

The bird shortly disappeared into the bushes with other Catbirds. None of the Nature Center Personnel had seen it at that time. A subsequent visit of Mrs. Muhleman gave her a brief glimpse of the bird in approximately the same place which has a large tangled mass of briars nearby and is the favorite nesting place of Catbirds. At this date (May) it could not have been a bird of the year, so had escaped predators for at least a year. We will keep a close watch and try to find whether this bird raised a brood and produced others with the same trait. —

Mrs. Margaret Cornwell, 8 Hanfling Road, Scarsdale.

Crows Hunting mice: In late winter crows find their supply of food greatly diminished by the blanket of snow and the cold weather. Corn and other grains are hidden under the snow or held captive by the frozen ground. Insects have long since disappeared and crows often resort to animals that are killed on the highways or other sources of food. In late February crows sometimes find food by catching mice in the fields. I observed one phase of this during the winter of 1960 - 61.

While out hunting for rabbits I noticed a flock of ten or twelve crows perched in a hedgerow. After watching them for some time, I saw two crows fly out over the field and land on the snow. Closer observation revealed the crows had spotted two mice running around on top of the snow. One proceeded to run and half fly and caught one of the mice. After picking it up two or three times and tossing it like a cat would, it picked up the mouse and flew back to the hedgerow. While this was going on the second crow watched, but after the first crow had left, it proceeded to catch the other mouse in the same manner.

A second phase of mouse hunting engaged in by crows involves the location of nests as they become visible through the melting snow. I have found crow tracks in the snow near exposed nests. The nests were completely torn apart and the contents spread around on the snow. The locating of nests was very thorough for I could not find a single nest left untouched in the two fields I searched. I found no evidence that any mice were caught in this manner, or that it was the exposed nests that attracted the crows. Since the snow was melting, the possibility arises that the crows sighted the mice on the snow and chased them to the nest before the nest was destroyed and the mouse caught. — Howard E. Baer, Graduate Student, College of Education, State University of New York, Cortland.

Herring Gulls Catching Flying Ants: During the last two weeks of August, 1961, a large number of Herring Gulls attracted attention by their unusual antics. They were observed on several consecutive evenings about 6:00 P.M. flying in tight very low circles almost to the "stalling" point at about 200-300 feet altitude. Their necks were extended, and their heads would turn from side to side. Their legs were also extended, and their heads would turn from side to side. Their flight. Some were observed to suddenly dart their heads out, mouth open wide, and catch some object unseen by the naked eye. This activity continued from one-half to three-quarters of an hour, and when binoculars were used it was seen that the gulls were catching insects, in much the same fashion as swallows but of course without their fleet-winged finesse. It was impossible to identify the type of insects being caught; however, it is reasonable to suppose that the bulk of them were ants, since at this time there were myriads of winged ants emerging from our lawn and from other lawns in the immediate area. Being very familiar with the soaring antics of Herring Gulls I can accurately state that during the incident mentioned they were actively engaged in catching insects.

By the first few days of September the mystical ant flights had ceased and no further ant pursuit by the gulls was noted. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the object of interest was the ants, an item not heretofore mentioned as part of their diet. — Thomas Lesperance, Keeseville.

Correction: A Scarlet Tanager was present at Short Beach through Dec 10, in field note in May issue, should read unidentified tanager.
