

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker roosting in chimney: On the evening of 15 July 1975 we started to burn trash in the fireplace at my summer cottage on Piseco Lake (Hamilton Co.) in the Adirondacks. It had been several days since the last fire. The papers had just begun burning well when my grandson shouted, "There's a bird in the fire!" Fortunately it had landed in the ashes at the front of the fireplace, not in the flames. To my surprise, it was a young Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*). I picked it up and blew the ashes off while it screeched and tried to jab me with its beak. A few red feathers on the throat indicated that it was probably a young male. Because it was already dark, I put it in a carton on the porch, and the next morning we released it, apparently unhurt. It flew to the nearest tree, a pin cherry, and began searching for food. I assume it had gone to roost for the night in the chimney, was partially overcome by smoke and fell down into the fireplace.

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Bluebird killed while establishing territory: On 10 May 1975, while inspecting our bluebird houses on Seneca Army Depot and greasing the steel poles to deter predators, John Turnauckas and I found a White-footed Mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*) in a fresh nest in one box with several one or two-day-old young. We left them undisturbed and did not grease that pole. On our next weekly check on 17 May the box contained a completed Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) nest with four eggs. In four years of bluebird work I have found them to be tough customers around their nests, but the displacement of an obviously unwilling mouse with young to defend clearly merited special respect.

The final clutch was five eggs. An apparently normal pair of adults tended and fledged four young. However, when I cleaned out the box on 20 June, I found the skeleton, remiges, and retrices of a male bluebird under the nest, atop the compressed remains of the mouse nest. There was no trace of the infant mice, which may have been thrown out or eaten by the bluebirds, or moved by the adult mouse.

The bird's skull was crushed just in front of the right eye socket. Apparently this was the direct cause of death. Several scenarios are possible, but it seems most likely that the male bluebird was killed by the mouse in a literal fight to the death, and the female bluebird quickly acquired another mate and proceeded with the nesting. This pair also attempted a second brood which failed for unknown reasons.

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