

# General Field Notes

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## A Peregrine Falcon nest at Table Rock, South Carolina

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In cooperation with the Peregrine Fund, personnel of the NonGame and Heritage Trust Section of the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department released 38 young Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) at Lake Jocassee, Pickens County, S. C. between 1986 and 1990. In addition, they released 9 young falcons at Table Rock, Pickens County, S. C. in 1985 and 1986 after which time we occasionally received reports of falcons seen at Table Rock. Although no falcons were sighted during the nesting season at Table Rock by official observers between January 1986 and May 1990; by 1990 casual falcon sightings from reliable sources became more frequent.

On 17 May 1990, I observed one adult falcon for about 5 min while conducting a watch from the north cliff face of Table Rock during 1600–1900 h EDT. On 29 May during a helicopter survey flight, Allen Boynton of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and I found an eyrie with two young peregrines in an opening on the north cliff face. These young were near fledgling age. We also saw a flying adult near the eyrie. Allen also noticed a Common Raven's (*Corvus corax*) nest at the same opening; but he could not tell if it had been used recently. On 4 June 1990, I checked the eyrie from the

Table Rock Reservoir dam using a Questar telescope, but I saw no falcons. Heyward Douglas of Clemson made five trips to the top of Table Rock on 5, 9, 12, 19, 25 and 26 June. He saw adult falcons on three trips and a juvenile on the last visit.

The above is the first known nesting of the Peregrine Falcon in south Carolina since 1933 when R. E. Ware reported a pair bringing food to young in a nest at Caesars Head, Greenville County (Sprunt and Chamberlain, South Carolina Bird Life, Univ. South Carolina Press, Revised Ed., 1970; Post and Gauthreaux, Contrib. Charleston Mus. 18, 1989). Caesars Head is 8.6 km NE of Table Rock.

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## **Predation by Rusty Blackbirds on Songbirds at a Winter Feeder**

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We live in Long Beach, North Carolina, located on Oak Island in Brunswick County. Snow here is very uncommon, usually amounting to a dusting once per winter. On Friday, 22 December 1989, snow began to fall at about 2300 h and continued until 1200 h on Sunday, 24 December, with a total accumulation of about 40 cm.

Numerous birds of different species visited our large, multi-stage feeder in the back yard during the storm. Just before 1200 h on 23 December, we noticed a Rusty Blackbird (*Euphagus carolinus*) picking at a Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) on our back porch, just outside our sliding glass doors. The cowbird was barely alive. The Rusty Blackbird pecked at the head, eyes, and throat. This attack continued for quite some time, with the blackbird tearing off pieces of flesh and eating them. To the best of our knowledge, the blackbird never attacked the body of the cowbird but concentrated on the head, eyes, and particularly the throat.

Sometime later, the same Rusty Blackbird flew up and knocked an American Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*) out of the air onto our back porch, which was covered with approximately 35 cm of snow. We started out the back sliding door to see if we could save the goldfinch and both birds flew, but the blackbird knocked the goldfinch out of the air again after it had flown only about 3 m. Both birds landed under our back porch. That was the last we saw of either of them.

Cummings (*in* Bent, 1958) described Rusty Blackbirds killing Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) and American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) after a heavy snowfall in Texas in 1895. He also reported that the blackbirds ate only from the head of their prey and left the body untouched. It is possible that pre-