

exhibited behavior similar to that observed in 1983, but again no nest was found. The Sooty Tern was still present in mid-May when this note was submitted for publication.

Several aspects of our observations are noteworthy. First, the Sooty Tern nest discovered in 1982 is only the second confirmed nesting attempt in North Carolina by this species, whose normal breeding grounds are about 1000 km to the south (A.O.U. Check-list, 1983). Second, the nest in New Hanover County was quite similar to the first nest of this species found in North Carolina at Morgan Island, Carteret County, in 1978 (Fussell et al. 1981). Both were located on dredged-material islands occupied by nesting colonial waterbirds, and both nests were placed in grassy areas associated with nesting Laughing Gulls, away from the bare domes occupied by other nesting tern species. Both nests were also apparently destroyed by Laughing Gulls. Finally, the three sightings reported here are the only records of Sooty Terns along the North Carolina coast south of Cape Lookout that were not associated with the passage of tropical storms. They are also the earliest sightings of Sooty Terns in North Carolina, with the exception of the first record of this species in the state on 16 March 1869 (Pearson et al. 1942, Lee and Booth 1979).

LITERATURE CITED

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Red-bellied Woodpecker Predation on Nestling Nuthatches

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While canoeing in Lassiter Swamp above Merchants Millpond, Gates County, N.C., on 21 April 1982, I heard a disturbance in a tree along the creek. This was followed by a splash in the water behind the tree and additional shrill cries from above. When I finally had the tree in view, I could see a male Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*) probing repeatedly into a hole in a gnarl approximately 30 feet up in a Tupelo Gum (*Nyssa aquatica*). After several tries (with continued distress calls coming from inside the cavity), the woodpecker pulled a nestling from the hole. At this time a White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*) arrived on the side of the gnarl. It was carrying a food item, apparently a caterpillar. Giving its characteristic note, the nuthatch moved about the gnarl in an agitated manner. The woodpecker then flew to a nearby upward-sloping branch, carrying the nestling, which it apparently ate with rapid jabs that continued for 2 or 3 minutes. The remains of the nestling, however, were not visible from below after the woodpecker flew away. Investigating the source of the splash

heard at the beginning of the incident, I found a nestling White-breasted Nuthatch that apparently had been pulled from the nest and dropped by the woodpecker.

Similar episodes have been reported by other observers. Roach (Fla. Field Nat. 3:19) saw a male Red-bellied Woodpecker remove three young and one egg from a nest that may have been its own or that of a neighboring pair of the same species. Roach heard one of the three nestlings fall into the underbrush. He could not determine whether the adult was a parent trying to move the young to another cavity or a competitor attempting to clean out the cavity for its own use. Watt (Wilson Bull. 92:249) saw a female Red-bellied Woodpecker remove three young in succession from an American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*) nest. Neither woodpecker was seen eating the nestlings.

Red-bellied Woodpeckers do not always act as predators when they encounter young of other pairs or other species. Curry (Wilson Bull. 81:470) describes an instance when a fledgling Tufted Titmouse (*Parus bicolor*) was fed by an adult Red-bellied Woodpecker that was in the process of carrying food to its own young still in the nest. Pursued by the begging titmouse, the woodpecker backed away several steps, but leaned forward and fed the young bird when it continued to advance.

BACKYARD BIRDING

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Monroe (on the St. John's River). Here was a spot where land and shore birds abounded in early May. Hundreds of migrating Tree Swallows were feeding on thousands of strange flying insects, called "love bugs" by the natives. There were Black Skimmers (a surprise as this was fresh water), Black-necked Stilts, Caspian Terns, assorted sandpipers, and Brown Pelicans. But the most delightful find of all was a flock of over a dozen White Pelicans. Also of interest were the female Red-winged Blackbirds in the tall grasses beyond the parking area—they had a pinkish cast to their body feathers! Could it have been something they eat? If feeding upon shrimp can enhance the rosy color in flamingoes and spoonbills, we wondered, could it be that these blackbirds, which appeared to feed from time to time at the water's edge, were gleaning tiny shrimp? What really threw us for a loop for a while were the strangely colored ducks and geese we saw. We later learned that they had escaped from a nearby zoo some years earlier and interbred with the local domestic species—the combination of European and Asian species with Mallards produced some quite bizarre specimens.

Wherever one stops overnight in Florida can be exciting and give close-up views of herons and egrets, White Ibis, and Wood Storks. So you see, you can take your backyard birding with you wherever you go and add another dimension to your travels.