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## SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF RED-CKOKADED WOODPECKER CAVITY TREES IN GEORGIA

Harley Kemp Jones, Jr., and Frederick T. Ott

The purpose of this study was to determine characteristics of cavity trees used by the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker, *Dendrocopos borealis*. This bird is listed as an endangered species in the "Redbook" of the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife U.S.D.I., Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Rare and Endangered Fish and Wildlife of the United States. Res. Publ. 34, 1968 (Baker, 1971).

The Red-Cockaded Woodpecker is one of the most habitat specific of the North American woodpeckers. It almost exclusively uses pine trees whose heartwood has been broken down by the Red Heart disease — *Fomes pini* (Ligon, 1971). The cavity trees, indicators of Red-Cockaded habitation, are identified by resin glazing on the outside of the trunk. Often the cavities are located near the center of the glaze as the bird strives to maintain a sap flow near the cavity, but they also use resin wells about and around the trunk to keep up sap flow. This species normally will not make or maintain a cavity in a tree in which the sap has stopped flowing (Ligon, 1970, 1971; Dennis, 1971). These cavities, used both for nesting and dens, are specific traits of this species and can be used in identifying the occupied habitat of the bird.

The Red-Cockaded woodpecker is also gregarious and forms colonies using members of the colony as "helpers" in feeding fledglings (Ligon, 1970, 1971; Baker, 1971; Beckett, 1971). For this study, a colony was considered to be one or more active cavity trees in a common area.

## METHODS

Trees were identified by the resin glaze and cavities that had been pecked free of nearby bark. We made no determination of active use of individual cavities as we were interested in the characteristics that caused the tree to be used initially, but all colonies in our study were determined to be active.



The following information was taken from cavity trees: age, tree height, diameter at breast height, number, height, and direction of cavities, and estimated undercover height. An increment bore was used to determine the tree age. We used both an Abney level and a transit to determine the heights. A hand compass was used to determine the direction of the cavities on an eight-axis basis. The height of the undercover was a subjective estimate.

In order to determine if there were any differences in the areas of this study and the species of pines used for cavities, our data were subjected to statistical analysis using a pooled *t*-test in an attempt to determine if, at the 95% confidence level, there were any differences in the means of the characteristics we studied.

Three different areas of Georgia were surveyed. These were the Fort Benning Military Reservation in Muscogee and Chattahoochee counties in the west central part of the state, with pine forests, which included longleaf, (*Pinus palustris*), shortleaf, (*P. echinata*) and loblolly (*P. taeda*). Most of this area has controlled burning management. The second area studied was in middle Georgia at Rock Eagle 4-H Center in Putnam County, where colonies were located in a campground and on a roadside. The pine trees in this area are predominantly shortleaf and loblolly pines. The third and smallest area was on private property in Emanuel County in the southeastern part of the state. This pine forest consisted of longleaf, loblolly and slash pines (*P. elliotii*).

## RESULTS

The results of our study are collected into four groups of related topics: direction of the cavities; the means of characteristics for all samples, for the Fort Benning and Rock Eagle Study Areas, and for the three species of trees found in our samples.

A total of 119 cavities was used in the study; of these 71% had a westerly exposure (Table 1), southwesterly exposure was next most common (23%), while northerly direction was least frequent.

These data support the findings of Dennis (1971) in South Carolina where 73.5% of 362 trees had westerly exposed cavities, in north central Florida where 51.6% of 31 cavity trees had a westerly cavity exposure, and in Virginia and North Carolina where 87.8% of 36 cavity trees had a westerly exposed cavity. Baker (1971) reports that at Tall Timbers Research Station, Tallahassee, Florida, of 186 cavity trees, 69% of the cavities had a westerly exposure. Hopkins and Lynn

(1971) in South Carolina report that 59% of 558 cavity trees had westerly exposed cavities. Clearly the Georgia colonies follow the same pattern of cavity direction of the species in other southeastern states.

**Table 1.** Exposure of Red Cockaded Woodpecker Cavities Used In This Study

Direction	Sample Size	% of Total
NW	5 Trees	4%
N	7	6%
NE	1	1%
E	10	8%
SE	9	8%
S	7	6%
SW	27	23%
W	53	44%

A total of 69 cavity trees was studied in detail (Table 2). Most trees were mature and tall. The diameters at breast height averaged 17 inches. Cavities were located about 24 feet above ground and there were 1.7 cavities per tree.

