

# General Field Notes

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## Red-cockaded Woodpecker Found Dead in Cavity Entrance

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On 20 May 1985, while checking Red-cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) nesting activity on Manchester State Forest, Sumter County, S.C., I found a dead adult male Red-cockaded Woodpecker in a cavity entrance. The bird's head and neck were protruding from the cavity with the head pointed downward. There was no external damage to the head. Many of the breast feathers were matted with pine resin. The matted feathers had to be pulled loose in order to remove the bird from the cavity tunnel. I estimated the bird had been dead several days. The bird's getting stuck in the sap probably caused its death. The cavity tree was a Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*), 24 m tall and 35 cm diameter breast high. Cavity height was 5.8 m. The cavity opening was partially grown over and the smallest I have seen (3.8 x 3.5 cm). This cavity had been used intermittently as a roost chamber at least since 1980, when this area was first surveyed.

Locke et al. (Bird-Banding 50:368-369) also reported a dead Red-cockaded stuck in cavity resin in Texas. Barnett et al. (Proc. Red-cockaded Woodpecker Symposium II, p. 110, 1983) reported a dead Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*) in resin at a Red-cockaded cavity in Florida. This unusual form of mortality, although certainly uncommon, may be more widespread than realized.

The specimen was deposited with the Clemson University Museum, Department of Biological Sciences (Accession Number CU 638).

## Atypical Nest Site for a Prothonotary Warbler

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On 20 May 1985 we had the opportunity to examine an unusual nesting situation of a Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*). An adult female bird was observed nesting

inside an inverted flat-bottom aluminum boat secured to Elwell's Ferry, which crosses the Cape Fear River near Kelly in Bladen County, N.C. The nest was approximately 1.3 m above the river, and the bird had a piece of moss in her beak when we first saw her sitting on the nest. Robert (Bob) Mitchell, the ferry operator, informed us that he had seen the bird gathering moss from the base of a Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) on the north side of the river near the ferry landing. During a follow-up visit on 18 June, we were informed that these birds had successfully fledged three or four young the preceding week. Because Prothonotary Warblers normally nest in small cavities, their nesting in such an atypical situation is interesting.

The nest was protected from adverse weather, and like many Prothonotary nests, it was over water. However, the "cavity" (boat) opening was so large that it is difficult to compare an inverted boat to any previously described nesting situation for this species. In the surrounding habitat on both sides of the river, we found Prothonotaries to be quite common in the cypress/tupelo swamp.

Mr. Mitchell informed us that Prothonotary Warblers had built a nest in the same spot the preceding year. When it became necessary to repair the boat, workers removed the nest, which contained young, and placed it at the base of a nearby cypress. Subsequently, grass-cutting crews moved the nest to a box placed at the ferry house, about 40 m from the original site. Throughout these moves the parents continued to care for the young, and they eventually fledged.

In both 1984 and 1985 the parents maintained a schedule of nest construction and parental care despite the irregular schedule of ferry crossings. As the ferry moved back and forth across the river, more than 100 m wide at the crossing, the birds, which always foraged on the north side of the river, continued to bring nesting material, to return to incubating eggs, and to feed dependent young. Adult birds returning to the nest would fly to the nest regardless of the ferry's location on the river. Birds were seen carrying nesting material and food from the swamp forest to the ferry, apparently unconcerned about its location or movement. This note documents a rather bizarre example of strong nest attachment and adaptability in parent passerines. We thank Bob Mitchell, Kelly, N.C., for bringing this nesting activity to our attention.

### **Spring Record of Clay-colored Sparrow for North Carolina**

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On the afternoon of 13 April 1985, we visited a large farm pond on SR 1618 about 3 air miles W of Halifax in Halifax County, N.C. We were observing a flock of about 25 White-crowned Sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) in a thicket of willows and other shrubs near the shore of the pond. Among the White-crowned Sparrows were several Field Sparrows (*Spizella pusilla*), one or two Chipping Sparrows (*S. passerina*), and a bird that appeared to be a Clay-colored Sparrow (*S. pallida*). Many of the White-crowned Sparrows were singing, and among these songs we heard one consisting of several low buzzes, which we thought to be that of the Clay-colored Sparrow. After