

FIELD NOTES

Red-tailed Hawk Attempts Piracy of Sparrow Hawk?: Because Brown and Amadon (1968, *Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World*, part 1, p. 73) mention that piracy is rather rare in birds of prey (excepting certain species which make a regular habit of it), I thought the following incident worth noting. At 12:38 E.S.T. on 5 April 1970 I observed a male Sparrow Hawk, *Falco sparverius*, perched on a telephone wire along a highway in Ithaca, N.Y. The highway edges a housing development and the bird apparently was still hunting a fall-ploughed field opposite the houses. The field had a thin snow cover. The temperature was 40°F. The sky was about 40% overcast with cumulus clouds and the wind was calm. I stopped to observe the Sparrow Hawk and at 12:43 he flushed, dropping to the field for a stoop. Shortly thereafter, he flew up carrying a small rodent (vole or shrew?) in his talons and landed about 20 yards south of the site of the kill. At 12:44 he was perched on a clod of soil and as yet had not begun to eat. Suddenly a Red-tailed Hawk, *Buteo jamaicensis*, appeared in the field of my 7 x 50mm. binoculars and the Sparrow Hawk flushed southward still carrying its prey which was very shortly dropped. He continued southward across the ploughed field heading for a woodlot about 200 yards away. The hawk actively pursued the falcon to the edge of the woodlot and stayed remarkably close to it (about four to five feet). The falcon attempted some evasive flight but it was for the most part direct to the woodlot edge. At that point the falcon perched and three Common Crows, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*, began mobbing the hawk. Although the Sparrow Hawk dropped the prey very shortly after flushing, it appeared that the Red-tailed Hawk was seeking the Sparrow Hawk's prey and had not seen him drop it. This is the same general vicinity where Allen (1962, *Kingbird*, XII, p. 22) observed a Red-tailed Hawk take prey from a domestic cat.

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Piping Plover at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge: At approximately 11:00 A.M. on April 22, 1970, I was driving along Main Pool Dike Drive just south of the New York State Thruway on the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, when two small pale shorebirds flew up from the road in front of my car. I recognized them as Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*), a species I was familiar with on the Massachusetts coast. As I knew this species to be rare in Central New York, I returned to Refuge Headquarters to report and to call other area birders, including Walter Benning who has had considerable experience with shorebirds. Returning to the dike I found the birds busily feeding, and for three hours they remained in a stretch of road approximately 300 yards long, flying up in front of oncoming vehicles and landing again behind the cars. A Killdeer made several attempts to drive the smaller birds from the area. At about 1:45 Walter Benning arrived and confirmed the identification. This is the first reported occurrence of the Piping Plover for the Refuge and for the Cayuga Lake Basin.

Mr. Benning has filed a detailed description in which he commented on the fact that the birds seemed to "disappear from view" when they turned their backs to the observer and completely blended in with the dusty road. It is perhaps interesting to note that the gravel road is the only suitable habitat in the area for such a bird, perhaps serving as a "beach."

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Snipe Impaled on Cable: Late Wednesday afternoon, 28 October 1970, I was driving north on New York Route 11A, just north of Tully. On the east side of the road, I saw a bird hanging from a telephone cable.

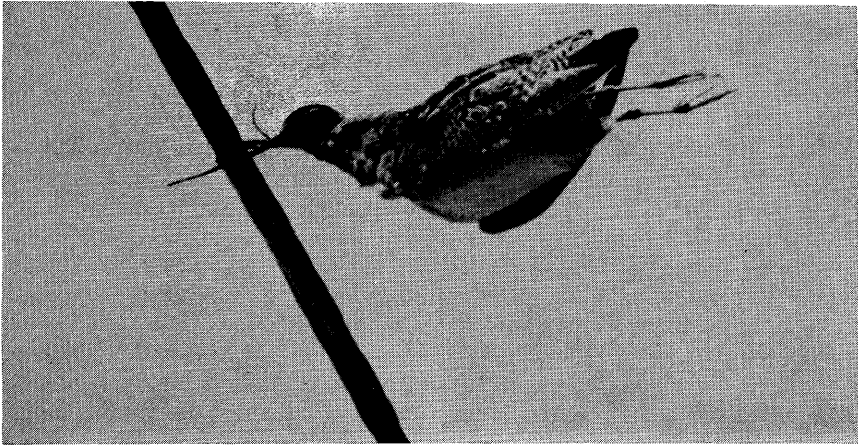
I stopped the car and examined the bird with binoculars. It was about 20 feet

over the road (directly over a highway marker 10.18). The bird was a Common Snipe, *Capella gallinago*.

The Snipe must have been flying directly east. Its lower mandible struck the cable. The bird flipped over the wire and hung there. The point of the lower mandible was still secured in the cable strands, with the bill forming a crook as it went over the wire.

I returned Thursday morning with long equipment to retrieve the snipe. Dorothy Crumb accompanied me and took several photographs. When the bird broke loose, the lower mandible remained in the cable.

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Phalaropes Hawking Insects over the Water at Montezuma: While watching swallows, on Sept. 14, 1960 at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, hawking insects following an abundant hatch, I discovered a Wilson's Phalarope (*Steganopus tricolor*) running along a mudflat, visible through the cattails in my 30x Balscope, apparently picking up food and occasionally jumping up in the air a few inches and snapping its bill as though catching an insect. After a few minutes it was joined by six Northern Phalaropes (*Lobipes lobatus*). Suddenly they all started flying low over the water hawking insects. For the next fifteen minutes, until it began to get dusk, there was furious activity as the phalaropes alternately swam, dabbled and spun in the water, and flew twisting and turning in the air, hawking insects a foot or so above the water.

The speed, agility, grace and beauty of the phalarope on the water can be matched in the air when they take to hawking insects.

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Sabine's Gull at Mecox Bay, Suffolk Co., New York: On August 25, 1970, at Mecox Bay, while looking over a group of Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*), I discovered a Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*) among them. It was in breeding plumage, with a few flecks of white on its forehead. My attention was first attracted to the bird by the yellow tip on its bill. It stayed on the beach with the terns and permitted close approach. The bird had all field marks — black legs, yellow tipped black bill, hood, white forked tail, and conveniently flexed its wings on the ground to display the spectacular wing pattern. I flushed the bird, and again noted the wing and tail characteristics as it flew about 100 feet and resettled with the terns. There was a SE