

Mr. John M. McCormick, I encountered a pair of Catbirds (*Dumetella carolinensis*) scolding furiously. We found they were attacking a snake which was about 2 feet above the ground in a crotch of a large apple tree. The snake was about 2 feet long and had its head drawn back in position to strike. An adult Catbird had advanced to within a foot of the snake, apparently trying to catch it by its thin tail.

When we came close the bird backed off a few feet and the snake resumed its climbing of the tree, going straight up the vertical side of the trunk. As soon as the snake got above our heads, the bird closed in again. At a small branch, the snake resumed its defensive position, but the bird retreated only a matter of inches. When once more the snake started to climb, the bird darted in, and, on the wing, grasped the tip of the tail, yanking the snake loose from the bark so that it fell 10 feet to the ground. There we captured it, and tentatively identified it as an immature black racer (*Coluber constrictor*); the snake escaped before we got home, so identification is not positive. The alternative is an immature pilot black snake (*Elaphe obsoleta*). At no time did it actually strike at us or at the birds.

The Catbirds had young, out of the nest, but we could see none in this particular tree. We found one fledgling about 20 yards away. Apparently the bird knew exactly how to handle the snake, and did the job like an expert, in the twinkling of an eye.—F. W. PRESTON, Box 149, Butler, Pennsylvania.

NORTHERN SHRIKE AT PLAY

Suspended from the top of a 60-foot radio antenna pole near the government school in Mountain Village, Alaska, was a 12-foot length of light rope, having on the end a large knot of frayed rope. On August 25, 1946, this rope was whipping about in a wind of 31 mph. For several minutes a Northern Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*) played an aerial game; the bird would fly down, seize the knot, and then struggle to maintain equilibrium. Apparently he did not try to fly off with his "prey", but only to hold on and remain upright without bumping against the pole. My wife had witnessed a similar performance the previous day. The knot later came off, but I was tempted to tie on another "lure" to see if the bird would play the game for a movie camera.—HENRY C. KYLLINGSTAD, Fort Yates, North Dakota.