

FIELD NOTES

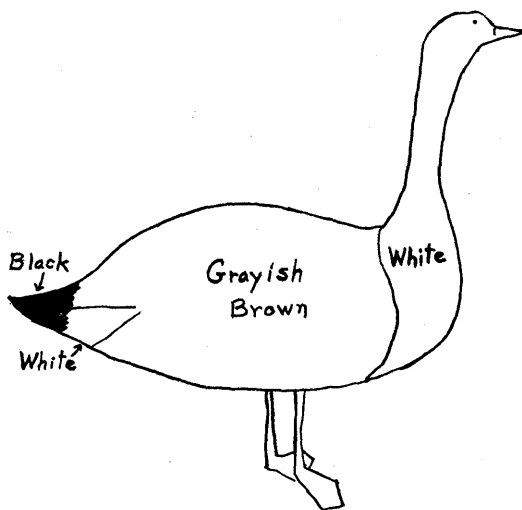
An Unusual Blue Jay Nest: While checking some old Robin nesting sites on June 17, 1965 in the Town of Friendship, Allegany County, New York, I found one of the sites had been taken over by a Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*). The loosely built but typical jay nest, containing two well-advanced young and one unhatched egg, had been constructed on top of a Robin nest that had been built during the 1964 nesting season. Both were located inside a small shed on a rafter under the roof about ten feet above the ground. The shed, one of several buildings in the dooryard of an old house, had a detached door, thus affording easy access to the inside. Open hay fields surrounded the building complex on all sides for several hundred yards before ending at the edges of deciduous woodland.

Bent (1964: *Life Histories of North American Jays, Crows and Titmice*, Dover, New York, Part 1:37) quotes A. D. Dubois who observed a Blue Jay nest on the roof trusses of an open pavilion at Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua County, New York. He also mentions (*ibid.*, 58, 67) several instances of nesting inside buildings by other members of the same genus. Therefore, while instances of nesting inside buildings are known for the Blue Jay and some of its close relatives, it is apparently an exceedingly rare practice. I find no reference to the fact that Blue Jays have been known to use an old birds nest as a base for their nest.

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A Strange Goose in Jefferson County: An unusual-looking goose was first seen by one of us (Walker) on April 13, 1966 in the flooded area of the lower flats at PRGMA (S of Rt. 12) feeding with Canada Geese. It was the same size as the Canadas and the same colors except that the head, neck and entire breast were white. (see sketch). Several hundred feet away were two Snow Geese and one definite Blue Goose. These were compared with nearby Canadas and seen to be smaller. These also remained slightly apart from the Canadas while the "white-headed" goose mingled. All were observed with a B and L "Zoom 60" telescope at 40× to 50× in good light.

The strange individual was again seen April 16 by each of us independently in the same area. Attempts to locate it after this date were unsuccessful.



A bird fitting this description was seen at about this time by Conservation Dept. Biologists Adams, Minnick and Moseltine.

Is this a Canada X Snow Goose hybrid or a case of a mutation (partial albinism) of the Canada Goose? A checklist and bibliography of hybrid birds (Cockrum 1952, *Wilson Bull* 64(3): 140-159) does not list any known Canada X Snow Goose hybrid in the wild.

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Ed. Note: Over the past few years, several odd-plumaged geese, either hybrids or partial albinos, have been observed on Cayuga Lake and at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge.

Common Grackles Catching European Chafers on the Wing: On July 2, 1966 at 9:00 p.m. EDT., Susan Howard and I noticed a flock of approximately 35 Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*) alternately feeding on the ground and in the air. They were observed on the grass-covered playground of the North Rose Central School, Village of North Rose in Wayne County, New York. Ground feeding Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) were interspersed within the grackle flock.

The grackles were noted flying up from the ground in hovering pursuit of countless winged, brown beetles. I later identified their prey as the European Chafer (*Amphimallon majalis* Raz.). We watched this unusual behavior for approximately 15 minutes, noting that a single grackle successfully caught a beetle in its beak about once in every 4 attempts. In addition, several grackles were observed flying up to and plucking chafers from the leaves of small deciduous shrubs in the school yard. They captured their quarry in their beaks while hovering in flight, and never lit in the foliage. It should be noted that grackles (perching birds) generally feed on the ground or in trees, and rarely on the wing.

The adult European Chafers are flying beetles which swarm about foliage at dusk, humming like bees. They belong to the family Scarabaeidae, and were introduced into this country about 25 years ago. They are a close relative of many native species of "June Bug", as well as the Japanese beetle (*Popillia japonica*), and Oriental beetle (*Anomala orientalis*). The larval stage of the chafer is injurious to the roots of most grasses.

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A Summer Record of Rough-legged Hawk in Jefferson County: On July 9, 1966, I observed a dark-phase Rough-legged Hawk along Interstate Route 81 near Watertown. The specific locality was about a mile northwest of Watertown, near the point where the highway crosses the Black River. The area there is open meadow, ideal habitat for this species.

I first observed the bird when I was perhaps a half mile away, and as I drew closer its identity was obvious. The black and white underwing pattern, hovering flight, and white tail base were all conspicuous as I slowed my speed while driving by. The bird was no more than thirty or forty yards from the road and about thirty yards over the meadow. The time was about noon, and there was not a cloud in the sky. I did not use binoculars as I could hardly have had better views in any case.

As far as I have been able to ascertain, this is the first summer record for this species in New York State. According to the literature, the Rough-legged Hawk breeds no further south than Newfoundland, northern Quebec (Ungava Peninsula), and extreme northern Ontario. The present record would, therefore, be several hundred miles south of this range.

While there appear to be no summer records of this species for New York State, there are some summer records of this species south of its normal range. These include one seen in the Carolinas on June 2, 1964 which was killed some time later by