**Table 2.** Mean Characteristics of All Cavity Trees Used In This Study - 95% Confidence Interval

	Number	Range	Mean	Confidence Interval
Tree Age	57	45-145	79.4	± 4.56
Height (feet)	69	56-113	81.0	± 0.99
Diameter (in. DBH)	69	8.1-24.5	17.3	± 0.74
Cavity (feet) Height	119	6-49	24.0	± 1.40
Cavities/Tree	119	1-7	1.7	± 0.16

There appears to be considerable consistency in the character of cavity trees in different locations (Table 3). For example, at Fort Benning and at Rock Eagle, mean tree age and diameter, along with mean number of cavities/tree were not found to be different. However, mean tree height and mean cavity height were found not to be equal by the pooled *t*-test comparison.



**Table 3.** Comparison of Characteristics of Cavity Trees Found At Rock Eagle and Ft. Benning - 95% Confidence Level

					Confidence
		Number	Range	Mean	Interval
Tree Age**	Rock Eagle	17	65-89	76.8	± 3.82
	Ft. Benning	48	45-142	76.3	± 5.52
Height*	Rock Eagle	17	80-113	91.0	± 6.15
	Ft. Benning	50	56-112	79.9	± 3.36
Diameter*	Rock Eagle	17	12.1-23.5	18.1	± 1.59
	Ft. Benning	50	8.1-24.5	17.1	± 0.87
Cavity	Rock Eagle	25	14-26	20.0	± 1.61
Height*	Ft. Benning	88	6-49	26.3	± 1.71
Cavities/	Rock Eagle	25	1-7	1.5	± 0.49
Tree**	Ft. Benning	88	1-7	1.8	± 0.17

Pooled t-test -  $H_0: \bar{X}_1 = \bar{X}_2$ ,  $H_1: \bar{X}_1 \neq \bar{X}_2$

\* Reject  $H_0$ ; we conclude that there is a difference in the means of the samples.

\*\* Cannot reject  $H_0$ ; from our data, we cannot say there is a difference of the means of the samples.

Further, the commonality of tree character seems not to depend upon species of tree (Table 4).

Mean tree ages were not found to be different in the longleaf to shortleaf pooled t-test comparisons, but in the longleaf-loblolly comparison the hypothesis of equality was rejected indicating a difference. The same findings are also true in the tree height comparison. Mean tree diameter and mean cavity height were found not to be different in all three comparisons. Only the longleaf to shortleaf comparison was found not to be different in the mean cavities per tree data.

These results have shown that the cavity placement of the Red-Cockaded woodpecker and the type of pine tree where cavities are located is relatively constant. Some deviation does occur. For example, we encountered on Fort Benning three small longleaf pines with diameters of only about 8 inches. In all three cases the cavities were unusually low, one as low as 6 feet, and yet all of the cavities appeared to be in active use. However, the overall pattern is consistent. Clearly this species displays strong preference for a particular type of nesting site.

**Table 4.** Comparison of Cavity Tree Characteristics of Three Species of Pines in this Study with a 95% Confidence Level

		Number	Range	Mean	Confidence Interval	Pooled t-test Comparison
Tree Age	Longleaf	26	45-145	85.7	± 9.83	Long Leaf Loblolly*
	Loblolly	37	50-90	71.1	± 3.63	Long Leaf Shortleaf**
	Shortleaf	4	61-91	76.7	± 24.09	Loblolly Shortleaf**
Height	Longleaf	28	56-97	75.3	± 4.26	Longleaf Loblolly*
	Loblolly	37	57-113	87.6	± 4.31	Longleaf Shortleaf**
	Shortleaf	4	74-87	81.7	± 10.48	Loblolly Shortleaf**
Diameter	Longleaf	28	8.1-24.5	17.5	± 1.42	Longleaf Loblolly**
	Loblolly	37	11.8-23.5	17.6	± 0.91	Longleaf Shortleaf**
	Shortleaf	4	16.0-20.0	17.1	± 3.67	Loblolly Shortleaf**
Cavity Height	Longleaf	55	6-49	25.5	± 2.19	Longleaf Loblolly**
	Loblolly	56	12-43	24.0	± 1.83	Longleaf Shortleaf**
	Shortleaf	8	10-40	26.5	± 9.73	Loblolly Shortleaf**
Cavities/Tree	Longleaf	55	1-7	2.0	± 0.25	Longleaf Loblolly*
	Loblolly	56	1-7	1.5	± 0.24	Longleaf Shortleaf**
	Shortleaf	8	1-3	2.0	± 0.45	Loblolly Shortleaf*

