

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

An Instance of Apparently Altruistic Behavior on the Part of an Evening Grosbeak – Northern birdwatchers are familiar with the noisy and scrappy behavior of the Evening Grosbeak. It seems, at times, to resemble the House Sparrow more than its native North American neighbors. On 13 January 1986 the following incident challenged my thinking on this issue.

There were about 40 grosbeaks feeding on sunflower seed. As often happens, the entire flock decided to take off at once. One male grosbeak flew into a window, tumbling to the ground. I went out to fill the feeders and checked to see whether this bird was killed. It was stunned, and unwilling to fly. I uprighted the bird where it had fallen and departed. From the window, I watched the return of the flock. One of the male grosbeaks, feeding on the ground close to the injured bird, gingerly picked up a seed, opened it, and passed the meat into the mouth of the wounded bird. The stunned individual consumed the sunflower meat, and continued to rest for a couple of minutes, then flew to a tree nearby to rest.

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