

## GENERAL NOTES

**American Redstart Assists at Yellow Warbler Nest.**—In spring 1977, near Goose Creek on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest in northeastern Oregon, I observed an adult (apparently >1 year old, see Ficken and Ficken, *Wilson Bull.*, **79**: 188–199, 1967) male American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*) acting as a “nest helper” to a pair of Yellow Warblers (*Dendroica petechia*). Skutch (*Condor*, **63**: 198–226, 1961) reviewed numerous examples of interspecific interactions of this kind and reported that relations between helpers and parent birds ranged from cooperation to open conflict. However, none of the examples given described a helper that reacted differently toward the male and female of a given pair of parent birds. In the interaction reported here, the redstart accepted the presence of, and cooperated with, the female Yellow Warbler but was agonistic toward the male Yellow Warbler and attempted to take over his duties at the nest.

On 1 June, the female Yellow Warbler was constructing a nest 2.1 m above the ground in a black hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii*) shrub. On 5 June, the nest held 1 egg; on 16 June 5 eggs were present, and the female was incubating. A male Yellow Warbler (assumed to be her mate) was singing within 20 m of the nest on both of these dates. By 23 June, the eggs had hatched and while I was watching the male Yellow Warbler feed the nestlings, a male American Redstart flew to the nest and fed the brooding female Yellow Warbler. In a 30-min period, the redstart and the male Yellow Warbler each returned six times to the nest with food. The redstart most often fed the brooding female (an interspecific interaction that Skutch classed as rare) but twice fed the nestlings; the male Yellow Warbler most often fed the nestlings. On one occasion when both males were at the nest, the redstart chased the male Yellow Warbler away.

Observations on 27 June clearly indicated that the redstart was the dominant male near the nest. In a 30-min period, the redstart fed the nestlings six times and between foraging bouts sang from a perch above the nest. In the same period, the male Yellow Warbler made five attempts to feed the nestlings, but was successful only twice because the redstart persistently chased him away. During these interactions, the female Yellow Warbler foraged near the nest, often within 2 m of the redstart. When I returned to the nest on 5 July, it was empty, but I saw both juvenile and adult (a male and female) Yellow Warblers near the nest. I did not see the redstart.

Skutch stated that if parent birds lose their nestlings before the drive to feed young birds is exhausted, they may feed a neighbor's offspring as an outlet for this parental urge. This statement suggests a potential explanation for the unusual behavior of the American Redstart, but since the history and breeding status of the redstart are unknown, such an explanation is purely speculative.

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**An Invalid Record of a 14-year-old Banded Bald Eagle.**—The purpose of this note is to call attention to an invalid longevity record of a banded Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and to warn of possible pitfalls of uncritical use of band recovery data in longevity studies.

While analyzing band recovery data for a paper on migratory movements of Bald Eagles, I came across a recovery report for band no. 448-12921. According to the printout received from the Bird Banding Laboratory this band was placed on a nestling in Florida on 01/14/46 by the late Charles L. Broley, and the bird was reported shot (How Obtained Code: 01) on the Niagara Peninsula, near St. Catherines, Ontario. The date was given as 02/73/60 (Unknown Date Code: 73 = date or postmark of letter + 50), meaning that the letter reporting the band was dated or postmarked 23 February 1960. This was evidently

taken to indicate that this bird had lived 14 years. Although Broley (*Wilson Bull.*, 59: 3–20, 1947) showed that immature Florida Bald Eagles migrate north in spring and return in early fall, similar movements by adults are less well documented. I was therefore especially interested in the above record indicating the presence of a Florida-raised eagle in the Great Lakes region in February, at a time when Florida eagles are breeding! Because Broley had also banded this species in eastern Ontario (Broley, M. J., "Eagle Man," New York, Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1952), I considered the possibility that some portion of this record might be in error, and that this bird might have been banded in Ontario rather than in Florida. A check of the original banding schedule showed that band no. 448-12921 was indeed used in Florida. However, examination of the original letter reporting this band to the Bird Banding Laboratory revealed that it had been taken off an eagle shot near St. Catherines, Ontario, "some few years ago" and had been in the possession of the finder for an unknown period of time before it was finally reported. This recovery is therefore of no value for determination of longevity or of migratory movements of adults. Since this record of an apparent 14-year-old banded Bald Eagle has found its way into reference books (e.g., Brown and Amadon, "Eagles, Hawks, and Falcons of the World," New York, McGraw-Hill, 1968, p. 134) and has been cited elsewhere (e.g., Beebe, Field Studies of the Falconiformes of British Columbia, *B. C. Prov. Mus. Occas. Paper Ser.* No. 17, Victoria, 1974, p. 29), this note of correction is in order.

Caution is also advised in the use of band recoveries with How Obtained Code 98 ("band or band number only obtained"). Such records are of no use for longevity determinations or for survivorship studies because they contain no definite information on the time of death. Although this fact should be quite obvious, it is sometimes overlooked in practice. For example, in his review of longevity of banded birds, Kennard (*Bird-Banding*, 46: 55–73, 1975) lists longevity records based on Code 98 recoveries for no fewer than 15 species.

I wish to thank the staff of the Bird Banding Laboratory for help with locating the needed documents for checking the banding and recovery information, and J. J. Hickey for critical advice.—SERGEJ POSTUPALSKY, *Department of Wildlife Ecology, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706*. Received 1 December 1978, accepted 8 February 1979.

**Great Blue Heron Attacks Horned Grebe.**—Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*) and the similar Grey Heron (*A. cinerea*) sometimes capture prey that are too large to be swallowed and are abandoned (pers. obs.; Lowe, 1954; Cook, 1978). Here, I describe the capture and abandonment of a Horned Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*) by a Great Blue Heron.

At the Yaquina estuary on the central Oregon coast on 20 December 1976, I was observing a Great Blue Heron on a feeding territory (Bayer, 1978) when the heron struck at and captured between its mandibles a Horned Grebe. The grebe shook loose, dropped to the mud, and began running. The heron again captured the grebe, which again shook loose, dropped to the mud, ran to the water, swam away, and then dove. The encounter between the heron and the grebe lasted less than one minute.

Although Great Blue Herons occasionally prey on birds smaller than Horned Grebes (see review in Kushlan, 1978), this was my only observation of a Great Blue Heron capturing a bird in over 1,000 hr of observations of foraging herons at the Yaquina. Further, I have examined over 2,000 individual heron prey at a Yaquina heronry without finding feathers in heron pellets or whole birds.

A Horned Grebe would be a large prey item for a Great Blue Heron. Body widths of Horned Grebes are not available, but the width can be estimated from stuffed specimens. The body widths of five specimens from the Oregon State University Museum of Natural History ranged from 7.0–7.8 cm. This is approximately the same width as the width of a starry flounder (*Platichthys stellatus*) (7.5 cm) abandoned by an adult heron after it had tried several times unsuccessfully to swallow the flounder (pers. obs.). This flounder and other flounders abandoned by herons at the Yaquina estuary appeared to be abandoned because they were too wide to be swallowed.

The heron's attack on the grebe thus appears to be a case of attempted predation on an inappropriate (i.e., too large) prey item. The adult heron was not successful in subduing