

Gray Rat Snakes observed climbing Red-cockaded Woodpecker nesting trees. Renee Roper, a JSU student working on Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (*Dendrocopos borealis*) in the Talladega National Forest, reports that on two occasions she has observed Gray Rat Snakes (*Elaphe spiloides*) climbing Red-cockaded nesting trees in an apparent attempt to prey on the eggs or nestlings. On the first occasion, a snake was seen about six meters (20 feet) high on the trunk of a "dry" tree no longer used by the birds. The snake went into the hole just at nightfall presumably looking for a meal and/or a place to spend the night. In the second case, another gray rat snake was spotted at nightfall about three meters (nine feet) high on the trunk of a longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) having in it an active Red-cockaded nest containing young. She was able to pull the snake down by the tail and placed it in a sack for translocation to a new home in her barn. It is questionable whether or not the snake would have made it through the protective area of sticky resin below the hole, but with 25% of this year's reproduction of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers in the TNF at stake, she couldn't take the chance to find out. Only four active colonies totaling 12 adults are presently known over the entire 221,000 acre national forest. *Bill Summerour, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama 36265.*

Barred Owls use nesting box. Clearcutting, shorter cutting cycles, urban sprawl and other land use practices have reduced or eliminated nesting cavities for a number of species including Barred Owls (*Strix varia*). Recognizing this problem, Howard and Larry Smith, two brothers who have a log cabin on Guntersville Lake, designed a box for a pair of Barred Owls whose territory had been invaded by houses and a loss of nesting sites around their lot on the Lake. The two placed the box in a tree behind their cabin and within a few weeks the owls moved in and presumably used the box for roosting or nesting. *Larry Smith, 804 13th Avenue, Jacksonville, AL 36265*

Bluebird killed by House Sparrows. This past spring (1987), a friend related to me that he had for several days noticed House Sparrows attempting to evict bluebirds from a box in his yard. Thinking the House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) may have started building a nest in the box, he opened it to remove the nest but instead found a badly injured female bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) slumped over in one corner. He brought the bird to me about an hour later, but by that time it was already dead.

All of the feathers were gone from the top of the bird's head and the skin was bruised and bloodied from a number of puncture wounds in the skull. Both eyes appeared to have been pecked and there were bloody

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

spots on both wings and several places on her back. There were no injuries on the ventral surface of the body nor were there any bruises to indicate some type of impact trauma.

It is unlikely, given the nature of the wounds, and the fact that the bluebird had been seen fighting with the sparrows in the box, that the injuries occurred elsewhere and the bird made it back to the box where it was found dying. Apparently the female refused to give up her claim to the box and the sparrows pecked her to death. *Bill Summerour, Dept. of Biology, Jacksonville State Univ., Jacksonville, AL.*

Nighthawks linger into mid-December in Anniston. For at least the last two years (1987-88) Common Nighthawks (*Chordeiles minor*), have remained in Anniston until mid-December feeding on insects attracted to lights over the First National Bank building in downtown Anniston. This past winter, about a half dozen birds were seen as late as 14 December. The temperature dropped well below freezing on several occasions and as low as 23 degrees F on 5 December. The birds may be holding over late in other localities as well since a nighthawk was recorded by Buzz Peavy on one of the Birmingham Christmas Bird Counts. *Bill Summerour, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, AL.*

White Pelican seen on Guntersville Lake. On 16 January 1988, Ben Brown of Anniston observed a lone White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) on Lake Guntersville near the Jackson/Ogletree Park complex. Ben reports that the bird was swimming among a mixed raft of Redheads (*Aythya americana*), Canvasbacks (*Aythya valisineria*) and Ruddy Ducks (*Oxyura jamaicensis*). According to Linda Reynolds, Guntersville State Park Naturalist, another White Pelican, possibly the same one, was seen by a Michigan couple on 29 January 1988 near the park campgrounds. Imhof lists the White Pelican in *Alabama Birdlife* (1976) as uncommon inland in Alabama. *Ben Brown, 1009 Old Mill Road, Anniston, AL.*

Lark Sparrows observed on breeding bird survey. In Alabama the Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*) has bred in past years in the western part of the Tennessee Valley and Upper Coastal Plain. The first records during the breeding season in about a decade, however, were recorded in 1986-87 on the North Sumter Breeding Bird Survey Route in Sumter County where one bird was found on 14 June 1986 by Bob & Elberta Reid, and a pair on 21 June 1987 by Bob Reid and Richard Holland. Interestingly, both of these observations (which were visual and not merely heard) were at the same stop on the survey route, just a