

Northern Goshawk on the Coastal Plain of North Carolina

ERIC G. BOLEN
Graduate School and
Department of Biological Sciences
UNC-Wilmington
Wilmington, NC 28403

DAN L. FLORES
Department of History
Texas Tech University
Lubbock, TX 79409

On 28 March 1992, we observed a Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) on the edge of county road 1120, about 3 miles NE of the Moores Creek National Battleground in Pender County, NC. We were trapping and banding raptors and, in fact, tried (without success) to lure the goshawk with our mouse-baited balchatri.

The bird was remarkably unconcerned about our presence, and from our car we gained an unobstructed view (with and without binoculars and in full light) at a distance of no more than 25 yards from its perch in a small tree some 20 feet above ground. Gregory and Gregory (1982) noted what they called "brazen" behavior of a Northern Goshawk observed in Wake County, NC; they walked within 40 feet of the bird before it bothered to move, when it flew just another 30 feet. In our case, we observed the bird at the time the balchatri was dropped, then again for several minutes at the time the trap was retrieved. The bird remained perched throughout the entire period of our observation, perhaps 25 minutes from start to finish.

The goshawk we observed was in adult plumage; its prominent white brow-stripe over a black cheek, gray back and pale breast were obvious, as was its long tail (whose muted bands also were visible a such close range). The bird's fiery red eyes were especially conspicuous, not unlike those of the Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) with which we are familiar. Although we could quite clearly see the white plumage under the tail, the oft-cited fluffy nature of these feathers was not readily apparent. In size, the bird was more robust and half again as large as a Cooper's Hawk (*A. cooperii*) and lacked any of the latter species' characteristics (e.g., reddish-barred breast). We also are familiar with the male plumage of the somewhat similarly sized Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), but the head markings and eye color of the bird we observed clearly eliminated confusion with the latter species; nor was the wooded habitat and resolute perching behavior at all typical of harriers.

Southern records for Northern Goshawks seldom include sightings from the coastal plain of North Carolina. For the latter region, we are aware of a record for September 1978 at Fort Fisher in New Hanover County (Davis and Parnell 1983). A winter sighting of a goshawk at Lake Phelps in coastal Washington County, NC, gave pause to LeGrand (Chat 54:23), who remarked that such a record was "amazing," given that the few accounts of the species in North Carolina usually occur only in the mountains or piedmont. An immature goshawk was reported (Chat 41:99), also in March, at Oak Island near Long Beach in Brunswick County, NC, some 45 air miles south of our sighting in Pender County. Two adults were sighted at Long Beach in October 1977, and a lone bird was recorded in Northhampton County near Occonechee Neck (Chat 42:62). The possibility remains that any of these sightings, including our obser-

vation in Pender County, might be an escapee from either a falconer or an aviary. However, we did not observe a falconer's jesses on the bird's tarsi, nor are we aware of any aviaries in the surrounding area whose collections include large raptors, although either a falconer or an aviary might be operating without notice.

Based on Knight's (1990) analysis, March is among the months when relatively few Northern Goshawks are observed in North Carolina and Tennessee (i.e., 9 of 92 records). We trust our observation of a Northern Goshawk in the coastal plain of North Carolina may help unravel the species' uncertain status in North Carolina (see Potter et al. 1980). At present, the Northern Goshawk is not included in the checklist of the Lower Cape Fear Bird Club.

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Wasps as Scavengers on Dead Bird

ELOISE F. POTTER

N.C. State Museum of Natural Sciences

P.O. Box 27647

Raleigh, NC 27611

About 1630 h EDT on 1 October 1968, I found a dead Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*) lying on its back on the ground beneath a large window to the living room of my home near Zebulon, Wake County, North Carolina. Nearly all the feathers and most of the flesh had been removed from its breast, but the remaining plumage was undisturbed. The missing feathers lay in a neat, V-shaped pile with the point of the V about 7.5 cm from the head of the bird. Two small wasps commonly called "yellow jackets" (*Vespula* sp.) were feeding on the carcass, burrowed deep inside with only the tips of their abdomens protruding on each side of the sternum. The wasps diligently guarded their prey from several species of flies and the human intruder. Using a 7 X 50 binocular from about 4 m away, I saw one wasp remove a feather and deposit it at the point of the V-shaped pile. Apparently air currents created by the wings of the wasps had caused the feathers to become distributed in a V instead of in a