

SONG SPARROW RETURNS HATCH THREE BROODS

By G. Hapgood Parks

We were knee deep in Song Sparrows at Monhonon's Cove Point in Maine during this summer of 1968.

Contributing to the ample population were Cluck Duck (30-149033), who returned for his fifth summer with us, and his mate (102-146474) who returned for her second season at the Point. These two birds mated, also, in 1967 and raised two broods. This past spring's unusually early successful conquest of winter and the exceptionally long spell of fine weather that persisted during the nesting season apparently inspired them no end, for they responded with three broods in three different nests.

Last year their nesting territory lay near the frog-pond, just beyond a wave-gouged gully, although Cluck Duck controlled the feeding area about our cabin for his family. This year a pair of aggressive newcomers took over the frog-pond area, so Cluck Duck moved his nest-building into the feeding territory.

1. When we opened our cabin on June 6 the first nest was already occupied. We were able to watch its location from an east window, for the nest had been built on the ground just 10 feet east of the cabin wall and snugly hidden at the base of an inclined bayberry bush. Less than 30 feet beyond it was a bare ledge where the sea broke constantly, but the nest was protected from the salty spray by a tangle of bayberry bushes, sugar-plum trees, alders and young spruces. How many young came from this nesting we shall never know, for they left the nest some time during the period between June 12 and 20 while we were "chasing" Evening Grosbeaks in New Brunswick. Upon our return Cluck Duck was feeding a single youngster which we trapped and banded (102-146593) on June 26. We have no evidence that any of our other bandees belong to this brood.

2. The second nest was located 20½ feet SSW from the southwest corner of the cabin porch and about 20 feet from a bare sea-washed ledge. It, too, was built on the ground, at the base of a wild-rose bush. Additional protection was offered by other wild-rose bushes, a thick growth of brakes, wild sarsaparilla plants and wild asters, plus sugar-plum trees and scrubby young spruces. Three youngsters vacated this nest on July 16, leaving behind them one infertile egg. The trio was captured and they now wear bands 102-146606, -609 and -610.

We were puzzled when we watched Cluck Duck's second brood being weaned more abruptly than usual. Nor did he assume the attitude of retreating timidity which, in previous seasons, had characterized his behavior during the period of post nuptial molt that followed the weaning of the second brood. In fact, his plumage showed no indication that a molt was occurring.

It was probably because our parental Song Sparrows had spent so much time among the boughs of the spruces collecting insects and insect larvae that their secretive new-nest building escaped us. Anyhow, it was not until August 14 that we awakened to the fact that a third nest had been built and a third brood was already being fed therein.

3. The third nest was built in a scrubby, mature, white spruce tree which stands three feet west of the northwest corner of our cabin. The nest was found 5½ feet from the tree trunk on a horizontal limb extending northwestward at a point 10-¾ feet above the ground and was well protected from above by the thickly massed needles of the next higher bough. The young left this nest at dawn on August 21. The brood consisted of at least three youngsters, one of which became Cluck Duck's special ward. These two birds remained together and were still accompanying each other in the proximity of the cabin when we closed it for the season on September 30. This youngster was marked with band 105-130376. Cluck Duck's mate spirited the remainder of the brood away into the forest so soon after they left the nest that none was captured.

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The exterior structure of each of the three nests was coarse straw, an abundance of which had been deposited by the tide along the nearby shore. The lining of each consisted of fine grasses.

Nests 1 and 2 were almost identical in shape and size although #1 was more loosely constructed and contained considerably less building material. Each had an outside diameter of 4½ inches while its cup measured 2 inches across and 2 inches deep. Tree-built #3 was a more imposing structure, considerably larger and much more firmly put together. Its outside diameter measured 6 inches; its cup had an inside diameter of 2½ inches and a depth of 2 inches.

The behavior of Cluck Duck, his mate, and their maturing offspring became an interestingly complicated backyard study as the summer waned. Then, when the frog-pond aggregation attempted to extend their "takeover" to include Cluck Duck's feeding territory, also, only a professional motion-picture setup could have recorded the hectic action adequately to describe it. We were, indeed, knee deep in Song Sparrows at Monhonon's Cove Point this summer.

(If you have been given cause to wonder, let it be explained that Cluck Duck received his unique appellation because of his persistently repeated "cluck"-like utterance. This "cluck" varies markedly in timbre and in amplitude according to Cluck Duck's mood and according to the environmental situation existing at the moment. It serves as a constant note of caution to his offspring when the presence of humans dictates such instruction. It becomes a note of appeal to such humans as have been known to have provided food, but who have allowed the supply of edibles

to become depleted. It amplifies to a sharp note of warning at the discovery of a proximate predator. It becomes calmly conversational when all is well in Cluck Duck's world.)

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WARBLER RETURNS AT ELDORA, NEW JERSEY

By C. Brooke Worth

In EBBA News for Sept.-Oct. 1967, I reported on warbler banding at Eldora, N.J., during the previous spring. In 1968 I again attempted to net warblers in my woods, though on a diminished scale. In addition I exploited two nets extending into the edge of my salt meadows. The distribution of net-days in the two years was as follows:

	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>
Forest	177	111
Meadows	<u>13</u>	<u>34</u>
Total	190	145

Thus in 1968, nets were in operation of 76 per cent as long as in 1967. However, the warbler catch was proportionately far smaller, the 17 birds of 1968 representing only 16 per cent as many as 1967's 105 birds. After making allowance for differences in the total net-times in the two years, it appears as if the 1968 warbler flight was only one-fifth as strong as in 1967.