

The Hawk Owl is considered a rare and irregular late fall and winter visitor in New York State, most reports coming from the northern and central counties. The only other recent record for the state that has come to my attention is a bird seen in Saratoga County on December 20, 1955 (**Audubon Field Notes**), Vol. 10, No. 3, p. 237.

Due to its diurnal habits and fondness for open country the Hawk Owl lends itself to easy observation. The paucity of recent records for the state suggests that it may be the rarest of the northern owls which penetrate our borders during cold weather. — John B. Belknap, 92 Clinton Street, Gouverneur.

A Note on the Roosting Behavior of the Brown Creeper — The Brown Creeper is a rather common winter bird in the wooded areas of western New York. On January 31, 1959, four to six creepers were observed feeding in a mixed hemlock-deciduous woodland in Wilson Cemetery bordering the southern shore of Lake Ontario, Niagara County. They were observed in company with Golden-crowned Kinglets for nearly an hour in late afternoon by a party consisting of Miss M. Edna Blowers, Mr. Arthur R. Clark, Mr. Anthony Krayna and the writer.

At 4:05 P. M. (EST), while we were standing near an abandoned house on the edge of the woodland, a creeper flew past us and landed on the shingles which covered the house. Upon further investigation we saw that the creeper had moved upward to a corner made by two walls directly under the eaves. The bird used its tail as a prop while the bill rested on a painted board about one-fourth inch higher than the shingled surface. The paint on this board was chipped off in the area where the bill was placed, thus indicating the possibility that this exact roost was used on previous occasions.

Further inspection of this roosting area revealed no additional creepers. However, at 4:25 P. M. (EST), a second creeper landed on the shingled surface on the opposite side of the house. This bird proceeded to move upward and take a position similar to that of the first bird in the opposite corner of the house. The body of the second bird rested on a mud wasps' nest.

No further activity was noted and our presence within four feet was completely ignored by both birds. The light intensity was considerably lower under the eaves than in the surrounding open woodland when the birds first came into these roosting areas. Both roosting places were well sheltered from a steady north-northwest wind. (Editor's note — On June 24, 1950 I observed a Brown Creeper's hiding place back of a window shutter. The bird climbed up to the second floor level of a lodge that was adjacent to pine woods. It moved up on the shingles until it reached a point exactly half-way between two windows. Then it sidled toward the left one, where the blind had been opened back against the house, and disappeared behind it). — Richard C. Roscge, 48 Dartmouth Avenue, Buffalo 15.

The Behavior Pattern of some Ruffed Grouse chicks in captivity (Part II) — It is now pertinent to remark about the sequence of moulting from the juvenile form to the first year adult form. This is a somewhat slower procedure than in Pheasant chicks of the same age. The body feathers arrive first, and they grow slowly while the primary feathers of the wings develop fully. Then the "forest strewn-floor" pattern that we have come to recognize comes into full bloom over the backs of the birds. The breast feathers come in much lighter in color than in the juvenile stage. Feathers begin to appear on the lower legs, and webbing on the toes becomes evident.

At age four months the birds were still relatively tame, and after some coaxing they could be picked up and held. Their consumption of food was tremendous, indicating a higher metabolism than a Pheasant would perhaps have. I make this comparison with Pheasants because I have raised many of them. The birds were kept in a large enclosed area (the old Pheasant yard) where they had as companions two old Canada Geese. After an initial period of resentment on the part of the Geese, the five birds got along well. The food of the Grouse consisted of grasshoppers, worms, varied insects, apples, wild grapes (fruits are taken to them), sweet corn on the cob, and turkey mash in pellet form. They still did not seem to require much water, even on the hottest and driest days. They were more prone to dusting than Pheasants in similar circumstances and delighted in stretching full length in a dust wallow in the bright sun.

As I mentioned earlier the birds would, during the early part of their captivity, run and hide and remain motionless for several minutes at the sound of our dog's

bark. Slowly, however, the birds became used to **his** bark and did not run and hide, although they kept a wary eye open just the same. If **another** dog were to bark, they would dash away for cover immediately. Therefore they can and do learn by association the difference between relative sounds.

As the Grouse grew older, they no longer came to a call which was a low whistle, having apparently attained a certain degree of independence on their own in the larger yard. Their curiosity, however, often prompted them to stalk sedately to you, to see what delicacy you might have brought. Blackberries were considered the peak of delicacies when they were in season. After that it was tough old sweet corn fed on the cob. I suggest that many a farmer with a marginal corn field has blamed some damage to the grain on everything else but the Ruffed Grouse, but I now know that a Grouse is capable of ruining an ear of corn on the stalk as easily as a racoon, squirrel, or Pheasant.

Plump and dainty these three birds have won their way into our hearts, and it will be with reluctance that we will turn them loose in some remote area away from man and **after** the hunting season. The ability of Ruffed Grouse to hide in the wild state has always amazed me. Upon being flushed, they burst out in a flurry of feathers, like some rocket, this being to the complete consternation of my reflexes as a hunter and to the utter resignation of my dog that I was not a very good wing shot. I could never quite fathom the telepathy with which they communicated a potential danger to one another over comparably vast distances and under the most adverse conditions until I elected to undertake the task of raising these orphans. Now I know how it is done, and it is one of nature's own secrets open to me for the first time. Rare is the time you have approached a Ruffed Grouse undetected, and observed the bird before it saw you.

A friend of mine recently came to call, and I was so intent on watching the birds that I did not see nor hear him come. When he saw me down in the yard and started toward me, the birds were in the deep grass chasing grasshoppers and other food. They could not have seen him coming. I don't know how close my visitor was before the three birds scooted to a quick halt and assumed the motionless stance of intimate hiding reserved for real danger. This was accompanied by an almost imperceptible danger alarm which sounded as a drawn-out "took-took". As my visitor continued to approach, the birds' actions indicated they were still communicating, but the sounds were too low for my ear to interpret.

I have enjoyed immensely and gotten considerable knowledge from the raising of these Ruffed Grouse. I would wish others to have such a heart-warming and educational experience in nature's world — Tom Lesperance, Keeseville.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON DECEMBER 1 — MARCH 31

JAMES K. MERITT

The various regional editors were generally agreed that the winter season really did provide winter weather. Snowfall was excessive in all areas of the state except the extreme southeastern part. The storms and blizzards in the Oswego area, particularly early in the winter, made national headlines. Either because of the weather or in spite of it, the season provided generally interesting birding. In this the regional editors were also agreed. The season's birds can be split into four distinct and separate categories: (1) late fall migrants or winter holdovers, (2) regular winter birds, (3) accidentals or strays into the state, and (4) early spring arrivals.

Among the late holdovers of note were a Blackpoll Warbler found dead in Westchester County and a Parula Warbler found in a weakened condition at Endwell in Region 4. Both of these records are remarkable. Yellow-breasted Chats were in Regions 9 and 10. Late Brown Thrashers were found in many areas. Robins put in a good late and mid-winter showing, and