

Unusual activity of Starlings at Yellow-Shafted Flicker nest.—On 15 May 1969 in the back yard of my Pennington, New Jersey home, my attention was often attracted to noisy encounters between adult Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and Yellow-Shafted Flickers (*Colaptes auratus*). A nest, containing flicker young, was in a dead elm tree, DBH approximately 18 in, with the entrance about 18 feet above the ground. Some 75 feet from this tree, there were noisy Starling young in a nest-box at a height of about 10 feet.

As I watched, a Starling with food in its beak flew directly to the flicker nest-hole, entered and emerged with empty beak a few moments later, apparently having fed the flicker young. Within an hour, Starlings made several similar feeding flights to the flicker nest. On one occasion, a Starling chased the female flicker away from her perch on the nest-hole edge before entering to feed the young. Only rarely did a flicker fly to challenge a Starling, and only once did a flicker (male) fly out of the nest-hole to frighten away a Starling.

On the following three mornings I seated myself partially concealed by a woodpile in order to observe this nest more closely with 7 × 50 binoculars. The Starlings made many rapid flights out over the meadow to a recently cultivated corn field to find larvae and other food for the nestlings. However, when the flickers left their nest they flew in the opposite direction into a wooded area to feed. It soon became apparent that the Starlings were attracted by the calling of the young flickers, although their calls were scarcely audible to me and contrasted strongly with the harsh and almost incessant calling of the young Starlings. The Starlings made many flights to the flicker nest-tree both before and after feeding their young. Only occasionally did they seem to feed the flicker young. At times the head of an adult flicker appeared at the entrance as the Starling flew away.

The most complete account of Starling-flicker competition I have found is that given by A. Brazier Howell (*Auk*, 60:90-91, 1943) who describes conflicts between the two species extending over a five-year period. He reports that the Starlings perched nearby as the flickers made the nest-hole and as soon as it was finished a Starling would remain in the cavity almost continuously. He reports seeing a flicker emerging with a Starling clinging to it and both tumbling to the ground. He even records seeing a Starling dropping flicker eggs to the ground below. My observations revealed no such hostile and physical contact. Howell also (*loc. cit.*) describes hostile behavior between the Starling and a Downy Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos pubescens*) in which the Starling "dangled food" in front of the nest hole "before giving a mighty jab . . . evidently trying to entice, with bait, a young Downy within reach of a crippling blow . . ." The impression I had of Starlings carrying food to the flicker nest was quite the opposite. Rather than hostile or threatening behavior it appeared as a typically hurried feeding flight.

It is especially noteworthy that Starlings not only fed (apparently) flicker young but removed a fecal sac. One Starling, after feeding its young, flew directly to the flicker tree, entered the nest-hole and emerged with a large fecal sac in its beak. As it began to fly, the sac broke and dropped to the ground below.

Four days after my first observation, the flicker nest was empty. Neither the young nor adult flickers were in evidence. The first day after the flickers had left this nest cavity, a pair of Starlings examined it closely. The male attracted the female Starling to the hole by flying to the edge, puffing out his feathers and calling softly. Once, he held a small green leaf in his beak which he took into the nest cavity. She seemed

reluctant to enter even though he entered several times in what seemed to be an encouraging manner. A week later, a Starling pair were nesting in this recently vacated flicker nest.—KENNETH W. PRESCOTT, *New Jersey State Museum, Cultural Center, Trenton, New Jersey 08625, 18 December 1969.*

The junco as a food item for the Rough-legged Hawk in Alaska.—On 9 August, 1969, I found a male Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) dying from injuries apparently inflicted by a motor vehicle at Mile 1280 on the Alaskan Highway, 34 miles southeast of Tok Junction, Alaska. The stomach contained a partially digested mass of fur, feathers, and bones. Both forelimbs and several ribs of an immature Arctic ground squirrel (*Spermophilus undulatus*) were found in the stomach. The scapulae of the ground squirrel were broken, but the remaining bones were intact except for some separation at the epiphyses.

The right and left feet and the premaxillary portion of the upper jaw of a junco (*Junco* sp., cf. *J. hyemalis*) were also present and were identified by me by direct comparison with appropriate skeletal material. Feathers associated with these bones were matted, partially decomposed, and discolored. The presence of fur and feathers gives additional support to statements made by Leffler (Bull. Kansas Ornithol. Soc., 17:9-10, 1966) and Bent (U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 167:274, 1937) that Rough-legged Hawks do not pluck their prey.

Leffler (op. cit.) discussed feeding habits of *B. lagopus* and presented the fourth published American record of bird remains in the stomach of this species. Bannerman (The birds of the British Isles, 5:138, 1956) indicated that about 12 per cent of the prey records for *B. lagopus* in Norway were avian. Additional records are presented by Witherby (Handbook of British birds, 3, 1948) and Dementiev (Birds of the Soviet Union, 1, 1966). The fifth American record reported in the present paper provides further data on the bird-eating habits of *B. lagopus*. Perhaps when sufficient stomachs of New World representatives of this species are examined, the presence of birds as food items will not be found to be unusual.—SANFORD R. LEFFLER, *Department of Zoology, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington 99163, 16 February 1970.*

Common Grackles prey on big brown bat.—On 4 July 1970, I took a subadult big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*) alive from a dog, and left it hanging in a bittersweet bush in my backyard, where the bat was found by three Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*). One grackle pulled the bat down onto the lawn. Another chased the first away, and pecked at the bat's chest. The first grackle then attempted to seize the bat, whereupon the second grackle flew out of the yard with the small bat carried easily in its beak.

Hawks, Mississippi Kites, and owls often feed on bats but, to my knowledge, no other birds except Blue Jays mentioned by Hoffmeister and Downes (Southwestern Nat., 9: 102-109, 1964), Allan (J. Mammal., 28:180, 1947), and Elwell (J. Mammal., 43:434, 1962), a Roadrunner reported by Herreid (Condor, 62:67, 1960), and these Common Grackles have been observed preying on bats.—CLAUDINE F. LONG, *Department of Biology, Wisconsin State University, Stevens Point, Wisconsin 54481, 8 July 1970.*

Herring Gull predation on common water snake in Lake Erie.—Many herpetologists have studied the common water snake, *Natrix sipedon*, in the western part of Lake Erie, for these snakes often differ from water snakes on the adjacent mainland of Ohio and Ontario. Water snakes from the islands of western Lake Erie tend to be