Pool t-Test -  $H_0: \bar{X}_1 = \bar{X}_2$ ,  $H_1: \bar{X}_1 \neq \bar{X}_2$

\* Reject  $H_0$ ; we conclude that there is a difference in the means of the samples

\*\* Cannot reject  $H_0$ ; from our data, we cannot say there is a difference of the means of samples



We might speculate about the location and direction of cavities of this species. Weather patterns in the southeast are predominately westerly, winds commonly come from west to east, or southwest to northeast. Apparently cavities are built to face into the wind. This direction might provide aeration of the cavity or prolonged exposure to the heat of the sun. Obviously cavities must be large enough to accommodate the bird, thus limiting the size of tree that can be used for nesting. Apparently the minimum tree size is near eight inches and in mature trees the cavity height normally occurs well above the understory. Possibly smaller trees are occasionally used for nesting because of lack of suitable larger trees infected with red heart disease that have low understory. If this speculation is correct, then cavity location is a function of tree diameter, prevailing winds, and understory height.

### CONCLUSIONS

1. Cavities are normally made in a west or southwest direction.
2. Cavity trees are most prevalent in pine stands with open understory. The areas are also frequently burned or artificially maintained open.
3. The overall mean cavity tree age appears to be about 76 years old, using trees in this study (Table 4).

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to acknowledge the assistance given us in our study. Frank Golley, Kermit Hutcheson and M. A. Stephens helped us in preparation and interpretation of our data.

Frank Fitch and Robert Shurtleff were instrumental in our locating study areas and providing help in data compilation.

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### NOTES FROM ATLANTA — 1971 AND 1972

Thomas W. French

During the spring and fall of 1971 and 1972 the author visited the Equitable Building and the Trust Company of Georgia Building in downtown Atlanta almost daily. During this period 1,296 birds of 83 species were found dead. The following list includes some of the more interesting records from these two buildings plus a few records from other localities in Atlanta. The status of each species is taken from "Occurrence Extremes of Birds of the Atlanta, Georgia, Region" com-



piled by Griffin and Parks, 1955. The common names and order follow the fifth edition of the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list (1957). Examples of each species mentioned were made into study skins and are in the collection at Georgia State University. The catalogue numbers of these species are given in parentheses at the end of each discussion.

Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*) - This species is considered a rare transient in the Atlanta area. One bird was picked up at the Trust Company Building on October 7, 1971, and the skeleton of another bird was found after it hit the Habersham Apartments on Pharr Court in N.W. Atlanta during the same migration. I also have a specimen that hit the Georgia State University Library on October 2, 1968. There seem to be only three other published records and only a few unpublished records of this species in the Atlanta area. The published records include a bird at the South River on November 2, 1946 (Burleigh, 1958), a bird that struck a utility wire on September 19, 1950 (Parks, 1951), and a pair breeding in a small swamp in June, 1970 (Einhorn, 1971). (Nos. 110 and 555)

Short-billed Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus platensis*) - This bird is thought to be a rare transient in the Atlanta area, but individuals were found dead on fifteen occasions and seen alive on several others during the past two years. Three birds were picked up on October 2 and 6, 1971; two on October 7 and 8, 1972; three on October 9, 1972, and one on October 10 and 15, 1972. It is interesting to note that Griffin and Parks (1955) give November 6, 1932, and May 11, 1917, as occurrence extremes for this species and all of the above records were made during the month of October. It is also interesting to note that the Long-billed Marsh Wren (*Telmatodytes palustris*), which is said to be an uncommon transient, only occurred on four occasions (September 13, 1971; September 30, 1971; October 7, 1971, and October 8, 1972). The House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*), which is an uncommon winter resident, was found dead on only seven occasions (one bird on April 19, 1972; three birds on October 1, 1972; and single birds on October 13, 1972; October 17, 1971; and October 28, 1972). The House Wren has, however, been seen alive in Trusco Park on numerous occasions between October 19 and December 4 (Fink, 1970, and Fink and French, 1971). (House Wren - Nos. 558, 675, 696, 709, and 710; Long-billed Marsh Wren - Nos. 542 and 556; Short-billed Marsh Wren Nos. 190, 219, 681, and 682)

