

Giraud reported that "this unrivaled songster occasionally passes the season of reproduction on Long Island." And Griscom cites a few sporadic breeding records for the New York City region between 1875 and 1884. It would be interesting to determine whether there were any invasions from the south during these periods. It should be said here that Dr. Elon Howard Eaton in the *Birds of New York*, published in 1910, commented that "on Long Island and southeastern New York this bird has been reported on numerous occasions and there seems to be some evidence that it has bred near Rockaway, Long Island and possibly other portions of southeastern New York, but no definite evidence to this effect has been brought forward."

These 'occasional' reports of Mockingbirds have been — and still are — frequent enough to always elicit considerable interest. Theodore Roosevelt noted a Mockingbird shot at Oyster Bay, August 15, 1876. Around the turn of the century, the belief was prevalent that the reported Mockingbirds were escaped cage birds.

Allan D. Cruickshank in *Birds Around New York City*, published by the American Museum of Natural History in 1942, quotes Griscom extensively on the subject (the source for the Griscom quotes in this piece). Then Cruickshank asserts that the analysis of the records "indicates that the bird is rarest in June and July and occurs most frequently in autumn between September 30 and November 30." Griscom points out that "no other southern species occurs chiefly in fall and winter" as the Mockingbird does in the New York City area. What is their origin? Where did the four birds come from that popped up in my yard? Cruickshank, or a writer today, could not do better than quote Ludlow Griscom: "where the birds recorded locally can come from is a mystery which still awaits solution." — Maxwell C. Wheat, Jr., 333 Bedell Street, Freeport, Long Island.

Hook, Line and — Wings: Early July, 1960 featured warm, clear, windless, full-moon nights, as well as the state opening of bass-fishing season. Two of us, W. T. Cook of Schenectady and I, were as usual opening our season with some surface-action plugs, casting into a shallow bay of Jenny Lake, Saratoga County. I was using a black Jitterbug which, for the uninitiated, is a floating lure with a bright metal "paddle" on the front to give it a wobbling action and noise, and leaving a trail of bubbles. It weighs 5/8 ounce, is nearly three inches long, and has two treble-hooks. My companion was using a quiet, light-colored surface lure. We were casting alternately into the same general area, with about 100-foot throws ahead of the boat.

It was midnight, but the moonlight was more than enough to make flashlights unneeded. We could see far along the shore without difficulty and well enough to fix our lures. The water was without ripples except for our lures and oars — even to absence of semi-usual tail-slapping beavers and jumping fish. In general we were casting slightly to the right of the moon's reflection, making easy for us to follow the action of our lures.

The bay, and that half of the lake, is heavily wooded right to the shore, and undeveloped. Barred Owls have nested there for years and have added interest to night-fishing trips during a week or so of the high-pitched, insect-like hisses of the young birds, out of the nest but not yet entirely on their own. This penetrating hiss, incidentally, seems too high-pitched to be heard by some people.

We heard action up in the trees ahead of us, in the direction in which we were casting. It was as though a bird had landed heavily on a leafy branch. Then things were quiet.

I cast, waited a couple of seconds, and started to retrieve. Again the noise in the trees and then, over my lure a hundred feet head of us and 50 feet out from shore, a bird dropped vertically with slowly flapping, big wings. Its feet touched the water. Then it flew back to the trees from where it had appeared. There was no slack in the line, and the lure was now a dozen feet or so to the left. Mr. Cook cast his quiet lure — no action.

I cast again. The bird came in on a swoop, reached down for the plug, and continued its swoop upwards. I left the reel with no drag, and again the bird dropped the lure. It had carried the floater about 50 feet. Then another no-action cast of the quiet lure.

On my next cast the Jitterbug had hardly struck the water when the owl was right there, and away. I kept the reel on free-wheeling. The bird flew about 50 feet to one of the many boulders protruding a few inches above the very shallow water back in the bay.

I waited several seconds. The bird simply sat quietly. I reeled in slowly. The monofilament line, particularly with so much out, had considerable stretch. Soon the line was tight, with no hint of a struggle. It was as though some of the hooks had caught on the boulder or that the line had wedged around some of the rocks. A jerk on the line, however, and I was in business. The bird was splashing in front of the rock.

The water was too shallow and had too many just-submerged rocks for rowing in, and the situation was no better for wading. I reeled in. The bird came in facing us, with feet and tail on or in the water, its body above, and wings occasionally flapping.

When the bird was at arm's reach beside the boat I stopped reeling. Now the bird was quiet and floating on its back, feet toward us and the lure held in its left talons. I had no difficulty in grasping the bird's legs above its talons and bringing it aboard, with flapping wings.

We released the lure at the snap fastener, and found one prong of the rear treble-hook caught in the gristly sole of the foot. Removal was easy.

Except for the lower feathers of its legs, the bird's plumage hardly looked as though it had been dragged through the water — and its leg feathers quickly dried.

The bird, a Barred Owl, uttered no sound, made no passes with its beak, and even did not strike with its talons. It perched on my arm after its release and then for a while on the edge of the boat. Then it flew low across the water and up into a tree on the opposite shore.

It was probably a bird of the year, judging by slight amounts of down in its head plumage, and its docility.

We continued to fish the same area with the same lures, but had no more strikes — neither ornithological nor piscatorial. In fact, the owl was our only catch that night.

Apparently this owl's conduct had precedent. Dr. Ralph F. Jacox of Rochester, in a note in **The New York State Conservationist** (December-January, 1958-59, page 45) relates his experience in catching a Barred Owl in the evening on a "Crazy Crawler" lure, also a noisy floater. He also refers to the cover of the June, 1958 issue of **Florida Wildlife** depicting, in a painting, the same situation. — Guy Bartlett, 1053 Parkwood Boulevard, Schenectady 8.

Observations on Visual Activity in Birds: An Osprey often uses a dead limb 35 feet up in an oak at the edge of our creek as a fishing post. He sits there and scans the pools for trout. When he spots a fish he takes aim by weaving his head back and forth, passing the image from one eye to the other, possibly getting a momentary binocular view as the image is passed from side to side. When the Osprey has secured a satisfactory orientation, he plunges and gets his fish.

I recall watching the specific actions of a Great Blue Heron which I flushed from the edge of the marshy creek. As my canoe nosed around a bend in the stream, the somewhat startled heron was standing about two hundred yards in front of me. He stared with one eye, slowly turned his head until he could see me with the other eye, and then crouched down a little, spread his wings, and sailed away.

Owls, of course, possess frontal vision, and some other species of birds would appear to have at least some frontal sight. Many birds, such as warblers, flycatchers, and chickadees, have their eyes very much towards the side of the head. I intend to make a study of the visual activities of Phoebe's this spring. With their aerial movements one should be able to ascertain how they get a focus on their prey.

This entire subject is of considerable interest, and I would much appreciate hearing from readers who may have made, or intend to make, similar visual activity studies or observations. — Ilse K. Dunbar, RD 3, Box 194, Kingston.