

dark mantle that was interrupted by a distinct, diagonal, white slash near the black wing tips.

Previous winter sightings were in the Buffalo area on 26 December 1955 and 23 December 1967. Fritz Scheider observed a gull of this species on 3 January 1960 at Oswego Harbor (Bull, 1974, *Birds of New York State*, p. 284).

T. Carrolan, Airport Rd., R.D. 2, Dexter, New York 13634

Gull predation on an ant swarm: On September 13, 1976 at approximately 1600, I was driving south over the Captree Bridge which spans Great South Bay, Suffolk Co., when I noticed insects striking my windshield in numbers reminiscent of past trips to the central plains states of North America. When I got off the bridge and headed west on Ocean Parkway along the Jones Beach strip, I found Herring Gulls and Ring-billed Gulls feeding on the flying insects, which by now I had determined to be some sort of flying ant. The aerial hunting technique of the Herring Gulls was notable in that they would circle very slowly through the ant swarm, flare out their wings, drop their tails in a braking action, and then snap at the flying ants with a lunging thrust. Laughing Gulls were now seen flying through the swarm, and together with the Ring-billed Gulls, performed aerial acrobatics in capturing the ants in flight. These two species appeared to be much more adept in feeding than the larger Herring Gulls.

The wind was quite calm at the time and remained so throughout the time period of this field report.

Proceeding west toward Jones Beach State Park, I realized after driving for about one mile and seeing a constant number of insect-eating gulls in the air that I was witnessing an enormous ant swarm whose proportions I had never before seen. The swarm of ants was relatively constant all the way to Zachs Bay, a distance of about 8 miles from Captree. I roughly censused the gulls in relation to the major geographical areas of the Jones Beach strip and the results from east to west are as follows:

	Captree	Oak Beach	Gilgo	Tobay	Zachs Bay	Total
Herring Gull	300	450	250	100	100	1200
Ring-billed Gull	200	150	100	200	200	850
Laughing Gull	200	200	100	200	150	850
	700	800	450	500	450	2900

Large numbers of the swarming ants were evidently falling on the water on the bay side of the parkway, for the gulls were feeding at the surface. The Herring and Ring-billed Gulls were feeding while sitting on the water, but the Laughing Gulls fed by picking the ants off the surface while in flight. As dusk approached, all three species of gulls continued to feed on the swarm on the ground. Whether the ant swarm was descending to the ground or whether the gulls could not see the flying ants in failing light, I could not determine. Several gulls were killed by automobiles while dashing here and there in pursuit of ants,

and the feeding continued until dark.

Several of the ants were collected and sent to the Los Angeles County Museum in Los Angeles, California, where they were identified as *Lasius neoniger* by Mr. Roy R. Snelling of the Department of Entomology, who wrote: "This and related species of *Lasius* are known for the often very extensive mating swarms. These are very common ants in woodland habitats and when all colonies in an area put out swarms at the same time, the result can be spectacular."

Anthony J. Lauro, 9 DeSoto Rd., Amityville, New York 11701

House Sparrow enters abandoned American Robin nest in November: On 1 November 1976 at 16:30 EST I observed a female House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) in and around an old nest of an American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*). The nest was ca. 3.5 m above the ground in a leafless Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*) on the campus of the State University of New York at Geneseo, Livingston Co. The wind was blowing from the northwest between 34-43 KPH and the temperature was near freezing.

When first seen the House Sparrow was in the nest, turning and pressing its breast against the walls of the cup while simultaneously treading in a manner suggesting typical nest building behavior (see e.g., Welty, *The Life of Birds*, 2nd ed., 1975, W. B. Saunders, Philadelphia). The bird next hopped to the rim and stabbed its bill repeatedly at the inside of the nest. After entering the nest a second time it began tossing out debris and small sticks with its feet. A passing dog flushed it from the tree. The same or another female House Sparrow, obviously alert, returned to the nest a few minutes later; immediately a second female landed within one meter of the nest and was chased from the tree by the first. Both birds soon returned and one again entered the nest and repeated the shaping and treading movements. The two females remained near the nest until 16:39 EST, when both birds left and did not return.

House Sparrows often construct roosting nests in regions with severe winters and occasionally even breeding nests are built outside the usual reproductive season (Summer-Smith, *The House Sparrow* 1967, Collins, London; Wessels, 1976, *Auk*, 93: 837). House Sparrows build domed nests in cavities (Summer-Smith, 1967), so interest in, and apparent defense of, an open, exposed robin nest in late fall are unexpected. I think the most likely explanation of this behavior is that the females were probably exhibiting behavior usually associated with construction or cleaning of winter roost nests or, less likely, with construction of winter breeding nests, and that they simply misdirected their efforts toward an inappropriate robin nest.

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Mark A. Finke, Department of Biology,
State University College, Geneseo, New York 14454