

Since the Bluebirds' nests in 1963 were dusted and sprayed with a mild flea powder to control the larvae of the birdnest screw worm fly, the same as in 1962, we can only conclude that the adverse weather had a definite detrimental effect on the production of young Bluebirds.

The Bluebirds and I are grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Neel for faithfully checking the Cherry Grove area which contains 26 of my nesting boxes. 71 Bluebirds were fledged in this section all of which were banded by the Neels.

A vote of thanks to Ted Grisez also for checking boxes and banding Bluebirds in other parts of my routes.

Wayne Yonkie has 76 nesting boxes on location. Preliminary figures indicate that at least 19 pairs of Bluebirds occupied his boxes with over 30 fledged.

Should the weather man cooperate in 1964 and should we be able to manage 170-180 boxes which will be available for nesting Bluebirds, we could conceivably fledge 500 Bluebirds.

W. L. Highhouse, 8 Fourth Avenue, Warren, Penna.

"In Jan. 1963 we published the results of the sixth Bluebird report by William Highhouse, and it seems worthwhile at this time to summarize the 7th season. While this area is not in the state, it is close to the border, and a similar study (which we hope someone will undertake) in N.Y. would probably produce similar results."

Editor's note.

Observations of Breeding Sapsuckers: Although the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*) occurs regularly around Cortland, New York, in migration, and is to be found as a summer resident at some of the higher elevations, it is generally thought to be a shy species that avoids human observers. I was therefore surprised when a pair of sapsuckers moved their family of three into our willows, where they set up a very convenient cafeteria for the fledglings.

These observations of the Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were made in 1962 at our home, in the hilly country just north east of Cortland (42° 39' N & 76° 07' 31" W) and where the surrounding elevations range from 1120 to 1920 feet. Our back yard (1160') is at the opening of a small gorge, cool and damp even on the hottest days in the summer. The sides and top of the ravine are covered with trees both coniferous and deciduous. The banks of the stream flowing from the gorge and bordering our yard are thickly lined with willows, oaks, maples and locust trees.

On July 31 a mewing cry came from the willows. This was repeated over and over, and since it was a new sound to me, I found myself leaving my kitchen chores to investigate. As I cautiously approached, a female sapsucker flew away. Then I saw she had left behind three young, each clinging to a good sized trunk. These young birds in their muddy-colored plumage, were completely indifferent to everything except the food before them. They just sat sipping the sap oozing from holes freshly opened in the bark and occasionally picking off an ant which was also attracted to the sap.

Later I learned that each morning the female came to the trees and opened new holes in the bark, and it was she who made the mewing call to bring the young to this place. After about ten days the young birds were a little more cautious and would move to the back of the trunk when anyone approached. These birds were so quiet all day long that our three cats continued a long standing habit of taking naps on hot afternoons on the cool earth under the trees with only an occasional curious glance at the dull birds perched within six feet above their heads.

During the weeks that followed, the young sapsuckers developed the colorful red markings on head and chin and yellow on the belly. They continued to come to the trees each day and only showed spirit when a hummingbird wanted to share their food. They would dart at the hummingbird and drive him away. However, the hummers would just light on a branch, and wait their chance to slip in unobserved and then dart away with a beakful of sap.

The sapsuckers again gave me a surprise when I observed four of them one evening in the dead branches of a tall willow flying out and catching insects in the air in the manner of flycatchers.

It was on the last day of September that I last saw one of the young males on the feeding place. His feathers were bright and colorful. He remained motionless as I approached, within a few feet, making what I hoped were friendly sounds to a sapsucker. Since then the willows have been deserted.

Frances Newman, R.F.D. #1, Cortland

Notes on Red-headed Woodpeckers in the Oneida Area: It now appears almost certain that Red-headed Woodpeckers (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) in this vicinity are actually increasing, as has been suggested by F. Scheider, (Kingbird VI, #3, p97) and documented for Northern New York by Belknap (Kingbird VII, #3, p87).

My notes in this area showed no sightings of this species for many years prior to 1952, which is just a year later than Mr. Belknap dates their reappearance in Northern New York state. Following that year, I have recorded them regularly, with numbers and locations slowly increasing. They have disappeared from only one or two of the known earlier locations, tending to return every year to the same general area, and often to the same tree.

Last year a report was made after correlating the records of several interested people in Oneida and Sherrill, with the resulting data showing 9 **probable** nesting locations—(Kingbird XII, #3, p154).

This year a special effort was made to find actual nest holes, and, if possible, to determine success of the nesting. The results show a total of ten occupied nest holes, with an additional five locations where sight records were made but no nest located. These sight records were made during July when the birds would not be expected to be moving about and so should not duplicate any of the nesting count. Adult birds were seen feeding young at eight of the ten nesting sites. At least twenty-eight adult birds were counted plus eleven in immature plumage.

All of these records were obtained within a ten mile radius of the city of Oneida, in Oneida and Madison Counties. The nesting sites were either on little-used roads, or else well back from a main road. The preferred habitat seems to be open groves or scattered trees in meadowland, with some dead trees or dead stubs in live trees. They have been found both in upland areas south of Oneida and in the flat country of the Oneida Lake plain.

Only one of the nests under observation was known to be abandoned, possibly because of competition from Starlings. A second nesting was noted in another case, with three young out of the nest about July 21st, and the parent birds showing courtship activity a few days before that. On Aug. 4th, one adult was in attendance on the three young, who were also feeding independently, and the other adult was in the original nest hole. By Aug. 20th the second brood was being fed at the nest and the three immatures of the first nesting were still in the neighborhood.

In watching the various birds feeding young, we noticed that one bird of a pair (the female ?) had selected a particular stub to which it flew each time it brought food, and used it as a shelf or chopping board on which to mash the morsel, preparatory to feeding it to the young ones. This behavior was observed in two different pairs of Red-headed Woodpeckers.

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