Philadelphia Vireo (*Vireo philadelphicus*) - This bird is a rare fall transient throughout the state and in the Atlanta area there seem to be about fifteen published records from sources other than the Equitable Building. At the Equitable Building twelve birds were killed in 1970, two on September 28 and ten on September 29 (Fink and French, 1971). During the fall of 1971 no birds of this species were found, but ten were found in 1972. One bird was picked up on September 19, two on October 1, three on October 6, one on October 7, two on October 9 and one on October 10 (Nos. 388, 449, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 493, 676, 683, 684, and 690).

Tennessee Warbler (*Vermivora peregrina*) - This species is abundant in the fall, but is a rare spring transient. I have one record of a female killed on May 10, 1972 (No. 624).

Nashville Warbler (*Vermivora ruficapilla*) - A rare transient that was first collected in Georgia in Atlanta on October 15, 1945 (Burleigh, 1958). There are still less than ten published records for the Atlanta area. My records include a single male found in the spring on April 27, 1971, and four fall specimens: a male found on October 9, 1972, and females found on October 7, 1971 and 1972, and October 16, 1972. This species seems to be much less common during the spring, being first recorded in Atlanta on April 23, 1956 (Parks, 1956) (Nos. 554, 467, 691 and 699).

Cape May Warbler (*Dendroica tigrina*) - This species is a common spring transient, but is considered a rare fall transient. I have records of single birds on September 11, 1972, and October 1, 1972; two birds on October 6, 1972, and another single bird on October 9, 1972. My previous records include four birds on September 28, 1970, and three birds on the following day (Fink and French, 1971) (Nos. 662, 685, 686 and 692).

Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*) - An uncommon but regular transient in Atlanta. There are numerous records of this warbler in Atlanta, but a female that I picked up on September 22, 1971, seems to be a late fall record for this area. There is, however, a published record of this species in Macon on September 30, 1932 (Burleigh, 1958) (No. 549).

Black-poll Warbler (*Dendroica striata*) - A common spring transient but rare fall transient. I have only one record of this bird in the fall, an immature bird picked up on October 13, 1972 (No. 694).



Northern Waterthrush (*Seiurus noveboracensis*) - I have found this common transient on eleven occasions in the past two years, but only in the fall. One specimen, a bird picked up on October 10, 1971, differs from all the rest by its complete absence of yellow on the throat and breast. This specimen appears to be a Sooty Northern Waterthrush, *S. noveboracensis linnaeus*, which is a far western race that Burleigh considers of casual occurrence in Georgia (No. 557).

Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*) - An uncommon spring transient that I have found only twice. On May 16, 1972, I picked up a male and on May 18, 1972, found a female (Nos. 627 and 630).

Wilson's Warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla*) - This is a rare transient that I have never picked up or seen in downtown Atlanta. It has, however, been seen in the Atlanta area more than a dozen times by other observers. I do have a specimen of this warbler that was given to me by an eleven-year-old boy who shot it with a pellet gun on September 19, 1972. The bird is a male and was first seen in heavy brush along the bank of Peachtree Creek in N.W. Atlanta (No. 653).

Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) - An uncommon and erratic summer resident that in recent years has also been found wintering around Atlanta (Einhorn, 1969). The first fall records in this area were made on September 27, 1955, when two birds were killed at the WSB television tower and eight birds were killed around a ceilometer at the Atlanta Airport (Griffin, 1956). This bird has since been seen in downtown Atlanta in the fall at Trusco Park (Fink, 1970). All of my records are of birds picked up at the Equitable Building on September 12, 1971 (two birds), October 5, 1971, and October 15, 1972 (Nos. 553, 531 and 532).

Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) - This species is a common winter resident and has been found dead on many occasions. The earliest published fall record that I can find for the Atlanta area is October 1, 1938 (Griffin and Parks, 1955). A specimen that I found on September 16, 1972, would seem to be an early record, but Mike Einhorn has an unpublished sight record for September 12, 1970, and another for September 19, 1971 (No. 664).

