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Edited
by Carl Freeman

The *Meadowlark* is the newsletter of the
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Dedicated To Increasing Our Knowledge Of The Natural World

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The Meadowlark

President's Thoughts

Target Birding

In response to the needs of traveling birders seeking to expand their life lists, those providing guiding services now offer "target birding": You send them your list of target birds; they'll fashion your trip accordingly. Here's my version of target birding.

The year was 2003 and we were living down state but visiting here for important occasions like bird counts. In May there was the Big Day Count. At the tally following the count no one reported a goshawk, prompting Carl to say, "Didn't anyone check the usual spots?" A light bulb went off in my head: "There are usual spots for goshawks? There's my target bird for the year!"

When I subsequently e-mailed Carl, he described the two local areas where goshawks have traditionally nested. Armed with Carl's description, Char and I headed to the first location, but Carl's directions ("Take the two-track off of Trails End and head south") seemed impossibly vague. We were about ready to give up when the loud "cackling" began. It was then we learned the first secret: You don't find the goshawk, the goshawk finds you! And once he or she does, there is no mistaking the bird's malicious intent. First one and then two goshawks set upon us, driving us out of their nesting territory post haste. In departing we learned the second secret: Goshawks like to attack you from the rear as you leave their territory.

Our experience at the second location along Boekeloo Road was similar. When we returned home from our exhilarating adventures, we read up on the Northern Goshawk and its aggressive behavior while nesting (duh!). Of course at this point I should have hung the "Mission Accomplished!" banner and given it a rest. But with birding friends coming up the next week I felt compelled to check out the Deer Lake spot again, this time by mountain bike.

On the way in I almost made it through the area undetected, but one of the hawks spotted me and started the now-familiar calling. I emerged from the far end of the woods unscathed but still had to return. I figured I might get by with a high speed run, but just when I thought I had gotten by the hot area I heard the alarm call from a distance and then, to my shock, received a heavy blow to the back of my head--an aerial assault by a goshawk! Wearing a plastic biking helmet was one of the few smart things I did that day. Heading home with pulse racing I could imagine the goshawk's thoughts: "You want a target? I'll show you a target, Bicycle Boy!"

Since then I've heard several stories of run-ins people have had with nesting goshawks (including the turkey



Goshawk by John Ester

hunter 'driven to the ground and bloodied" by a goshawk near Lower Herring Lake), and I've learned that one entering the territory of a nesting goshawk should carry a stick vertically extending above one's head. And I've learned that one setting a target should be careful of what he wishes for!

March Activities

March 5th Meeting, 7PM . Attracting Purple Martins



Field Trip - Winter-Spring? birds. Meet at Pt. Betsie at 8AM led by Doug Cook.