

April, 1974

2709 S. Fairfield, Amarillo, Texas 79103

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## A BIRD WALK AND A FIELD TRIP:

On Saturday, April 27, at 8:30 a.m. there will be a bird walk in Memorial Park Cemetery.

On Sunday, April 21, at 2:30 p.m. there will be a field trip at Buffalo Lake NWR. Though there is no water in the lake at this time, we should pick up some waterfowl on the stream below the dam along with migrants of other species in the wooded areas.

## COOPER'S v. GOSHAWK:

The following article is from Birding, the publication of the American Birding Assoc., which offers aids in identifying the Cooper's Hawk and the Goshawk:

Plumage

Adults: no problems.

Immatures: very similar. Immature Goshawks have a white mark over and behind the eye as in the field guides. There has been some question whether this mark is conspicuous in all immature Goshawks. Fritz Scheider (NY) says that he has never seen an immature Goshawk without a white eye stripe. This comment is based on spring observations at Derby Hill on Lake Ontario. He does not claim that his comments apply equally to fall birds with five to six months less feather wear. Helen Snyder (PR) comments that some immature Cooper's Hawks have fairly whitish marks over the eye and, at least occasionally, approach the Goshawk in this character. All the comments that dealt with the eye stripe question were of the same nature.

Another mark that appears as though it might be of use is the extent and intensity of the streaking on the lower belly and leg feathering. In Goshawks (20 fall immature birds, both sexes, from Minnesota, Michigan and Western Ontario), these areas are always boldly marked with heavy black streaks. Most immature Cooper's Hawks (25, mostly fall birds, in Western Ontario) had little if any streaking in this area and what streaking did exist was thin and relatively indistinct. A few birds had some large streaks, but these were rusty and not black.

The final plumage character mentioned was the crissum. The Goshawk is said to have a much larger crissum than the Cooper's Hawk, but the degree to which this character can be used to separate the two species is uncertain. Both species can fluff out their crissums to an astounding degree while displaying, making the use of this field mark even more tricky. Paul Buckley (NY) considers the extent of the crissum "usually reliable" in separating Goshawks from Cooper's Hawks. Fritz Scheider considers this mark "useless". Obviously, when two excellent field birders disagree to such an extent, the jury must be considered "out" on the question.

SHAPE

General shape: Goshawks are bulky and Cooper's Hawks are slender. Goshawks have a relatively (and in some cases, absolutely) shorter tail than the Cooper's Hawk. Head-wing position: There has long been a discussion of the relative position of the head and wings in the three accipiters. A number of people think that the differences are distinct and usable. Their opinions are, I feel, worth repeating. Bear in mind that

there is no consensus yet.

Sharp-shinned Hawks and Goshawks are said to hold their wings in such a way that the leading edge from the body to the wrist angles slightly forward. Consequently, the head lies in a shallow "V" created by the wings. As a result, the birds appear small headed. The Cooper's Hawk, on the other hand, holds the entire wing at right angles to the body, making the head appear longer. Another result of the wing arrangement is that the wings of the Sharp-shinned Hawk and Goshawk are said to taper slightly (at least) from wrist to wing tip while in the Cooper's Hawk, the wings are, if anything, broader towards the tip.

BEHAVIOR

Cooper's Hawk (at least when migrating at 90 degrees to the wind) use their long tails as rudders, twisting them frequently to maintain balance. Goshawks, due to their bulk and power, tend to plough through the air.

SUMMARY

There are not hard and fast field marks. The white eye stripe may not be diagnostic. In any event, it is difficult to see at any distance. The amount of dark streaking on the lower belly and legs may turn out to be useful, but it needs further verification. The chances of the two species are probably the best marks and people with access to hawk-watches where the two species can be seen are urged to pay attention to this character and the behavior that results from it. Photographs of birds in flight are needed.

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE ORANGE ON THE CROWN OF AN ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER?

If you have, I'll bet not many times. In all my years of birding I can recall seeing the orange crown clearly and distinctly only once. When I saw it, I said to myself, "What species could this be that looks like an Orange-crowned Warbler but has an orange crown?" Needless to say, this thought was nonsense for any fool knows that it wouldn't be called an Orange-crowned Warbler without reason! Both Peterson and Singer portray it in their bird guides with an obvious orange patch on its crown. I used to believe they did this only because they would think other people would consider them to be poor artists if they didn't have enough sense to put an orange patch where it would logically appear if an Orange-crowned Warbler really lived up to its name, regardless of whether or not they had ever seen it there on a live bird. They just decided to play it safe and put an orange crown on an Orange-crowned Warbler. It's that simple!