Lincoln Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolni*) - A rare winter resident that was picked up by Dick Parks at the Equitable Building on October 15, 1972. This species has previously been seen in downtown Atlanta at Trusco Park on several occasions between October 25, 1970, and

November 30, 1969, and on April 27, 1970 (Fink, 1969; Fink, 1970) (No. 698).

I would like to thank Dick Parks and Charlene Beard for the early morning trips that they made to the Equitable and Trust Company Buildings on several occasions when I was out of town. All of the specimens mentioned in this paper which were found on October 7, 8, and 15, 1972, were picked up by Dick Parks.

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#### RECENT CHANGES IN COMMON NAMES OF BIRDS

J. Fred Denton

In the Thirty-second Supplement To The American Ornithologists Union Check-list of North American Birds, *The Auk* 90: 411-419, April, 1973, there are presented the first changes in bird names accepted by the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature since the publication of the A. O. U. "Check-list of North American Birds" (1957, fifth ed.). The majority of the changes pertain to the scientific names of species and subspecies. Such changes were made for purely nomenclatural reasons or for taxonomic reasons. Examples are 16 changes resulting from dropping the hyphen from compound names and the omission of diaereses and other marks. Seventeen changes were made in the endings of specific names to obtain agreement in gender with generic names. The greatest number of changes, sixty-one, resulted from the lumping or merging of genera and species. Such



changes are difficult to remember and should be looked up when writing papers or notes. In most instances English or common names are not affected. However, in some cases where the common names are affected the changes are pointed out.

Reasons given for making changes in English or common names are as follows: 1) to supply names for new superspecies resulting from lumping; 2) to supply specific modifiers where additional species with the same name will be included in the Check-list area; 3) to facilitate conformity with international usage; 4) to avoid misleading taxonomic implications; and 5) to substitute for the modifier "common" a more meaningful modifier.

Changes in common names not resulting from taxonomic changes are: Fulmar changed to Northern Fulmar, Leach's Petrel to Leach's Storm Petrel, Wilson's Petrel to Wilson's Storm Petrel, Common Egret to Great Egret, Wood Ibis to Wood Stork, Shoveler to Northern Shoveler, Common Scoter to Black Scoter, Pigeon Hawk to Merlin, Sparrow Hawk to American Kestrel, Upland Plover to Upland Sandpiper, Knot to Red Knot, Catbird to Gray Catbird, and Yellowthroat to Common Yellowthroat.

As a result of merging, 21 species were lost from the Check-list and new names proposed for some of the resulting complexes. These are summarized below.

- Great White Heron merged as a subspecies of the Great Blue Heron and becomes a white morph of it.
- Blue Goose merged with the Snow Goose and becomes a blue morph of it.
- Green-winged Teal merged as a subspecies of the Common Teal and becomes the American Green-winged Teal.
- Harlan's Hawk lumped as a subspecies of the Red-tailed Hawk and will be called Red-tailed Hawk.
- The Red-shafted and Gilded Flickers are merged as subspecies of the Yellow-shafted Flicker and the complex becomes Common Flicker.
- The Black-eared Bushtit is merged with the Common Bushtit and becomes Bushtit.
- The San Lucas Robin is merged as a subspecies of the Robin and becomes the American Robin.
- The Socorro Warbler is merged with the Olive-backed Warbler and becomes the Tropical Parula Warbler; our Parula becomes the Northern Parula.

Audubon's Warbler is merged as a subspecies of the Myrtle Warbler and the new name is Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Bullock's Oriole is merged as a subspecies of the Baltimore Oriole and the complex becomes the Northern Oriole.

The White-winged, Oregon and Guadalupe Juncos are merged as subspecies of the Slate-colored Junco and the complex becomes the Dark-eyed Junco.

Baird's Junco is merged as a subspecies of the Mexican Junco and the new name is Yellow-eyed Junco.

The Trail's Flycatcher populations were divided into two species and the name Alder Flycatcher (*Empidonax alnorum*) given to the northern population and Willow Flycatcher (*E. traillii*) to the more southern and western population.

