

General Field Notes

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Bobolinks Nest in Haywood County, NC

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On 20 July 1998 we observed a male and female Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) exhibiting agitated behavior along the Art Loeb trail on a mountain bald in Haywood County, just outside the boundary of the Shining Rock Wilderness Area. That day, and again on 22 July 1998, we saw the female carrying small caterpillars to hidden places in the weeds, then emerging a minute later without the food. This behavior is consistent with the presence of nestling or recently fledged young birds.

On 20 July 1998, we saw both a male and female Bobolink very near the trail. They flew over the trail several times as we watched. Finally, we saw the female perch on a blueberry bush about 40 feet from us on the east side of the trail, carrying a bright green caterpillar. She chirped for more than a minute, obviously aware of and disturbed by our presence. She dropped down into the grasses near the bush and emerged a few seconds later without the caterpillar.

We did not attempt to find the nest (or just-fledged young, if that were the case) as we thought it would be too disruptive to the birds.

On 22 July 1998 we relocated the birds about 100 feet farther north than they had been two days earlier. Again, we saw them on both east and west sides of the trail during our half-hour stay. The male spent most of the time perched on a large blueberry bush chipping loudly, but occasionally flew into the grass and on one occasion, fluttered above the area in typical Bobolink fashion. We did not observe the male carrying food. The female was seen bringing several caterpillars of different sizes to the same perch, about 100 feet away on the west side of the trail, and then dropping down into the grasses with them and emerging a few seconds later without the food.

The breeding area was at an elevation of 6214 ft., just south of Black Balsam Knob, approximately one-half mile from the intersection of the Art Loeb trail with Forest Road 816. The bald itself is treeless, with many weedy plants such as Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*), Turk's Cap Lily (*Lilium michauxii*), and Northern Bush-Honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*) interspersed

among several species of grasses and sedges, along with numerous small blackberry (*Rubus canadensis*) and blueberry (*Vaccinium constablaei*) bushes. The birds were observed perching on many of these plants above the grasses on both sides of the trail.

Simpson (1994) did not include Bobolink in the annotated list of species. In addition, Larry Gray, a regular hiker along the Art Loeb trail who originally reported the presence of this pair to us, had never seen Bobolinks there before late June 1998. Presumably, therefore, this is a newly-adopted breeding site for the species.

Photographs of both male and female Bobolinks, taken on 22 July 1998 by Ludwig Kempe, are on file at the North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences.

Literature Cited

Simpson, M B, Jr. 1994. Bird Life of North Carolina's Shining Rock Wilderness. Occasional Papers of the North Carolina Biological Survey and at the North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences, 1994-1, Raleigh.

CAROLINABIRDS

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