



# Roundtable

... with Louis C. Fink

## Request for Bluebird Nesting Data

Dorothy J. Foy, who maintains 300 bluebird boxes, is researching the status of the Eastern Bluebird in North Carolina. She would like to receive reports from CBC members including the following information:

1. Number of boxes, starting in 1979 and ending with 1984 nesting season.
2. Number boxes used by other species (names of species if known).
3. Number boxes used by House Sparrows, including how many fledged.
4. How many bluebird eggs and how many fledged.

Mrs. Foy promises a response to everyone who provides data for her project. Send reports to: DOROTHY J. FOY, P.O. Box 457, Oriental, N.C. 28571.

## More on Opportunism of the Red-tailed Hawk

The Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) seems more abundant in the Carolinas today than, say, 30 years ago. Perhaps that is because people shoot the birds less often now that free-roaming poultry is scarce, but more likely resurgence in numbers of this hawk is because of increases in pasture land and super highways with the edges between forest and grassland that are favored by the meadow mice and cotton rats the Red-tail prefers.

Still, the Red-tail is extraordinarily adaptable in its pursuit after food, not specializing on rodents by any means. The Craigheads describe the species as an "unrestricted" feeder on any kind of animal it can subdue, and that includes snakes, rabbits, small- and medium-sized rodents, bats, pheasants, and large insects. In fact, the species seems, at times, to be opportunistic to a fault. Years ago when I lived in California, the keepers at the San Diego Zoo had problems in winter when the Western Red-tail flocked onto the grounds to prey on free-running pheasants and jungle fowl.

I thought I had seen the ultimate in adaptability in Red-tails when W.G. Brown Jr. and I watched a bird take apparently moribund fish from the surface of a lake near Raleigh, N.C. (Chat 44:16, 1980). Later that morning what was likely the same bird flapped across the lake clutching prey with a flock of crows in hot pursuit. About halfway across, the hawk dropped its quarry, a fledgling crow. The crows harrassed the hawk for more than half an hour.

As unusual as fishing by a Red-tail might have seemed, I think the following behavior was just as bizarre. It was a brisk afternoon in November 1985 at the Upper Coastal

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made within walking distance of his house. Never before and, quite likely, never again will anyone else produce comparable results from such a limited geographic area.

Wayne's other major contribution was to the students he gathered around him. The importance of record keeping, the eye for detail, the need for collecting—all of these values contributed to the overall conservative scientific approach that would become the mark of South Carolina's major ornithologists for the next 50 years.

Arthur Wayne was one of the few fortunate enough to do exactly what he wanted to do for life. Although he never achieved riches and frequently had to struggle, Wayne made a tremendous impact on South Carolina ornithology. "It is," he wrote, "a perfect passion for me to be in the woods . . . and all I want is a living out of it" (Wayne to Brewster, 22 February 1911).

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Plains Research Station, Rocky Mount, N.C. A combine was harvesting a field of soybeans while a mature Red-tail glided along above at about 100 m. As I watched, the bird folded its wings and stooped in the direction of the machine. About 50 m from the combine, the hawk braked and plunged to the ground. I immediately heard the scream of a rabbit in distress. I located the hawk with my binoculars. The bird was, by then, shielding its catch and glaring back at me. Finally the hawk rose laboriously with its prey, apparently a young rabbit. As the bird flapped to a scope of woodland nearby, I reflected that a favorite pastime of my childhood was chasing assorted varmints flushed by farm machinery. Evidently that particular Red-tail took a more utilitarian view of such situations, although I hope it found a bit of adventure, and even felt suspense, from waiting near a soybean combine.—JOSHUA A. LEE, 5104 Newcastle Road, Raleigh, N.C. 27606.