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*Ed. Note: It will be greatly appreciated if all persons submitting material for publication in The Oriole will use the new names in the future.*



## GENERAL NOTES

**SPOTTED SANDPIPERS ALONG THE CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER NEAR COLUMBUS, GEORGIA** — Available local records reveal only two winter sightings of a Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*), both in December, in the 15 years before 1969; therefore, I was surprised when James Miller reported one from Bartlett's Ferry Dam on Jan. 11, 1969. There were no further sightings that winter. One year later on Jan. 18, 1970, he led me atop the dam to a point about two thirds of the way to the Alabama side from which vantage we could look down with binoculars upon an alcove of soil some 70 feet below. There, feeding placidly, was a Spotted Sandpiper. No bird was found there the following year on the 1970 Christmas count. But a year later on Dec. 27, 1971, Miller not only found one there, but another at Goat Rock Dam three miles downriver in a similar situation. During this past Christmas season, 1972, none could be found. We surmised that the furor of water over the dam after recent heavy rains kept them away. How commonly, and how far north may these birds be found in winter?

L. A. Wells, 322 Cascade Road, Columbus, Ga. 31904

**VERMILLION FLYCATCHER IN WARE CO., GA.**—In Georgia, the Vermillion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) is regarded as an accidental winter visitor to the southern part of the state (Burleigh, T. D., 1958, Georgia Birds, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Okla.). Burleigh (1958: 387-388) described a sighting near Albany (Dougherty Co.) in December, 1949, and January, 1950, and a specimen that was collected west of Tifton on December 31, 1949.

On the morning of January 13, 1973, I investigated a report by Mr. Harry Johnson, the concessioner at the Suwannee Canal Recreation Area, of an unusual flycatcher in Chesser Prairie at the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. I observed the bird for a period of approximately 20 minutes near the Chesser Prairie boat run, about ¼ mile south of the Suwannee Canal. The bird exhibited typical flycatcher-type feeding habits as it flew from the top of a low bush on one "battery" to another "battery." The bird was carefully observed from a boat through 8 x 40 binoculars; I was able to paddle within 20 feet of the flycatcher. The under-tail coverts were reddish-pink and the white breast was narrowly streaked. It was about the size of a wood pewee. On

the same morning the bird had been observed by Mr. and Mrs. David Green of Portsmouth, Virginia. They agreed with me that it was a Vermillion Flycatcher.

Ronald L. Fowler, Assistant Refuge Manager, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, P.O. Box 117, Waycross, Ga. 31501

**FURTHER SIGHTINGS OF THE EVENING GROSBEAK ON SAPELO ISLAND** — Baker and Neel (1969), in presenting a history of the sightings of the Evening Grosbeak (*Hesperiphona vespertina*) in Georgia, reported the first significant penetration of the Evening Grosbeak into the Coastal Plain of Georgia during the winter of 1968-1969. During this season six Evening Grosbeaks were sighted on Sapelo Island during the annual Christmas Bird Count.

Flocks of Evening Grosbeaks were observed by the author on Sapelo Island during February and March, 1973. On 2 February at 1300 EST a flock of five males and seven females was observed, and a flock of eight males and ten females was sighted on 9 February at 0930 EST. Five males and six females were observed at 0830 EST on 10 March. On all three occasions the birds were either perched in a solitary Sugarberry (*Centis laevigata* Willd.) or foraging on the ground beneath this tree, which is located near the University of Georgia Marine Institute on the southeastern corner of the island. Baker and Neel (1969) reported Sugarberry seeds as a food utilized by Evening Grosbeaks in Georgia.

Since the United States Weather Bureau has a weather recording station very near to where the Evening Grosbeaks were sighted, the weather reports (tabulated by Owen M. Ulmer of the Marine Institute) were consulted for the days the birds were sighted. A remarkable consistency in one aspect of the weather was discovered. From 1 February 1700 EST to 2 February 1700 EST, 1.60 inches of rainfall were collected; while from 8 February 1700 EST to 9 February 1700 EST, 1.34 inches of rainfall were recorded. The weekend of 9 February through 11 February was characterized by a storm which brought heavy rains, wind speeds up to 53 mph, and a measurable amount of snowfall. The 1 February-2 February and 8 February-9 February intervals represented the two twenty-four hour intervals in February during which the greatest amount of rainfall was recorded. The rainfall on 2 February ceased at 1230 EST, and by the time of the observation the sun had broken through the clouds. At the time of the 9 February observation a slight drizzle was falling.



