

A Kingfisher and Some Swallows: About 8:00 p. m. on July 29, 1948, while sitting on the porch of our camp located on a 75-foot bluff overlooking Canandaigua Lake, ten miles south of Canandaigua, I observed an interesting sequence of bird behavior. A Belted Kingfisher was flying south over the lake approximately a hundred yards from shore when it was annoyed by a flock of about twenty swallows (species undetermined). One swallow, then another and another, separated from the rather loose flock and flew in single file down toward the kingfisher. The kingfisher dove into the water and after one or two seconds emerged and flew in the opposite direction. The swallow flock circles back, and another two or three swallows, in file, again stooped down toward the kingfisher. Again it dove and emerged flying in the opposite direction. The swallow flock, flying approximately a hundred feet above, circled back and again swallows flew down toward the kingfisher. The bird dove a third time, and this time the swallows did not wheel back. The kingfisher flew in toward shore and perched while the swallows continued down the lake.

I have often wondered whether this could be interpreted as "play" on the part of the swallows and kingfisher or whether it was true attack and escape behavior on the part of both birds. Swallows are known to be aggressive as a flock (Forbush, E. H., **Birds of Massachusetts**, Vol. 3, p. 150) and to even chase Sharp-shinned Hawks (Bent, A. C., **U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull.** 179:452). Kingfishers have been seen to escape attack from other kingfishers (Bent, A. C., **U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull.** 176:123) and Cooper's Hawks (Johnson, S. E., **Auk** 42:585-586), but the situation reported here is an apparent combination of errors, the swallows misidentifying a short-necked kingfisher as predator and the kingfisher misidentifying the short-necked pointed-winged swallows as a stooping hawk.

Another possible explanation, on the assumption that the swallows and kingfisher were young birds, is that this might represent what E. A. Armstrong (**Bird Display**, Cambridge, p. 261) calls "play". Another thing that is difficult to explain in this observation is the ability of the kingfisher to turn under water and reverse his field. This was also noted by Johnson (*ibid.*) when a kingfisher was attacked by a Cooper's Hawk. — Stephen W. Eaton, Dept. of Biology, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure.

Notes On a Wintering Catbird: Here in Ulster County wintering Catbirds are difficult to find since few ever remain beyond the Fall migration period. Those that do stay usually linger in some favored thicket area of bushes and vines that have a southern exposure. With the instinct to migrate lost the Catbird may remain here for the winter. So it happened at my residence near Kripplebush last fall (1960). I first noticed a Catbird in a little thicket back of the house during late October but felt that the bird was a migrant that would soon pass on. This did not turn out to be the case as I kept on infrequently seeing the bird on into November when it became apparent that he was going to stay. Where he was spending the nights during this period I never knew but when winter set in during early December I discovered he was using the dense honeysuckle vine growing against the corner of the house. Two Song Sparrows were also using the vines for a roost. Snow came and stayed and the rigors of winter were constant. Snow was definitely hostile to the Catbird's normal ground frequenting habit and he avoided it most of the time. Consequently, his daily habits became restricted and were centered about the vicinity of the house with short trips up and down the shrubbery bordering the driveway. The only bare ground he had was a few inches along the foundation of the house. The sun helped to keep this bare and the bird spent much time here. His survival food was mainly the dried fruits of the Boston Ivy vine growing over the sides of the house. Fortunately these were not cleaned up by a Starling horde. From the observations I could make this was his main diet. He ate but little from the bird seed mixtures and was not seen to take any suet although he might have. He sampled Holly berries but did not seem to prefer them.

As winter progressed more snow and cold came and our Catbird spent most of the day about the roost, his food supply, and immediate vicinity. The shyness exhibited earlier was tempered by the existing conditions and he became easier to approach. On stormy or very cold days he would often sit in the vines just under one of the windows which was nearly always open a few inches and probably offered a little warmth or he would sit on the canopy of the kitchen exhaust fan