

Whip-poor-will alights on observer's head. Various accounts in ornithological literature have shown the Whip-poor-will to be quite unafraid of man on occasion. The following experience records another instance of this characteristic being carried to a surprisingly high degree of fearlessness.

The wooded ridge behind my residence (near Accord, Ulster Co., N.Y.) has long been the summer home of Whip-poor-wills and not infrequently they include my yard in their nightly circuit of hunting. In this region the first call is usually heard in the latter part of April, indicating their arrival from the south. On May 11, 1973, about dusk, we had the pleasure of having one of the birds appear in the yard and commence "shaking the dusk" with his loud repetitious whip-poor-willing.

Two days later, May 13th, again at dusk, I deliberately left the house with the intent of listening for the distant call of a Whip-poor-will which seems to have a different appeal than when heard close by. In stepping from the doorway to the walk I was met with a glucking note (Not unlike one of the Catbird's notes) and at the same time saw a Whip-poor-will rise from the ground about 10 feet in front of me and land on the picnic table nearby. I remained still and watched.

From its actions it appeared to me that the bird had found fair hunting in this vicinity as exhibited by the number of times it took off, flying about the yard with frequent upsweeps, flycatcher fashion, then cutting back groundward seeking to alight on some object for a brief time before making another flight. My presence did not seem to have any disturbing effect as it would make flights that brought it so close to me that I could hear the flutter of wings when it made a sudden maneuver. Once it landed on a large stone in the rock-garden and was not more than 6 feet in front of me. My big surprise came when it made one of its upsweeps near the corner of the house, cutting back and then, flying along over the walk in front of the house, came directly toward me and without hesitation landed on the top of my head (crew-cut hair style). The landing was so light and effortless that I could feel nothing except the slight pressure of the buoyant feathers resting on the hair stub. The bird felt incredibly light. When the lift-off came, it too, was so effortless that the only sensation that told me it was gone was the release of the slight tactile pressure of the feathers against the hair.

The bird remained in the vicinity a short time longer, suddenly disappearing and was not seen or heard again that evening. It was of interest to note that during this incident only one note was used and this was repeated many times.

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Mourning Warbler nest in marginal habitat. On 8 August 1971 I found a nest of *Oporornis philadelphia* in a 30-acre study plot at East Branch, Delaware County, New York. The site was on the northwest slope of near-climax maple-oak-birch forest at an altitude of about 1200 feet. The canopy is about 20 m high and is entire. The substratum is sparse, and the ground cover by mid-summer is knee-high and dense, consisting mostly of ferns, Waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum* sp.), and White Snakeroot (*Eupatorium rugosum*). The nearest edge is about 240 m distant.

The bulky open cup was concealed in a stand of Silvery Spleenwort (*Asplenium acrostichoides*) 65 cm tall. The bottom of the nest was 17-20 cm above the forest floor, supported solely by ferns, and consisted of a multitude of dead stipes of Silvery Spleenwort. The stipes which were 95% of the mass were rather uniformly 150 mm in length, and were laid up in a funnel-shaped space between the flaring blades of the fern. A few twigs of Flowering Raspberry (*Rubus odoratus*) and an unidentified herbaceous plant (aster?) were also used in the outer nest. The cup consisting 80 percent of fine black rootlets, 20 percent of narrow strips of grape-vine (*Vitis* sp.) bark, and thinly lined with Porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*) guard hairs and other unidentified short hairs, was 55 mm in diameter and 40

mm. deep. The maximum outside height of the nest was 100mm, the outside diameter 125-150 mm, and the sides were 47mm thick.

Nichols (*Birds of America*, 1936) says that the Mourning Warbler nests in dry cut-over clearings or swampy ground. Bent (*Life Histories of American Wood Warblers*, 1953) says "seldom in shady woods". Pough (*Audubon Bird Guide*, 1946) states that "the essential habitat" is an extensive, dense stand of shrubbery. The nest that I found in marginal habitat may be explained by reviewing recent plant succession in the area. After limited selective cutting of mature timber in the tract in 1959, berry tangles sprang up on about 10 percent of the forest floor. In 1965 I found four singing males. As the canopy gradually closed again, the tangles ceased to flourish and the habitat became marginal for Mourning Warblers. By 1971 only one pair returned to the tract. In 1972 there were none. Nesting materials mentioned in the literature are dead leaves, coarse fibers, and grass. I find no mention of fern strips. In marginal habitat this pair of Mourning Warblers used a large proportion of atypical nest material.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SPRING SEASON

Fritz Scheider

April entered warm, wet, and mild with some really splendid days around Easter (April 22); May, however, was persistently cool, very cloudy, very wet, and with some extraordinarily late snowfalls upstate (3,5). Warbler flights were sparse (2,3,4,5) with only May 11-12 downstate and May 28-30 upstate as good wave days. Most migrant species were delayed, some markedly so, e.g. Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and the major tallies and/or peak dates were four to ten days later than usual. A gaudy array of southern "overshoots" (Prothonotary Warbler—3,10, Yellow-throated Warbler—2,10, Summer Tanager—2,10, and Blue Grosbeak—10), primarily from Long Island and the Lake Ontario littoral brightened an already rarity-rich spring (vide *infra*).

The recent surge of pelagic trips received good coverage in the Region 10 report—tideless, saltwaterless upstaters can only drool while all those semi-sailors downstate happily unchuck and log shearwaters, petrels, jaegers, and Lord knows what else out at sea.

Cattle Egrets staged another vernal invasion (2,3,5,9,10) and small flocks rather than singles are now the rule; lesser numbers of Glossy Ibis were also reported (3,5,6,9). Waterfowl, both geese and ducks, left almost statewide in late March and early April; April numbers were uniformly few except of dabbers at Federal and State Refuges. Even fewer leftover ducks were noted in May and I suspect many Big Runs were shy of the usual late, list-swelling anatids one always hopes for. A heavy Lake Ontario White-winged Scoter flight (2,5) was associated with inland observations of both *Melanitta* scoters (3,4).