

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Unusual Close Encounter

On 19 Feb , a fairly warm day, I was pruning an apple tree in my garden. The garden faces north, with a six-foot wooden fence on the east side where I was pruning. The north side is bounded by a line of arbor vitae in front of the wire fence which borders the reservoir for Northport, Suffolk Co., which has many large Norway and Sugar maples. The west boundary is a post and rail fence, with the complete property measuring 60 x 120 feet.

I was pruning the lower branches of the tree, using a pruning saw that is five feet long but can be extended much farther.

I heard a swooshing sound to my right and turned my head to the right to see a Sharp-shinned Hawk sitting on the fence directly in front of me. It seemed completely at ease, wings folded , and no body movement, with its head slightly cocked to the left. I waited quietly to see what it would do next. It did not move, and as I talked to it, it looked directly at me. In about a minute, it lifted off, flew over my right shoulder and on to the back bird feeder, where it began to rustle through the bushes, and then flew over the arbor vitae and back again, and after another minute or so , it left.

I resumed pruning, again heard that swooshing noise , as the hawk again flew right over my shoulder and on to the same back feeder. At this point, I went into the house for my camera and took some photos.

This was probably the "sharpie" that had been a regular visitor to my garden that winter, but I have not seen it since.

Kerrin B. Polaski
221 Scudder Ave.
Northport, NY 11768

Ed.note: Of all our local birds of prey, this species is undoubtedly the least likely to approach a human this closely. A search of the literature reveals no like occurrences. Hopefully, this curious trait did not lead to an unhappy end for this individual .