

rapid, vanishing, delicate lines of moving yet quiet electricity they drew for me across the spread of grass, the trees, and the blue sky."

"The kingfisher has been described," wrote Dr. Sally Hoyt Spofford in the June-July 1961 issue of *The Conservationist*, "as handsome by some; ugly by others; as clownish, graceful, awkward, stupid or bright. Take your choice."

But my impression of one on a branch last summer with the salt bay seemingly at its service was of dignified comicality. In its high white collar it appeared puritanically clerical. The stout bill, pointed directly towards the water, effected the picture of the stereotyped, sharp-eyed, firm occupier of the old New England pulpit continually surveying the sea of faces during the sermon for any drowsers. Only my "clergyman" was clearly a fisher of fish as it suddenly plunged and extracted its struggling meal from the water. But in some of its other dives it returned empty-billed indicating that the predator's search for food is not always successful.

"Yes, this handsome and mildly bizarre bird eats fish," reported Dr. Spofford. But it doesn't seem to have the licensed fisherman's eager preference for the fish that can desperately break water or dash deeper dragging hook and line with it. "Indeed, most of his fishing is done in stretches of sluggish water where abound the so-called 'trash fish.' Trout, bass and other game fish are not given to much loitering near the surface of stagnant pools. Chubs and suckers are taken very often by kingfishers, as they are, indeed, much easier for them to catch," she continued.

They also eat crayfish, beetles and many larger water insects. Did you know that kingfishers sometimes eat berries or chokecherries? Dr. Spofford reported this in the article mentioned above, entitled "Are Kingfishers Worth Saving?"

You bet they are.

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FIELD NOTES

Outlying Colony of Prairie Warblers: In the summer of 1955, Richard A. Herbert, Thomas Lesperance and Dr. Walter R. Spofford saw several Prairie Warblers (*Dendroica discolor*) at Burnam's Siding near Port Douglas, Essex County, N.Y.; Mr. Lesperance had heard them there before (*Kingbird* 5:89, Oct. 1955; also pers. comm.). On June 21, 1963 I went to the location and immediately heard the familiar song of this species — a series of ascending, harsh, buzzy notes, and shortly saw its author. I believe there were two males present, though not observed simultaneously. The site is along railroad tracks above a steep slope pitching down to Lake Champlain. This rather barren slope has a scattering of red cedars and staghorn sumac. On the other side of the tracks is a small meadow with shrubbery bordering extensive mixed woodland typical of the area. The location of this colony is about 125 miles from the nearest breeding locality mentioned in the *AOU Check-list*: Concord, N.H.

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Ed. Note: Dr. Spofford also comments that "there are a number of regions up in that direction where I would like to look for the Prairie . . . pitch pine and oak scrub,

etc. The habitat near Schenectady is repeated in spots northward up to the Lake George area — and farther up?"

Eared Grebe Collected near Olean: Between 1 and 6 A.M. April 24, 1967 a severe storm passed through the Olean area with strong west winds, leaving 2-3 inches of snow. This storm forced many waterfowl to seek shelter on rivers and ponds of western New York. The count of birds taken at 1 P.M. that day on the Allegheny River from Olean Creek a half mile downstream was: 1 Red-necked Grebe, 306 Horned Grebes, 3 American Widgeon, 2 Ring-necked Ducks, 120 Lesser Scaup, 6 Common Goldeneye, 113 Buffleheads, 94 Oldsquaw, 93 White-winged Scoters, 1 Ruddy Duck, 1 Hooded Merganser, 4 Red-breasted Mergansers, and 12 Bonaparte's Gulls. For counts of birds from other areas see *Prothonotary* 33:70-71.

This same storm may have brought the Eared Grebe (*Podiceps caspicus*), with black neck, which Joseph A. Grzybowski observed on April 30, 1967 on the Allegheny River at the Olean Sewage Treatment Plant with 7 Horned Grebes. This was about one mile downstream from where the count was made on April 24. Later in the day the bird was collected by S. W. Eaton with the help of Grzybowski. It was a female, ovary 7.0 mm. $\times$ 20.0 mm.; bill 21.1 mm.; wing 127.1 mm.; tarsus 41.6 mm. The specimen is mostly in 'breeding feather' but still not in 'high plumage'; neck and throat still with small freckling of winter feathers. Rump not as dark nor sides of rump as chestnut as a May male from Colorado; primaries all grayish underneath — NO WHITE — making it agree with descriptions of *P. c. californicus*; bill black; iris scarlet orange with silvery ring around pupil; eyelids orange; tarsi black. Weight 279.5 grams. This specimen appears to be the first collected in New York State, although two specimens have been obtained from the Canadian side of Niagara Falls. It is #1080 in the St. Bonaventure University collection.

Beardslee and Mitchell (1965, *Birds of the Niagara Frontier Region*, p. 85) state that the first sight record for this area was Nov. 14, 1948 at Braddock's Bay. Since that time the species has been reported almost every year, most records being in October and November

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Sparrow Hawk Nest in Martin House: Two years ago we put up a Martin house. Two springs we waited for Martins in vain. This year, on April 16th, with a wave of migrating swallows a pair of Martins came, looked, landed on the house chattering in Martinese. They circled, came back and inspected some more. And then came the Sparrow Hawks and chased the Martins and they were not seen again. A disappointment, but two lively months followed.

Since late March the Sparrow Hawks had been using the Martin house off and on for a perch (so we thought). Now suddenly we became aware that they had more serious intentions and planned to use this as their nesting box. Sure enough, on April 20th, the female started sitting in the left attic hole of the Martin house and from then on there was to be continuous turmoil in our garden for over two months. Turmoil when the male came with shrill ki-ki-ki-ki's when he was bringing food to the female and took over the nest duties for a while. More turmoil when both adults began feeding the hatched young on May 20th, preceding every appearance at the nest with resounding ki-ki-ki's stirring up Robin, Catbird, Tree Swallow, Grackle and sparrows in hot pursuit. During this time, whenever we started to do some chores in the garden, we would immediately hear the familiar ki-ki-ki overhead and the swooshing of wings as the adults dove at us. We could see that there were three young in the attic hole. As they grew, the adults had quite a time getting into the opening with whatever prey they brought in. Most of the time it was a mouse, sometimes a frog, once a bird. Apparently the crowding in the hole became unbearable to one determined young who left his nest on June 11th and moved into the south attic room of the Martin house. And still there were 3 heads visible in the North