

Water Pipits Mobbing Cooper's Hawk: During observation of open-country birds at the Syracuse Airport on 25 October 1965, an immature Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperi*) was noted flapping strongly and heading southward over the open grass and weed areas at the western end of the area. As the hawk approached at about 200' elevation, lofted and headed southwest, a group of 60-75 Water Pipits (*Anthus spinoletta*) and a few Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*) flew up from the grass and bunched in a loose banner-like cloud of birds directly behind and above it. A steady chorus of sharp "jit" notes with only occasional double "jit-jit" notes descended from the flock of Water Pipits and a few sharp, almost metallic "tseet" notes from the Horned Larks. Neither larks nor pipits actually dove at the hawk and most of the flock regularly kept behind (downwind) and somewhat above it. The hawk had made no attempt to catch any birds as it approached the airfield from the north and made no maneuver to escape the tangle of excited, calling smaller birds. The hawk eventually worked southwestward over the end of the airfield, disappearing in a long glide beyond a patch of woods. Only when the hawk was well away from the grassy areas of the airfield did the flock of pipits descend and resume feeding.

For birds so protectively colored as Water Pipits and Horned Larks to indulge in open, high-flying mobbing of a potential hazard seemed most unusual and I can find no record of similar behavior on the part of Water Pipits in the literature.

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Hooded Merganser x Common Goldeneye Hybrid at Fulton, Oswego County: On 6 February 1966 on the Oswego River at Fulton, N. Y. an apparent hybrid (male) between the Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*) and the Hooded Merganser (*Mergus cucullatus*) was studied for about 15 minutes in full sunlight, and again under rainy skies on February 13, 1966 both John R. Haugh and I were able to study the bird for some time. The bird regularly moved and fed with a small group of Common Goldeneyes, both male and female, and on 13 February was seen to actively court a female Common Goldeneye (see below).

Description of hybrid as seen in field with 30x scope (combined data February 6 and 13):

A medium sized duck, slightly longer and definitely slimmer than drake Common Goldeneye; bill black, tubular like merganser but thicker than Hooded Merganser and with wide base; head shaped like male Green-winged Teal with slight drooping posterior crest, black with moderate dark green gloss; eye bright yellow; back sooty brown black with three black and white pennant tertials on left and one visible on right; evident white patch on shoulder bilaterally as seen in swimming bird, with smaller and not regularly visible white patch posterior to this (? white secondaries); chest white with thin black chest bar and a wide white patch between this black bar and a thin black bar at anterior end of flank feathers; flank feathers white anteriorly, sandy gray posteriorly with fine, crisp vermiculations (like a male Pintail's flanks); under tail coverts white; tail very dark gray; feet dark yellowish brown.

On February 6 the bird was observed feeding and swimming on a small patch of open water in the river. On February 13 it was found about 250 yards farther downstream. On the latter date, the bird made several apparent courting maneuvers toward female Common Goldeneye (? same female bird each time). The hybrid drake would bill-flip several times, then swell out the neck feathers, raise the head up sharply but with bill parallel to water surface, and quickly fan the short drooping crest, then settle back into its low swimming posture, with occasionally a plumage stroke, especially of the black and white pennant tertials, and some tail wagging, all actions similar to courting drake Hooded Mergansers. No apparent response was forthcoming from any of the female Common Goldeneye. It is of interest that the courting behavior of the hybrid incorporated largely Hooded Merganser-type activity, which may be in keeping with the largely Hooded Merganser plumage expression.

Further, particular efforts should be made to see if this striking hybrid returns to the same area to winter in subsequent years. F. H. Kortright's *The Ducks, Geese, and Swans of North America*, American Wildlife Institute, Washington, D. C. 1943, plate #36 shows a picture of another Hooded Merganser-Common Goldeneye hybrid which is very like the Fulton bird, but the head shape, back pattern and leg color are somewhat different.

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An Encounter between Two Snowy Owls: On 11 February 1966 at the Syracuse Airport, a check of the grass-lined runway strips for winter birds revealed a small, very white Snowy Owl, presumably male, perched on a tall lamppost at the edge of the area. When I approached the bird for a better look, it launched itself from the light pole and flew rapidly past me with the quick, short, snapping wingbeats that I have come to associate with a hunting bird. As observed thru binoculars, it was seen to suddenly strike at another large, rather dark Snowy Owl (? female) perched on the ground some 200 yards away. The perched owl ducked and the attacking bird veered off, flying with peculiar deep slow wingbeats, almost a "moth" flight, and reminiscent of some parts of the Short-eared Owl's courtship flight. About 150 yards from the second bird the first bird alighted and proceeded to posture in a peculiar fashion. Facing the still sitting second bird, the first owl stood high on slightly flexed legs, arched the back feathers, lowered the head and depressed all the head feathers giving an odd bullet-like effect to same, and elevated the wings such that the wrists pointed straight up, the under surface directly forward, the tips of the primaries straight down and almost touching the ground, and the secondaries about one-third spread. The tail was extended straight backwards and the upper tail coverts were fluffed and drooped at the side. Holding this position for some 3-4 minutes, the owl stepped in a shuffling, dancing motion back and forth in a semicircle, always facing the second owl. The posturing bird was noted to open the beak, and throat motion was seen but no sound could be heard because of adjacent jet aircraft noise which the owls appeared to ignore. The second owl throughout this appeared transfixed, sitting perfectly upright, looking very like a fat yellow-eyed bowling pin. After posturing as described for 3-4 minutes, the demonstrating bird very carefully folded the wings (somewhat like an Upland Plover after the "angeling" position) and both owls then settled into more relaxed postures.

The actual reason for the encounter remains totally obscure but the behavior was so bizarre and arresting that a description of it seemed warranted.

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Behavior of Swallows, Warblers and Swifts at Hornell: On May 10, 1966 we were called to come and see the swallows at Canacadea Creek in Hornell. Literally thousands of swallows were coursing up and down the creek, which is confined to a concrete-walled flume as it passes thru the city. The phenomenon had started after the snow and low temperature of May 8.

The mass of birds were flying very low over the waterway, with the greatest concentration of swallows, Yellow and Myrtle Warblers, and Chimney Swifts at the Thacher Street bridge. This density seemed to be caused by the type of wall construction at this point. Elsewhere the retaining walls were of smooth concrete, but at the bridge was a section of old fashioned stone masonry laid without mortar. The swallows included Barn, Tree, Rough-winged and a lesser number of Bank Swallows. I saw no Cliff Swallows. Barn and Tree Swallows greatly outnumbered the others. High overhead and never entering the stream of swallows below were several hundred Chimney Swifts gyrating about like a cover of fighter planes high over a mass of bombers beneath. On the edge of the flowing water were more than a hundred Yellow Warblers and a lesser number of Myrtle Warblers, all intent on seeking food. A single Savannah Sparrow worked side by side with the Myrtles.