

On the Reluctance of Bonaparte's Gulls to Fly under Objects: Gunter (Auk, 73:131-132, 1956) in a general note discusses some observations which suggest that "gulls may have some mental occlusion which prevents them from seeing through or beyond overhead structures even though there are no physical obstructions to a clear view."

A flock of Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*) following his boat "acted as if they could not see the boat at all and, to all intents and purposes, as if it had vanished into a solid wall," when the boat passed under the Copano Causeway between Aransas Pass and Port Aransas, Texas.

In view of Gunter's observations the following may be of interest. In the New York City region Bonaparte's Gulls (*L. philadelphia*) are extremely uncommon away from the immediate coast. During 1959-60, however, this species suddenly appeared on the Hudson River, as far north as "the city line," in considerable numbers. For the succeeding three winters numbers of Bonaparte's Gulls could be found in this area, but not in such concentrations as during 1959-60. By 1963-64 numbers diminished greatly and only a handful of these birds were in evidence.

At all times the greatest concentration of birds was in the vicinity of the George Washington Bridge (5,000+ on December 13, 1959 is a conservative estimate) which connects 178th Street, New York City with Fort Lee, New Jersey. The bridge's main span is 3,500 feet long (which equals the width of the river at this point). Supporting this span are two steel towers (one on each bank of the river). During the four winters, 1959-63, many flocks of Bonaparte's Gulls were seen crossing over the bridge, frequently at a height exceeding that of the supporting towers (which are 593 feet above the river). Minimum clearance over the bridge is 277 feet. On approaching the main span and its supporting cables, a flock of gulls would rise to sufficient altitude to clear the structure, then descend, once having reached the other side.

Not once was even a single gull seen to cross under the bridge, even though there is ample clearance (248 feet) and a clear view of the other side.

Peter W. Post, 575 West 183rd Street, New York, 10033

Boreal Owl in Monroe County: On the morning of February 22, 1964 I was birding the pines in the west end of Hamlin State Park with two of my companions, looking for owls and winter finches. This is an area of planted white pine trees about 30 feet tall that has in the past decade been a winter roosting place for Long-eared Owls and various other birds of prey. While working the south edge of the tract, I glimpsed a bird disappearing into the pines. Expecting a Long-eared Owl, I proceeded after the bird only to discover an owl of Screech Owl size sitting on an exposed branch about 15 feet off the ground in a small clearing. The size of the bird, its lack of ear tufts and the white spots on its forehead convinced me I was looking at a Boreal Owl (*Aegolius funereus richardsoni*). I watched the bird about three minutes until it took flight and disappeared into the nearby pines.

After returning to get my companions Tom Tetlow and Al Maley, we returned to search for the owl and managed after some searching to locate the bird concealed about 25 feet up in a grapevine-covered pine just outside the clearing. Gentle persuasion failed to dislodge the owl from its perch and we found it necessary to pull violently on the grapevines to get the bird to fly to a more exposed perch about 20 feet away. There we were able to confirm the identification, noting the black rimmed facial mask, the square head shape, large white spots on the back and a light horn colored (not yellow) bill.

As we were leaving the area we met Dick O'Hara and Howard Miller so we returned and located the bird for them.

The following Saturday, Feb. 29, the owl was located in the same vine-covered tree and was seen by many people — Mr. and Mrs. Leon Atkinson, Al Starling, Walt Listman, Bob McKinney, Allen Kemnitzer and Steve Taylor.

This time the bird, which kept pretty much to the upper branches, was photographed from about five feet away from an adjacent tree.

The next day a number of people searched for the owl without success and it was not reported subsequently.

As far as I can determine there is no previous record of the Boreal Owl for Monroe County and only a few in the state outside the Adirondacks as summerized by M. Rusk (*Kingbird* XII No 1 p. 25).

John Foster, 14 Utica Place, Rochester.

On Albino Swallows: In over 60 years of bird observations on Long Island the writer has recorded only five albino swallows, representing two species.

On June 20, 1928, a pure white Bank Swallow (*Riparia riparia*) was found in East Marion standing by the side of a highway with other Bank Swallows. The bird was in feeble condition; perhaps it had been persecuted by other birds. It soon succumbed and was preserved as a study skin. The bird, an immature female, had reached the flying stage and was a mile from the nearest nesting colony.

On July 9, 1935, another white Bank Swallow was seen all of one day flying in a loose flock of the same species in Orient. Its association with the other swallows during the period of observation appeared perfectly normal.

The other three white individuals recorded were Tree Swallows (*Iridoprocne bicolor*) observed one at a time in different years flying over a wide marsh in a mass flight of Tree Swallows during fall migrations. These, apparently pure white swallows, were strikingly prominent as they darted among the other swallows. There was no indication noticed that the white birds were molested by the other swallows.

Locally the nests of Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) are invariably lined with white feathers. It is plausible that Barn Swallows should have no objections to albino fledglings among white feathers that they are partial to, especially young they have been feeding since they were hatched.

The ducking in flight of adult Barn Swallows with beseeching notes is a common habit on Long Island when humans, horses, dogs or cats are near newly flying young.

Among the numerous other local albino records, was a pure white male Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) that mated with a normal female and brought up five typically plumaged young to maturity in the border of a salt marsh in Orient, proving that full albinos do mate and nest occasionally.

Roy Latham, Orient, Long Island
Ed. Note: In an analysis of 3,134 cases of albinism recorded in Britain (Sage, Brit. Birds 56:409, 1963) found that swallows comprise 7% of the records. In his results, which omit mallard and pheasant because of the influence of artificial conditions, the commonest families in which albinism was recorded were thrushes (29%), crows (11%), and swallows, starlings and sparrows (7% each).

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON DECEMBER 1 — MARCH 31

DAVID B. PEAKALL

For the state as a whole the crossbill invasion was the most spectacular in years, perhaps of the century; although in western areas of the state the numbers may not have been as large as the 1960/61 invasion. Much of the material on this invasion has already been given in the fall issue. Peak numbers were reached by late November or early December. It appears that the increasing predominance of Red Crossbills towards the end of the period was due largely to a decrease of White-winged. At the end of the