

FIELD NOTES

Raptors at Point Peninsula: Late in October 1961 David Gordon noted an unusual concentration of Rough-legged Hawks on Point Peninsula. This situation continued into November and the writer decided to keep the area under surveillance throughout the winter season. Between November 1 and March 31 seventeen trips were made. Although Rough-legs predominated, other raptors were present as will be noted later.

Since the name Point Peninsula is somewhat of a misnomer, a description of the area is in order. A glance at the map will show that it is virtually an island in Lake Ontario, joined to the rest of Jefferson County by a narrow neck of land known as "The Isthmus". Relatively flat, it has an area of about eight square miles. Once extensively farmed, there is now a large acreage of abandoned fields, overgrown with grass and weeds — ideal habitat for small rodents. Although wooded areas are few, there are numerous scattered trees, and these, together with fence posts and utility poles afford ample perches. Add to this the open, level nature of the land and the existence of several roads and we have ideal conditions for wintertime observation.

During November and December between 25 and 30 Rough-legs were present. As the winter progressed, the number dropped somewhat, averaging perhaps fifteen for January and February. Lower counts were obtained during March, nine being seen on the 27th of that month. The distribution of this species during the past winter is in marked contrast to two seasons ago (see Kingbird, Vol 10, No. 2, p. 55) when they were scattered widely over northern Jefferson County. An interesting sidelight occurred on December 23 while David Gordon and I were making a tour of Point Peninsula. A Snowy Owl was flushed from an open field leaving behind the remains of a female Rough-leg. Little was left but bones and feathers.

The Snowy Owl population in the area was fairly stable through the winter. Three or four could be seen on most occasions, the maximum count being eight. As was true of the Rough-legs, Snowy Owls tended to stay close to Lake Ontario, few being reported from other parts of Region 6. Marsh Hawks lingered late, six being present on December 23. No more were seen until March 22 when the first spring migrant was noted. Sparrow Hawks remained all winter, one or two being seen on most trips. Northern Shrikes were seen regularly during January and February.

This is the story in a nutshell — an abundance of small rodents on Point Peninsula — and it didn't take the birds long to discover them. — John B. Belknap, 93 Clinton Street, Gouverneur.

Red-tailed Hawk Takes Mouse From Cat: The following observation was made at Ithaca, New York, December 1, 1961, at approximately 2:15 P. M. in a field of closely cropped clover and oat stubble.

While driving west on the Hanshaw Road, I observed an immature Red-tailed Hawk on the top of a telephone pole. As I approached, the bird took off in a glide to the south. I then noticed a yellow and white domestic cat about eighty yards out in the field and the hawk approaching it from the rear. For an instant it appeared that he would strike the cat, but did not and merely skimmed gently a few inches over its head, to land immediately in front of it, about two to three feet away.

The cat instantly arched its back and tail in a threatening gesture toward the Red-tail. Apparently this did not bother the hawk for he very deliberately took a few steps toward the cat and picked up a mouse (or possibly a small rat) from in front of the cat's forefeet. This he did with his beak, then stepped back to almost his original landing position and switched the prey to his talons. All this time the cat stood its ground watching the hawk but making no attempt to retrieve the mouse.

At this point I decided to return to my office (about a mile away) for a camera. This I did and upon my return the hawk was eating the mouse and the cat had turned away and was leaving the scene, supposedly returning home. I secured two pictures showing the hawk and the cat together but the cat walking away. The pictures were taken with a Nikon and a 400 mm lens. — David G. Allen, Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, Ithaca.