

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

BLUE JAYS

During my morning stroll on May 5, 2005, in a lightly wooded portion of our East Quogue property (Suffolk County), my attention was attracted by an unusual cry coming from the ground a short distance from the path. The vegetation was thick with catbrier (*Smilax* sp.) but there were few leaves and I could see a tangle of feathers that clearly belonged to a motionless Blue Jay, apparently trapped by the dense thorny lianas of this notorious plant. The bird was so completely trapped that even the clumsy and noisy way I bulldozed my way through the thickets did not seem to have any effect on the bird. As I approached, I was astonished to discover not one but two Blue Jays flattened out against the ground with tail and wings splayed helplessly. They were so thoroughly snared by the deadly thickets - so I thought - that they made no attempt to escape my bull-in-a-china-shop arrival. But when I bent over to try and free the birds, I was able to pick them both up, one in each hand, quite easily and without any protest. Not only were they not tangled in the catbrier but they were tightly locked together in an extraordinary manner with the toes of each foot tightly clamped on one of the feathered tibia of the other. No effort on my part could loosen the grip of either foot on either bird. Neither bird made any effort to escape or resist in any way. Their eyes were open but they both appeared to be in a deep trance. Finally I put them back down on the ground and, as I walked away, there was a kind of twitching or shuddering sound and movement but I did not again hear the cry that originally attracted my attention. When I returned to the area a half an hour later, the birds were gone.

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SWIMMING CLAPPER RAIL CHICKS

On Saturday, July 9th, during a Linnaean Society visit to Dune Road, Shinnecock Bay, Suffolk County, the undersigned flushed a Willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*) from a dry brushy area adjacent to salt marsh. The action of locating the Willet nest stirred up a pair of noisy Clapper Rails (*Rallus longirostris*) which began agitated back-and-forth calling from dense stands of Phragmites and Spartina bordering a small deep-water channel. In spite of the fact that one or both of these birds seemed to be very close at hand, no birds were actually observed until an adult rail emerged from the spartina on the opposite bank of the channel, swam across to our side, and disappeared into the reeds. After a few moments, what appeared to be the same bird emerged accompanied by a small downy black chick which it escorted back across the channel. After a short period, the performance was repeated. An adult emerged from the vegetation on the far bank, swam across the channel and reappeared with a downy black chick, swimming

with it back across. After still another repetition of this escorted swimming activity, a fourth chick and then a fifth emerged by themselves and swam across on their own. All this activity was accompanied by intermittent but urgent-sounding calls.

The chicks were jet black with a reddish or pinkish bill. These were very young birds but, according to B. Taylor (*Rails. A guide to the Rails, Crakes, Gallinules and Coots of the World*. 1998. Yale University Press, New Haven CT), Clapper Rail chicks can swim within one day of hatching.

This particular locale has long been an active site for breeding Clapper Rails. On another Linnaean trip several years ago and only a short distance away, I was in the process of explaining to a tour group that we had to be very lucky to be able to see a Clapper Rail when one flushed off a nest right at my feet. The nest had 13 eggs and both adults emerged and circled around us, puffed up like strange terrestrial owls and hissing like snakes. Over the years, I have also observed courting, copulation and agonistic behavior of these birds, always in this area.

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COLOR-BANDED SHOREBIRDS ON LONG ISLAND, SUMMER 2005

Seven color-banded shorebirds observed on Long Island during the summer of 2005 were reported to shorebird biologists and produced information concerning survivorship and migratory patterns. Readers who observe wild color-marked birds of any kind are encouraged to report them to the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/homepage/reptauxm.htm>), and to report follow-up data to *The Kingbird*.

American Oystercatcher

Observed: Cedar Beach, Suffolk Co., 28 August 2005

(P. Lindsay and S. S. Mitra).

Left leg: orange above joint, teal over aluminum below joint; right leg: black below joint.

Originally banded: Cape Romain, South Carolina, 8 October 2002
(fide Shiloh Schulte).

Red Knots

Observed: Cupsogue CP, Suffolk Co., 29 June 2005

(B. Carlson, P. Lindsay, and S. S. Mitra).

Left leg: green flag with black lettering "TAY"; right leg: yellow.

Originally banded: Reeds, Delaware Bay, New Jersey, 2 June 2005
(fide P. Atkinson).

Observed: Pike's Beach, Suffolk Co., 21 July 2005 (P. Lindsay).

Left leg: orange flag with black lettering "HY"; right leg: aluminum over orange.

Originally banded: Rio Grande, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina,
November 2003 (fide P. Gonzalez).

Observed: Pike's Beach, Suffolk Co., 23 July 2005
(P. Lindsay, S. S. Mitra).

Left leg: green flag over green; right leg: aluminum over orange.
Originally banded: Delaware Bay, spring, prior to 2003
(fide B. Harrington).

Observed: Pike's Beach, Suffolk Co., 23 July 2005
(P. Lindsay, S. S. Mitra).

Left leg: green flag over red; right leg: aluminum over orange.
Originally banded: Delaware Bay, spring, prior to 2003
(fide B. Harrington).

Observed: Pike's Beach, Suffolk Co., 11 August 2005 (J. Fritz).
Left leg: orange flag with black lettering "RP"; right leg: green.
Originally banded: Argentina (fide B. Harrington).

Ruddy Turnstone

Observed: Fire Island Lighthouse, Suffolk Co., 5 Sep 2005
(P. Lindsay, S. S. Mitra).

Left leg: green flag over orange; right leg: aluminum over white.
Originally banded: Delaware side of Delaware Bay, 2003
(fide W. Pitts).

