

FLYCATCHING ACTIVITIES OF THE STARLING

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In September and October the Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) sometimes resorts to flycatching or swallow-like feeding activities. Kalmbach and Gabrielson (Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus. Vol. 197, p. 197) observed starlings capturing insects on the wing and appearing very much like martins. Beecher (Auk Vol. 70, No. 3, p. 322) says, "... forward vision and pointed wing pre-adapt the introduced starling in North America to take over the Purple Martin's niche when the latter flies south. On warm fall days, it feeds in the air, fluttering and gliding like the martin, but with frequent resting".

On September 10, 1953, I observed this behavior in large numbers of starlings. The activity stretched for over five miles between Hamburg and Woodlawn, New York, and was concentrated along the highways bordered with telephone poles. The birds would perch on the wires and poles and then sally out after passing insects. They rarely ventured over fifty yards from the road. Most of the feeding was at about wire height or a little higher. Upon capturing their prey they would immediately return to the poles and wires. Again, on October 7 while approaching Herkimer, New York I discovered smaller numbers of starlings flycatching. It is interesting to note that on both occasions this activity occurred in the afternoon.

This introduced species, though often a serious competitor of our native birds, sometimes helps in the fight against insects when our native flycatchers have departed for the south.

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PUBLIC RELATIONS AND RADIO

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One of the aims of the Federation is, or should be, to understand the problems of ornithologists better and to have these problems and the aims of ornithologists understood by the public. This is good public relations.

From the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University a radio program on the general subject of birds, has gone on the air regularly once a week for over 20 years.

Recently this program has been expanded so that it covers the entire State through cooperation with the Rural Radio F-M Network in addition to the stations of Cornell University.

This weekly radio can be of great public relations value in the study of birds. Clubs of the Federation and individual members can help by sending in information about ornithological events to this program. It's a simple and effective way of letting others know what is happening in your community. Club meetings can be announced as well as field trips and the results of censuses.

The Eaton Bird Club of Geneva has by far the best record for using this medium in their publicity. Others should also take advantage of it to keep your community informed of your activities. A postal card will often suffice to get your message across — and it's quick and easy.