

Editorial

Although it is stimulating to travel to new places and to see new plants and animals, it is surprising how many interesting observations of nature we can make right at home, going about our daily round of activities. That thought came to my mind this spring when I had an unusually close view of a Sharp-shinned Hawk feeding, an event we seldom witness since these little accipiters only pass through Regina in migration.

On April 1, I had a quick, but good, look at a Sharp-shinned Hawk that perched briefly on a tree in the Legislative Grounds. The appearance of the hawk on this early date interested me, for Margaret Belcher's *Birds of Regina* (1961) gives April 3 as the earliest spring arrival date, stating that its spring arrival follows that of smaller birds. This year some Tree Sparrows and Slate-colored Juncos had already returned by this time, but they were not numerous and I had been wondering about their survival, for the last two days of March had been unusually cold with considerable fresh snow and strong winds.

The following day was bright and clear, but the temperature did not go above 10°F. When I put my car in the garage at 5:00 p.m. and walked toward the house, I was alerted by a small flock of House Sparrows in the bushes which were uttering loud alarm notes. Suddenly around the corner of the garage from the direction of Liz Roley's feeding station a little hawk came flying and the sparrows quickly dropped into the centre of the bushes. The hawk as it passed between me and the bushes was less than 10 feet away, and I could see clearly the dark bluish back and wings and the rather long notched tail of the Sharp-shinned. It was carrying a sparrow and it stopped on the back fence, a mesh one with a steel bar along the top. The sparrows were still in the bushes and they became noisy again, with some moving restlessly about scarcely a yard from the hawk. I stood still on the path for a long time. The hawk was not 50 feet from me, but the view was broken by an intervening lilac bush.

Ten minutes later the hawk moved to a new perch on the fence, where stems of a Clematis covered the steel bar and gave him a more natural perch. I could now see him better, for there were no longer any bushes between us. He was wary and still not in a hurry, but soon he started to pluck his prey and begin his supper. When a big Labrador dog came along the alley less than eight feet from the bird, the hawk stayed where it was and soon resumed feeding. This prompted me to move closer, to within 30 feet. There I could see every detail of the striking adult plumage of the Sharp-shin, even noticing two or three small spots of white on the dark blue back. I could have watched this handsome and fierce-looking little hawk till he finished his dinner, but a neighbour across the alley came out to his garage nearby; as he opened the large steel door, the hawk left his dinner and flew up into an ash tree and soon on again. On the back fence there remained only the head of a female House Sparrow, proving that our little guest had had a good meal on our busy city lot.

Observations of interesting things going on around us have been the strength of our *Blue Jay* magazine, and it is always gratifying to have new contributors sending records of unusual things they have seen, such as the commensal feeding of the gull and the Peregrine Falcon reported in this issue.

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