela de araña como trampa para facilitar la captura de presas.

Some avian species are known to take prey from spiders' webs opportunistically (Brockmann and Barnard 1979, Waide and Hailman 1977). However, all reports of such kleptoparasitism (e.g., Burt et al. 1976, Douglass 1977, Tiebout 1986, Waide and Hailman 1977) have been of instances in which birds picked dead or previously entangled insects from spider webs and departed soon after. We report on 22 min of nearly continuous foraging by a Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*) on live insects as they became entrapped in a spider's web.

Our observations were made along the Tennessee River in Benton County, Tennessee. At 1645 on 25 Apr. 1987 we observed (from 15 m away) a male Prothonotary Warbler perched 5 cm from a 15-cm-diameter spider web, 1 m above ground in a fallen dead tree. The warbler was surrounded by a swarm of small (approximately 2 mm) dipterans that flew around the warbler's head and landed on branches near the bird. Many of these insects became entangled in the spider's web. For 7 min the warbler picked an average of 15 insects/min from the web as they landed, sometimes at a rate of one insect/s. At 1652, the warbler ceased foraging from the web, but remained perched in the same spot for an additional 5 min. During that time, the bird snatched three insects from the swarm around his head. This lapse in foraging may indicate that the bird was satiated with prey. At 1657 the warbler resumed foraging on insects as they landed on the web and on the branch where the bird was perched. In the following 10 min, the bird gleaned approximately 110 more dipterans as they became entangled in the web. No spider was seen on the web. At 1707, the bird moved away from the web to another area in the dead tree and continued to forage on the small dipterans as they landed on branches. Upon examination, the web showed only minor damage, and a few dipterans were still in the web.

Prothonotary Warblers take spiders and other prey opportunistically from spider webs while foraging (pers. obs.). However, this is the first time that we have observed a Prothonotary Warbler foraging from a web for such an extended length of time. Douglass (1977) mentioned that spider webs could be useful as "insect traps" for birds. This appears to be the case, here, where the warbler used the web to facilitate capture of numerous small, live insects.

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