

# General Field Notes

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## Nest Predation by a Red-bellied Woodpecker

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On 20 May 1990, I located the nest of a pair of Acadian Flycatchers (*Empidonax vireescens*) about 4 mi. N of Edenton, Chowan Co., North Carolina. The nest was in a beech tree at the end of a limb about 5 m above the ground, over a broad ditch of flowing water, and about 50 m from my back porch. The female was incubating a clutch of three eggs. On 3 June, as I sat on the porch, I heard both birds of the pair calling and scolding loudly. Walking to the edge of the yard and using a pair of 7X binoculars, I observed a Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*) clinging to the edge of the nest and pecking into the nest. Both of the flycatchers were diving at the woodpecker while scolding and bill-popping. A Downy woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*) and a female Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*) were attracted to the noise and also began to scold. The Red-bellied Woodpecker ignored the other birds and, as I watched through binoculars, picked up a tiny flycatcher nestling in its beak and flew up into a large Red Oak tree. It placed the nestling in a bark crevice, pecked it several times, and swallowed it. It came back to the flycatcher nest, but I tossed a stick at it and scared it away.

For the next hour I observed both flycatcher parents at the nest through a Celestron telescope with a 45X eyepiece. Both adults brought small food items to the nest, sat on the nest edge looking confused, then flew a short dis-

tance away. One adult, presumably the female, arrived at the nest and sat in it briefly before flying off. One of the birds returned, sat on the edge of the nest for about a minute, and then began to hook an egg under its beak and attempt to roll it out of the nest. After several minutes it succeeded in removing the egg from the nest. The egg fell into the water below where it floated and I retrieved it. The egg was a flycatcher egg but was infertile, and had a small puncture at the narrow end. I believe that two eggs in the flycatcher nest hatched and that the Red-bellied Woodpecker ate the other nestling just before I arrived.

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 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. Dunn (Chat 48:74) saw a male Red-bellied Woodpecker pull a White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*) nestling from a hole in a Tupelo Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), fly with it to a higher branch, and proceed to eat it.

Red-bellied Woodpeckers are quite active in the woods around our house. Other species known to nest in the area include Wood Thrushes (*Hylocichla ustulata*), Summer Tanagers, Eastern Wood Pewees (*Contopus virens*), Red-eyed Vireos (*Vireo olivaceus*), and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*). I think that nest predation in these woods by Red-bellied Woodpeckers might be one of the limiting factors in the breeding success of these small woodland birds.

According to Harrison (A Field Guide to Birds Nests) Acadian Flycatchers are single brooded and while this pair remained around the yard during June, July, and early August, I have not been able to find any evidence that they re-nested.

## **Late-Season High-Elevation Breeding Record of Cedar Waxwing in the North Carolina Mountains**

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Around 25 August 1984, Duyck found a nest with two fresh eggs of the Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) at 1769 m on Black Balsam Knob, Haywood County, North Carolina. The nest was 1.2 m above ground in a *Rhododendron* 1.5 m tall. Habitat was extensive *Rhododendron* (spp.) and northern hardwood shrubs and thickets on the north slope of the mountain. The nest was checked almost daily thereafter. Two adults associated at the nest and no further eggs were laid. The clutch hatched on 3 September. One of the