

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.