I can understand this. I would probably have done the same thing under the circumstances myself. It doesn't hurt to try to get along. What I don't understand, though, is why they didn't show the dingy white, or pale yellow, patch that can often be seen at the base of the bird's secondaries. This shows up as a rather thin strip right along, or near, the bend of the wing. This feature is one I keep stumbling across as I closely scrutinize the bird in the hope of seeing its orange crown. It seems to me that this second characteristic is much more obvious than the complete absence

in orange crown. Yet, I don't recall ever seeing it portrayed in any artist's depiction of the species. Even though it isn't all that obvious, still, it's certainly more so than a missing orange crown. I realize that I could be seeing things myself, but at least I am seeing something that I discovered on my own and not something that someone told me ought to be there but seldom is.

The only way out of this dilemma that I can see is to call the bird something else. That appears to be a common practise these days and I really don't see anything badly wrong with it. After all, we do it every day when it comes to flowers. Around here, we call Liatris punctata the "Blazing Star". Five hundred miles from here the natives may very well call an entirely different species of flower "Blazing Star". Fair enough! To each his own. As long as we don't fool around with the scientific names we ought to have the freedom to call a bird by a more appropriate or satisfying name than it has heretofore been called.

But what to call the Orange-crowned Warbler? I've been digging through some ancient bird books to discover what the old timers may have called it, the idea being to resurrect one if it sounded good enough. I finally got to Pearson's Birds of America (1917). I figured he could help because under his descriptions he always has a category "Other Names". Under Orange-crowned Warbler he states: "Other Name, ---Orange-crown". Big deal! Whoopee! That's ducking the problem, for sure. Regardless of my hurt feelings, though, I kept on reading and finally found the solution to the problem. Both he and Bent say the western variety of the Orange-crowned Warbler was known as the Lutescent Warbler. I like that. I'm not sure what lutescent means, but I still like it. I think it has something to do with the word "yellow". If so, it's even more appropriate as the Vermivora calotta that moves through our area very often has a yellowish appearance. Sometimes, though, it appears rather gray. In that case, we could always call it the non-Lutescent Warbler. There's more than one way to pluck a feather!

Dear Reader, correct me if I err. (KDS)

#### NEWS FROM AUDUBON:

The joint private-state-federal program to stop raptor electrocution from power lines, on which National Audubon has been working since 1972, has been moving ahead, though there is still a long way to go. The U. S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife reports that many power companies are showing cooperation in removing or modifying offending power lines or poles, even though there are still several cases where the companies are reluctant to do their part. However, studies conducted by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, with an annual survey made each year, prove that death by power lines has been a real problem throughout the United States for golden eagles particularly, but also for bald eagles and a number of species of hawks, and the great horned owl. Though only a small segment of the millions of miles of distribution lines can be checked and improved, this is one of the causes of raptor losses that can most easily be dealt with and progress is being made.

#### THE OIL CRISIS HAS NOT MADE EVERYONE FORGET ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT:

Conservation leaders point out that from November to January, when the so-called energy crisis was at its worst, environmental organizations reported a major gain in membership. National Audubon's membership rose by almost 30% over last year, the biggest 90-day jump in its history.

#### BIRD NOTES:

Peggy Acord, Esther Waddill and Mary Glenn made a trip to the Canadian/Lake Marvin area on April 6 & 7, primarily to observe the Lesser Prairie Chickens perform on their booming grounds. They reported a very successful trip with a couple of dozen chickens observed at close quarters as they went thru their courting rituals. To top of the day, they saw 8 adult Black-crowned Night Herons, 18 Long-billed Curlew, a Wood Duck, 30-35 White-faced Ibis, numerous Turkeys, and their first Scissor-tails, Lark, Vesper and Cassin's Sparrows of the year, plus a number of Barn Swallows. On the same day, Kenneth Seyffert reported 3 Long-eared Owls, Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks, Chipping Sparrows, many Vesper Sparrows, Turkey Vultures, a Rough-winged Swallow and numerous Say's Phoebes at Buffalo Lake.

#### CALENDAR:

- April 15: Monthly society meeting at the Garden Center - 7:30 p.m.
- April 21: Field trip to Buffalo Lake - 2:30 p.m. - Meet at refuge entrance.
- April 27: Birdwalk in Memorial Park Cemetery.