

FIELD NOTES FROM HERE AND THERE ___

NOW, *THIS* IS BIRDING!

On a South Shore Bird Club trip to the Quabbin Reservoir on December 7, 1997, we had a lot of great looks at fine birds. The adventure we remember the best began while three new dedicated birders were peering at the ground in a wet lowland. We asked, "What's up?" We heard a rustling of leaves, and then, with a burst, a raptor lifted from the ground — it was perfectly camouflaged, light brown on top, and *big*. We gently pursued the bird as it flew about 150 feet into a brushy, wet area. Someone said, "It landed," and we crept up to a vantage point. Then a member said, "I see it, I see it, it's a Barred Owl!" Everyone was excited; several people mentioned that it was a "lifer."

A member started hooting "Who cooks for you?" No response; we pursued further, and our excitement flourished. Then the bird flew again, headed for the nearby road. Someone said, "Now, *this* is birding." The shortest way to the road was up a twenty-foot cobblestone embankment, its rocks snow-covered, jagged, and slippery; all fourteen of us clambered over this, up to the top, through briars and brambles. The someone yelled, "The owl is flying!" and four birders were running down the road, keeping abreast of the owl with its powerful wingbeats. It landed in tall pines, we thought; we searched the woods for three more minutes, returned to the tall pines, and everyone saw it. Fantastic!

The owl only flew in short hops, we discovered, because it had a mouse in its talons. It was a great team effort getting this bird, and a lot of fun.

--Dan Furbish

A "GROUSEHAWK"

At home in Arlington Heights on her birthday, October 2, 1997, my wife Pat heard jays and other birds furiously calling, mobbing something — maybe a hawk or an owl. Or possibly our cat, Misty (we have to confess we have a cat, a contradiction of sorts, though of course he's a bird-lover too . . . just more lethal). As Pat related it to me later, she slipped out the door, glasses in hand, to have a look. The object of the mobbing was low down in a red cedar on the border of our backyard. A whirr of wings, and the action shifted to the next street. Following around, Pat finally caught a glimpse of the object, a large, brown bird with a small, crested head — a Ruffed Grouse! When she approached a step closer, off went the grouse again, apparently more afraid of her than of the mobbing birds (hunting season, perhaps). A new bird for our backyard list (#65), and we imagine a new bird for the resident jays and mockingbird, for they seemed to identify it as a hawk or an owl.

--Oakes Plimpton