During the three days preceding the 10 March sighting of the Grosbeaks, 4.97 inches of rainfall were collected. The nearly continuous rainfall ceased by approximately 0500 EST on 10 March; at the time of observation the sky was completely overcast with stratus clouds.

Five male and five female Evening Grosbeaks were observed on 9 March at 0830 EST by Charles and Jeannette Durant on the southwestern corner of the island at a bird feeder. Sightings of Evening Grosbeaks on the north end of the island were made in early February and early March by various observers.

Apparently one or more flocks wintering on the nearby mainland reacted to the onset of adverse weather conditions by moving to Sapelo. A reasonable estimate for the length of these visits would appear to be on the order of a week or more. Why the Evening Grosbeaks appeared to have chosen to feed at the exposed Sugarberry near or just after the termination of heavy rainfall may be explained by the following observations and speculations.

Single Loggerhead Shrikes (*Lanius excubitor*) have been observed in this very Sugarberry on a regular basis, including February and March of 1973. However, during rainy weather a Loggerhead Shrike was very seldom seen in or near this tree, notably being absent during the times of the Grosbeak sightings. Bent (1968) includes a case where on several occasions a Loggerhead Shrike attacked and pursued a large flock of Evening Grosbeaks. Loggerhead Shrikes have been observed on Sapelo by the author to chase moderately sized birds such as Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) and, remarkably, a Sparrow Hawk (*Falco sparverius*). Heavy rainfall apparently causes favorable feeding conditions for Loggerhead Shrikes, in that subterranean foods are often brought to the surface (Bent 1950). Under heavy rainfall conditions the Loggerhead Shrike(s) that frequent the Sugarberry may move to a more favorably flooded area to feed, or be occupied with feeding from a flooded area to such an extent as to ignore activity around the nearby Sugarberry. The Evening Grosbeaks would then be relatively free of harassment that might normally be received and be induced to occupy the Sugarberry. However, due to the sandy and highly permeable soil on Sapelo, this reprieve would be short-lived.

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 William J. Pfeiffer, University of Georgia Marine Institute, Sapelo Island. Georgia 31327

**RED CROSSBILLS IN DEKALB COUNTY, GA.** — Red Crossbills (*Loxia curvirostra*) were observed in Dunwoody, Ga. (DeKalb County), five times over a two-month period, the first four observations being in our yard.

On March 11, 1973, a flock of 8-10 crossbills was seen feeding on pine cones, noisily extracting the seeds with their powerful beaks. The red coloration on the males was brilliant and the wings were dark gray-black. On April 21, one lone crossbill was observed for 5 minutes as it sat quietly in the dead top of an otherwise "leafy" tulip tree. His coloring was suggestive of an immature male, being a dull orange-red, mottled with rather large patches of gray and the wings were gray-brown. Again on April 30 presumably the same bird was seen at this same perch. After several minutes he flew to a nearby pine tree giving the "kip-kip" sound in flight. After five minutes of feasting and lone conversational chatter he departed. On May 10 one female crossbill was seen feeding in the pine tree previously mentioned.

On May 12, near the Atlanta Baptist Assembly, a flock of six crossbills lit in a pine tree. The falling debris could be seen as they fed on the pine cones for approximately 10 minutes.

Tom and Anne Bailey, 1741 Tolleson Court, N.E., Dunwoody, Georgia 30338

**RED CROSSBILLS IN COBB COUNTY, GA.** — On May 9, 1973, I observed four Red Crossbills (*Loxia curvirostra*) near Cheatham Hill within the Kennesaw National Battlefield Park, Cobb County, Georgia. There was one adult male, one adult female, and two heavily streaked birds, obviously immatures. I watched the birds for about 15 minutes, during which time they were almost constantly feeding upon pine cones in the typical crossbill fashion. Once, one of the immature birds flew to the female, fluttered its wings, "begging" for food, and was fed by the female. While feeding, the birds constantly made a rather subdued "chittering" sound, much less noisy than the more familiar "kip-kip" flight notes.

On March 4, 1973, 1 to 3 birds were seen and heard near Cheatham Hill by Terry Moore.

