

Cowbird Upsets the Summer Routine

By Lydia King Frehse
Special Writer for The Birmingham Ecocentric

WALLOON LAKE—Our family has long since learned to experience and to enjoy the commonplace in our every day encounters with the creatures that populate the out-of-doors.

The life that surrounds us in the woods and fields is compounded of the constant struggle to escape manifold and cunning enemies and the final chapter of violent death, for few animals in the wild reach a natural end.

BUT OCCASIONALLY we see the unusual.

Our summer dining porch, christened the "chipmunk room," is open on two sides to an adjacent lowland of white cedars. Here for the last month, children and adults alike have been watching the doings of a mother song-sparrow feeding a single fledgling.

At first we found this an expected occurrence. But as the days passed and the young bird grow-

certain aspects of its habits and manners became noticeably un-sparrow-like.

THE DEMANDING youngster was not only growing to be much larger than its mother, but its color and markings did not resemble those of a juvenile song-sparrow.

The striped back and the spotted breast were lacking. Instead the bird was taking on a dark olive white the underparts became dull white streaked with brown.

However, it was the fledgling's characteristic walk as he became tamer in his daily maneuvers around the nearby woodpile which finally convinced the "bird-man" in our family that the hard-working and patient song-sparrow was nurturing a young cowbird.

FUTURE DAYS confirmed his conclusion and within the last week we no longer see the pair. It is evident that the young cowbird has exchanged the confines of the cedar swamp for the open pastures

and fields which are the typical range of his kind.

The brown-headed cowbird is the black sheep of the bird world and possesses few of the charming manners of his avian fellows. No songster is he; it is only during his brief courtship that his harsh rattling tone and his squeaky whistle give way to a few brief and more musical notes.

HOWEVER, IT is the parasitic habits of the cowbird which give him a bad name.

On a morning when other birds have begun their brooding period, the female searches for the nest of a warbler or song sparrow.

She perches nearby and when the rightful mother leaves for a slight reprieve, the intruder quickly lays one of her large white speckled eggs in the partially filled nest and departs. At the same time she may destroy the owner's eggs by piercing them or by rolling them out on the ground.

OF THE SEVEN known species of cowbirds, four have parasitic habits. The family originated in South America. In this country they were

THE COWBIRD continues her parasitic habits laying an egg a day usually each in a different nest.

She may also select the nest of a robin or a catbird. If so parasitized, these species puncture the offending eggs.

If she lays in the nest of a yellow warbler, the mother bird has been known to cover the intruder's eggs with as many as five new nest bottoms, each time laying a new clutch of her own.

The cowbird egg hatches in 10 days and even if some of the rightful owner's young hatch they are soon routed by the intruders, who are larger and can beg louder for most of the proffered food.

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first known as "buffalo birds," because they followed the great herds of bison on the midwest prairies while they fed on insects which followed these animals or were stirred up in the grass by their insistent movements.

Today cowbirds are commonly found in cattle pastures where they eat parasitic insects as well as grasshoppers, leaf hoppers, mosquitoes and flies.

Their basic food also includes seeds of grasses and grains.

IN SOME SUCH fashion our young cowbird became for us one of the unusual experiences in our happy summer days.

Schedule

(Continued from 1-C)

Robert Anders, Mrs. John Foster, Mrs. Robert Hague, Mrs. Beatrice Roach, Mrs. Paul Schaefer, Mrs. Virginia Sieden, Mrs. Jeanne Jacobson, Mrs. John Calhoun, Miss Janet Taisey, and Mrs. Richard Pope.

From other areas—Mrs. Thelma Anderson, Mrs. Joseph Cuchti, Mrs. Boris Maximovich, Mrs. Ernest Clinton, Mrs. Wasia Enoch, Charles Doan, Neal Maas, M. S. Richard Neal and Mrs. Raymond Wyatt.

Sign Letters, Mayor Urges

City commissioners received a letter of complaint Aug. 5 but they can't even extend the courtesy of answering the writer because the letter wasn't signed.

Bearing only the signature of "Birmingham Taxpayer," the seven-paragraph letter suggested that the new golf course at Cranbrook near Lincoln be used for residents only and not for people in the entire Birmingham area.

The "taxpayer" said builders were actually selling homes in the area on the pretense that this new

recreation area will be available to the township people.

MAYOR WILLIAM H. Burgum said the administration and commission would have been able to answer the letter but found it impossible because there was not even a return address on the envelope.

The mayor urged all Birmingham residents to sign letters sent to the city or the commission so that they may be answered.

4-D THE BIRMINGHAM (MICH.) ECENTRIC August 15, 1963

- ACROSS**
- 1 Pairs
 - 6 Informers
 - 10 Mice
 - 14 Rant
 - 15 Fide
 - 16 Half
 - 17 Expense
 - 18 ---- Sam
 - 19 ---- the Red
 - 20 Consolidation
 - 21 Canadian Province
 - 24 Vase
 - 25 ---- Mamer
 - 26 Balance
 - 27 Evergreen tree
 - 30 Minimum
 - 34 Tag
 - 35 Routine
 - 36 Mortar
 - 37 Pant
 - 38 Counselors
 - 40 Metallic element
 - 41 Rank
 - 43 Island (Pr.)
 - 44 Lard
 - 45 Rob
 - 46 Conjunction
 - 47 Succinct

Answers to Puzzle Will Be Found on Page 6-D

- DOWN**
- 1 Street car
 - 2 Merchandise
 - 3 Beyond
 - 4 Aquatic bird
 - 5 Select
 - 6 Play on words (pl.)
 - 7 Business abbreviation
 - 8 Pastry
 - 9 Cane
 - 10 Dairy product (pl.)
 - 11 German title of respect
 - 12 Skip
 - 13 A size of type
 - 21 Before houses
 - 22 Bundles
 - 25 Posing
 - 26 Argues
 - 27 Xavior
 - 28 Solitary
 - 29 Spot
 - 31 Fragrant oil
 - 32 Cuts
 - 33 Taut
 - 34 Communist
 - 35 Commas
 - 36 Before
 - 38 Thousand (comb.-form)
 - 39 Not young
 - 42 Impious
 - 44 Women
 - 46 Soft yarn
 - 47 Twilching
 - 48 Internal
 - 50 Aims
 - 51 Feminine name
 - 52 Solicit
 - 53 Tidy
 - 54 ---- Majestic
 - 55 Volume
 - 56 Vice
 - 57 Vale
 - 60 Cistern

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
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66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78

PUZZLE NO. 771

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