

following observations made in Delaware County, April through June 1964, may be of interest.

The nest was discovered on April 18. It was located in a clearing in the midst of a grove of birches, giant hemlocks and rhododendron bushes in a large wooded swamp near where I live. In this clearing a yellow birch had been partly blown over and was fixed at an angle of about 70 degrees, caught and held in the branches of a nearby tree. The roots were partly pulled up, forming a small cave-like recess beneath them. There were several fairly large openings between the roots through which one could see into the semi-darkness of the interior. The nest was constructed on a shelf-like place on the inner wall of this little cave, about 2½ feet above the ground over a bare space of oozy muck beneath the tree.

On April 18 I was birding in the swamp and heard a bird song that I had heard on a previous occasion without being able to identify it. I traced the song to its source—a tiny wren about 4 inches long with a very short tail which it tilted sharply upward over the back, barrings on the sides and belly, and a buffy stripe over the eye. I identified it as a Winter Wren. While identifying the bird I noticed that it was carrying pieces of sphagnum moss in its bill and disappearing between the roots of the partly upturned tree, into the dark interior. It would emerge without the moss, and repeated the process several times. My curiosity aroused, I peered into the little cave. It required only a brief examination to disclose the nest. It was in the shape of a ball with a circular opening in the side and was constructed of tiny hemlock twigs, clods of earth, mud, and moss, all woven together. It contained neither eggs nor young, as construction was still in progress, but it had the same general shape and appearance as at a much later date. On the basis of a careful description of the song it has been suggested that this was the female singing and carrying nesting materials.

For several weeks I watched the nest without noting further developments, although the birds were still singing in the swamp. On May 22, while showing the nest to a friend, I discovered the female sitting on the nest and there were four eggs! The eggs were pure white without markings. The literature indicates that Winter Wren eggs may sometimes be almost clear white. A fifth egg was laid later.

Two eggs had hatched on June 3, but there were eggs in the nest for the next few days, although all five eventually hatched. The young were flesh-colored and naked at first, appearing completely helpless. On June 18 I went to check the nest and as I bent down to look in, the young popped out—all five of them—and scurried away through the grasses and cinnamon ferns, each in a different direction. The young were fully feathered, resembling the adults in every respect, except for a somewhat blotched appearance and shorter tails.

The eggs hatching over a period of several days suggests that incubation began before the clutch was complete. This would explain what would otherwise be a 12 day incubation period, rather short for this species. The young left the nest 15 days after the first ones hatched, although they may have been forced out early by my visit.

Robert E. Dirig, R.D. 1 (French Woods), Hancock, New York, 13783

---

**A Roof-nesting Upland Plover:** The Upland Plover (*Bartramia longicauda*) is generally regarded as nesting in concealed grass or among grass tufts in the open areas that it frequents. In the Schenectady area its nesting is of extremely local occurrence. In recent years the plovers at Craig School on Balltown Road in Niskayuna near Schenectady have drawn considerable interest. On June 21, 1965 I went to Craig School hoping to band young plovers which I had been told were seen on the school lawn.

Craig School is in open, semi-rural country atop a grassy knoll. The building is

mostly one story and has a tarred, pebble-covered, flat roof. In the immediate area of the school are several acres of cut lawn and further away some houses and hay-fields, some of which are cut annually. That evening when I was talking to the two custodians, asking for permission to roam the school ground, they told me that these "long-legged and long-necked" birds had a nest on the roof last year. I asked if they really did not mean a nighthawk and described the nighthawk. They said that neither this nor the killdeer which I described were the birds with the nest. The bird was streaked above and below, brownish, had long legs, a long thin neck and a small head. The nest was in a hollow among the pebbles on the roof and had two eggs. The birds gave the broken-wing display whenever anyone walked near the nest on the roof. Both custodians were within 10-15 feet of the birds on the roof. Since both of them have worked at the school since 1956-57, they are familiar with the plovers that frequent the school ground, even though they do not know the birds by name. They told me that the birds on the roof were the same as the ones seen commonly on the lawn.

Later when I went to the back of the school and was photographing the two young that I had caught, one of the custodians came and pointed over my head to a bird atop a power pole, saying that that bird was one of the same kind that nested on the roof last year. Atop the pole was one of the nervous-looking parents of the two young I held. I am convinced that their story is authentic.

That evening, three adults and two young were seen. On June 30, 1965 only one banded young and at least five adults were seen. Only the one adult that defended the banded young gave any inclination of parental responsibility. The other four adults were shy and wary. They may have nested elsewhere nearby and had come to the school lawn to feed on the abundant insect life that attracted about a dozen other species of birds.

Robert P. Yunick, 1527 Myron Street, Schenectady, New York, 12309

---

**An Unusual Downy Woodpecker Plumage:** On Feb. 27, 1965 a partially albino Downy Woodpecker (*Dendrocopus pubescens*) was observed at the home of Mr. and Mrs. William Fearnside of Fishers, N.Y. The bird, a female, appeared normal about the head and neck but the wings, back and tail were brown where the color is normally black. In addition, the tips of the primaries were nearly all white. In flight the bird appeared quite bizarre, flashing a great deal of brown. It was observed by the Fearnside, Allen Kemnitzer of Webster and myself, and photographed by Mr. Fearnside.

Robert G. McKinney, 198 Parkview Drive, Rochester, N.Y. 14625

---

**Winter Food of Long-eared Owls:** In the winter of 1964-65 four Long-eared Owls (*Asio otus*) roosted in a small pine-spruce grove north of Liverpool, N.Y. They were first discovered on 6 March 1965 and were seen subsequently by several observers. Because we could find little published material relating to the winter food habits of the Long-eared Owl, we collected and dissected all the pellets we could find in the grove on 24 and 25 June 1965. The skulls found in the pellets were identified by Professor LeRoy C. Stegeman of Syracuse University.

In the pellets were the remains of at least 156 different animals: 1 small passerine (probably *Spizella* or *Junco*), 1 Short-tailed Shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*), 1 Southern Bog Lemming (*Synaptomys cooperi*), and 153 Meadow Vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*). Also found in the grove were the remains of a Blue Jay and a Common Grackle, but it could not be determined whether they were prey of the owls.

Stephen H. Morgan, 4467 Buckley Road West, Liverpool, N.Y. 13088

Christian G. Spies, Jr., 7708 Morgan Road, Liverpool, N.Y. 13088