Doris Cohrs, P.O. Box 90817, East Point, Ga. 30344

**BARN SWALLOWS LYING IN ROAD** — At noon-time, July 13, 1973, my son, Frank, and I were driving home from our farm along a country road. The day was sunny and the temperature stood at 85° F.



Upon rounding a curve on Utility Road we noticed 15+ Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) lying on the outside edge of the pavement and in the dirt of a driveway leading into the farm we were passing. There were 10+ Barn Swallows perched on the wires alongside the road. The birds allowed a fairly close approach and flew off in a normal fashion. I looked at the spot in which the birds had been lying and could see nothing. After going on a distance and rounding another curve, I felt this was such an interesting phenomenon that I wanted to examine the area more thoroughly.

On our return, we found 25+ Barn Swallows lying all over the paved road—with stomachs in contact with the pavement—wings and tails outspread. The birds seemed in a stupor and allowed an extremely close approach with the car—almost to the point of being run over. When they flew off, it was in a normal manner. Frank got out and examined the place where the Barn Swallows had been lying. He reported a goodly number of Dragonfly wings scattered about on the road. As often as I pass this area, I have never seen Barn Swallows acting this way. This area always yields Barn Swallows—an old barn nearby, a pond and fields. We came to the conclusion that the birds were sunbathing.

The owner of the farm, Mr. Marlin Clark, later told me he sees Barn Swallows lying in the long dirt driveway at times. He stated that at first glance the birds gave the appearance of being dead and would allow a very close approach before flying off. His opinion is the same as ours—the birds were sunning.

The old barn is now being torn down and Mr. Clark and I are wondering if the Barn Swallows which have nested there will now nest in some of his other sheds and out-buildings.

In reading Bent (Bent, Arthur C. *Life Histories of North American Flycatchers, Larks, Swallows and Their Allies*, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1963), I could find nothing on this type of behavior and in talking with others I could find no one (save the owner) who had seen Barn Swallows acting in this manner.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Mrs. R. E. (Anne) Hamilton for suggesting I write this article, for giving me access to her library and lending me her Bent series for study.

Harriett G. DiGioia, 1309 Lakemont Drive, Dalton, Georgia 30720

**HOVERING ACTION OF A SUMMER TANAGER**—At 5:15 P.M. on July 28, 1973, I was birding on the grounds of the Dalton Golf and Country Club. The day was sunny and the temperature was 85° F. I noticed a male House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) with bread in its mouth being hotly pursued by a male Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*). Upon approaching the chain link fence surrounding the tennis courts, the House Sparrow flew through the fence. As the Summer Tanager came to the fence—at a distance of about three feet from the fence—it stopped and hovered in the same spot for several minutes. It hovered in the manner of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*)—tail pointed downward so the bird seemed to be standing on its tail; the wings were fast-beating to the point of blurriness. The bird moved a short distance twice and hovered in these spots, although for not as long a time as the initial hovering. The area in which this took place is a grassy strip between the tennis courts and road.

The Summer Tanager then flew and perched in a nearby American Elm tree (*Ulmus americana*). The bird then came out and hovered again—for not so long a time—over a grassy embankment across the road from the first area. Once again the bird perched, this time in a White Oak (*Quercus alba*), then flew to perch on the chain link fence surrounding the swimming pool; then back to the White Oak. When last seen, the Summer Tanager was again chasing a male House Sparrow in the vicinity of the dumpster at the back of the parking lot.

My daughter, Harriett, who was playing tennis at the time, told me she and her instructor suspended play while the bird was close to them. She thought the bird was caught in the fence. The tennis instructor asked if I had seen "that crazy Cardinal" (*Richmondia cardinalis*).

Reading Bent (Bent, Arthur C. *Life Histories of North American Blackbirds, Orioles, Tanagers and Their Allies*, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1965), I could find nothing on behavior such as this in a Summer Tanager. Also, in discussing this with several people, no one could remember a Summer Tanager hovering in this manner.

Tree names are from Radford, Albert E.; Ahles, Harry E.; Bell, C. Ritchie. *Manual of the Vascular Flora of the Carolinas*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1968.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Mrs. R. E. (Anne) Hamilton for suggesting I



write this article, for giving me access to her library and lending me her Bent series for study.

Harriett G. DiGioia, 1309 Lakemont Drive, Dalton, Georgia 30720

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