

FIELD NOTES

Gyr Falcon in Westchester County: On February 7, 1961, I observed a white Gyr Falcon at Katonah, Westchester County. The bird was flying fairly low and was dwarfed by the crows which were quick to mob it. The huge size, white color, long pointed wings and tail, and the distinctive slow wing beats were all carefully noted as the bird passed over in a north-to-south direction. Insofar as I can ascertain, this is the first county record since 1879 (Allan D. Cruickshank, *Birds Around New York City*, 1942, cites the latter record, and I have heard of no local records since publication of his book).

It is interesting to note that the winter of 1960-61 witnessed a substantial movement of Gyr Falcons south from their normal wintering range into Newfoundland, where they were described as fairly common (*Audubon Field Notes*), Vol. 15, No. 3). There were also several reports last winter from coastal Massachusetts — William Russell, Katonah.

Baltimore Oriole nests in Norway Spruce trees: While Baltimore Orioles (*Icterus galbula*) have been known to nest in a variety of types of trees, elms, maples and oaks are chosen most often. In any case, deciduous trees seem to be preferred over evergreen, and in fact there are few records of nests of Baltimore Orioles in evergreens, although Eaton (*Birds of New York*, 1914: 241) indicated that he had found Oriole nests in Norway Spruce and Hemlock. Therefore I was extremely interested to have two come to my attention in June, 1961, both in Norway Spruce.

On Lower Creek Road on the western edge of the village of Etna, Tompkins County, New York, Mr. Ralph Dickinson called my attention in mid-June to an Oriole nest eleven feet up on the northern side of his Norway Spruce in front of his home. The young birds left this nest the first week in July. Mrs. Genevieve Kelsey, of Candor, New York, wrote me that she located the nest of her pair of Baltimore Orioles on June 12, 35 feet up in a spruce. These young left the nest about June 25. Mrs. Kelsey had noted that at the time the Orioles were nest-building, some of the nearby deciduous trees had not yet leafed out, and it occurs to me that this may be a factor, at times, in the birds choosing an evergreen. A late season, such as was experienced in spring of 1961, might result in scanty leaf covering in deciduous trees in the territory selected by the Orioles. Comments or additional observations on this would be welcomed by this writer.

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Observations On Nesting Killdeer: A pair of nesting killdeer was observed in a field adjacent to the campus of the State University College of Education at Potsdam. The nest was discovered on May 17, 1961 and contained four eggs. From previous actions of the parent birds, the nest and eggs had probably been present for at least two days prior to this.

The nest was a shallow indentation in the soil next to a large rock. It was lined with grass and a few twigs.

Upon the approach of an observer, the incubating bird quietly left the nest. When ten or fifteen feet distant from it, the adult bird would attempt to lure the invader away. This was done either by feigning injury or by circling in the air or running along the ground and uttering the characteristic alarm note.

The nest, eggs and adult birds, were observed regularly through June 3. On June 5, one parent was found dead at the nest with a wound in the chest, evidently the victim of a predator. One egg was missing, one broken and two were intact. The other adult bird was not in evidence.

It was felt that the surviving adult probably would not successfully incubate the remaining eggs, and so they were removed and placed in an incubator. The surviving bird was not observed to return to the nest area.

Incubation was carried out at 35° C, and the eggs were turned once per day. Both hatched on the night of June 11.

The young birds were fed a mixture of powered milk, water and deca vitamin drops. Both appeared to be thriving, but on the morning of June 16, one was found dead.

In order to avoid loss of the survivor, it was decided to determine whether other adult killdeer would adopt it. Accordingly, this bird was taken to an area where

killdeer were known to have nested. Leaving the young bird in a container, I hid nearby. The calls of the young bird soon attracted a pair of adults, which exhibited great interest in the container. Upon my appearance to free the captive the adults became very agitated and acted similarly to nesting birds or birds with young. They refused to approach the newly found bird, until I had retreated a great distance.

Upon subsequent visits to this area, these birds have exhibited the great agitation of parents but the young bird has not been seen.

It must be stated that this incident cannot be considered a proven successful adoption, although the indications are that it may have been. Unfortunately, time did not allow the procurement of a band so that the young bird could be marked. — Robert H. Cerwonka, State University College of Education, Potsdam.

Chuck-will's-widow in Monroe County: Late on the afternoon of June 1, 1961, Dr. Gerhard Leubner was netting and banding birds in a hedgerow just west of Braddock's Bay, and a short distance away Walter Listman was observing late spring migrants which were still passing along this narrow strip between two fields. Listman's attention was suddenly drawn to an unknown bird which arose from the ground almost underfoot, flew a short distance, and soon settled down again in thick cover. It appeared rather owl-like, but the brownish color and the long, squarish tail puzzled the observer.

By a combination of skill and luck the bird was driven into one of Leubner's nets. It then was seen to be a goatsucker of large size, with a general buffy appearance and brownish throat. Measurement showed the bird to be 12½ inches in length. Several colored pictures were taken of the bird, and these turned out very well in spite of the dull, overcast day.

The bird remained in this rather restricted area until at least July 2, when it was last seen by Warren Lloyd. The bird seemed partial to a low, horizontal limb of a pear tree and was often seen perched there. When driven off, it frequently circled around and returned to the same perch.

The area where the bird was found is a long, narrow strip of land about ¼ mile west of Braddock's Bay and about the same distance south of Lake Ontario. The immediate area is an abandoned pear orchard, well grown with vines and tangles and somewhat swampy. The area north of it is similar brushy thickets with some cultivated land and summer cottages along the lakefront.

In addition to the two original observers the bird was seen by Margaret Foley, John Foster, Warren Lloyd, Ruth MacRae, Al Malley, Tom Tetlow, and myself.

On May 19, 1959 Joseph Taylor reported having heard a Chuck-will's-widow near his home in Brighton (Ed — see **Kingbird**, Vol. 9, No. 2, p. 78). The bird called persistently for a considerable length of time, even answering a recording of its call on one of the bird records. Mr. Taylor is familiar with the bird as a result of much time spent in its regular range in the South.

Insofar as I know, these are the only two records for the Chuck-will's widow in New York State. — Howard S. Miller, 54 Luella Street, Rochester 9.

Albinism in a Catbird: Notes on albinism in the **Kingbird** have always been interesting; since this is a comparatively rare occurrence, the following may be of additional interest.

On May 31, 1961, with Mrs. Helen Muhleman of Bronxville, I visited the Audubon Nature Center at Greenwich, Connecticut. Shortly after our arrival, we noticed several Catbirds calling near the entrance to the Center, and as we watched, a strange looking bird appeared in an open space, hopping around on the ground and in low bushes. We watched it with binoculars at about 25 feet.

The outstanding effect was a pale, ghostly grey, with white wing and tail feathers. The only color we could see was the chestnut of the under-tail coverts, confirming our identification of the bird, based on shape, size and actions, as a Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*). This is another example, therefore, of shades of red or brown being the last color to be lost, when partial albinism occurs . . . i.e. partially albino Robins usually having varying amount of red on the breast, and the Rose-breasted Grosbeak pictured in A. A. Allen's **Stalking Birds with Color Camera** (page 90) retained its rose breast.