

Summer Tanager in Essex County: My summer home near Elizabethtown, Essex Co., is in a clearing on a wooded slope, altitude 770'. Just after 10:00 a.m. on 30 May, 1976 I heard calls consisting of five or six fast notes in a monotone, with the pattern of a Wood Thrush's sputter. The tone was sufficiently flatter and harder to make me suspect the bird to be a Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*). I could see it moving through the branches of tall birch trees actively fly-catching. It was singing a loud, full song, surprisingly like a Scarlet Tanager. I was anticipating checking all tanager calls in the literature when the bird came out in full view, still actively fly-catching. It was bright rose red except for the wings, rump and belly which were golden-olive, and the bill was large, long and horn colored—unmistakably a Summer Tanager.

During this time, a Scarlet Tanager (*P. olivacea*) was heard singing farther in the woods, an identification subsequently verified both visually and by hearing the usual two-note "chip-churr." The Summer Tanager moved uphill into the edge of deep woods and was not found again. I have long been familiar with this species in the south where I have heard its usual fast robin-like song, and in New York City parks I have seen a number of individuals in May, with patchy rose and olive plumage. So far as I am aware, this is the first occurrence in northeastern New York State.

It is interesting to conjecture that this individual may have been raised in an area of overlap with breeding Scarlet Tanagers, with resulting influence on the song. On the other hand, Ridgway in *Bent* considers the songs of the two species similar. The song, incidentally, was twice heard by Mike Peterson, whom I called immediately, as I held the phone at the open door.

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Blue-gray Gnatcatcher nest in Essex County: On May 29, 1976, the author, together with Deborah Anson, Teresa Anson, and Patricia Taber, canoed to Schuyler Island, Lake Champlain, located in the Town of Chesterfield, Essex County. Owned by the State of New York, Schuyler Island is "Wild Forest" land within the boundaries of the Adirondack Park. Approximately three-quarters of a mile long by one-half mile wide, the island lies about a half-mile off Trembleau Point, at lat. 44°30', long. 73°21', and includes open fields, overgrown pastures, stands of hardwoods and conifers, and several low boggy areas.

At 2:30 p.m., as our two canoes passed a small hardwood swamp on the east shore of the island, Deborah Anson noted a small grayish bird with a white belly feeding in the shrubbery. Upon landing, we quickly located a foraging Blue-gray

Gnatcatcher (*Poliioptila caerulea*). A few moments later when the bird had twice flown to a leafy area high in an American Elm (*Ulmus americana*), I saw the nest, placed near the intersection of two terminal branches about fifty feet above the ground. As Francis Marion Weston (1949, in Bent's *Life Histories N. A. Thrushes*, etc., p. 347) observed, descriptions of the nest are monotonously similar: "A beautiful, cup-shaped nest, compactly built of plant down and similar materials bound together with insect silk and spider web and covered externally with bits of lichen." During the next hour we noted both parents actively bringing food to the young at frequent intervals or simultaneously. The nestlings could not be seen, each parent reaching deep into the nest with only the tail extended out above the cup for the feeding.

Eaton (1914, *Birds of N.Y.*, 2: 315) stated, "It is evident that this species, like the Tufted titmouse and the Carolina wren, is of frequent occurrence in the interior of New York, but has never established itself as a breeding species." Among the early records cited by Eaton is "Middle Granville, August 12, 1908 (Weber, *Auk*, 26: 82)," about 70 miles to the south of Schuyler Island, in Washington County. Bull (1974, *Birds N.Y. State*, p. 439), commented upon the change in status of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in New York State, describing recent flight years that produced a multitude of migration and breeding records, but he felt the bird was "absent in northern New York," adding that breeding had penetrated only as far north as Saratoga County.

The first Essex County sighting was made by Janet Cooper at Ticonderoga May 13, 1962. Carleton (1976, *Bds. Essex Co., N.Y.*, p. 18) considered the species a very rare transient visitant, with extreme dates of April 22 to May 24, adding that there were 4 records in the county during May 1974. Mack (1975, *The Kingbird*, 25(1): 51) noting that the 1974 invasion by this species, a bird alien to the Adirondack-Champlain region, was unusual, presciently felt, "the total number of individuals and total area covered may indicate we will have a breeding record some year."

The Schuyler Island nest, located high in a tall tree in a hardwood swamp on the shore of (and surrounded by) a lake, fits Bull's description of other New York State breeding sites. Although the outcome of the nesting after May 29 is unknown, the record apparently provides both a new early date for nestlings and a new northernmost location for the State of New York.

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