

Birds fight off nest invaders

By ART-BRIGGS JUDE
There are many methods by which wild birds protect their nests. Some species such as the great horned owl and the larger hawks present a formidable set of talons in a direct frontal attack that soon discourages any intruder.

Other medium-sized birds like the ruffed grouse, whippoorwill and killdeer put on such a convincing broken-wing act that it draws attention of an enemy away from their defenseless brood.

The little ruby-throated hummingbird, which began to show up in fair numbers this past weekend, is a bundle of determined energy whenever its nest is threatened.

In an unmatched display of aerial manoeuvrability, this tiny emerald roars to the attack. Sounding somewhat like a runaway buzz saw blade that has spun off its shaft, this courageous

feathered creature gives an enemy the impression that one of those whirring teeth is about to nick them at any instant.

Our neighborhood robin kicks up an awful fuss when a cat comes too close to its nest site, but does not usually press home its attack on the tabby like the bluejay.

A pair of nesting jays will often pin a cat down for a time on the ground or force it to scurry across any open spaces fearing the wrath of the blue fury.

Actually, of all the birds I've banded, including some of the largest raptors, the bold bluejay is the only one that ever struck me and drew blood.

On the other hand, I have seen flickers drive their long-pointed bills into the face of a bird-hunting squirrel when the latter tried to enter this type of woodpecker's cavity.

On one occasion, after discovering a shrike's nest, the

parent birds came awfully close to my ears with their stout snapping beaks. Yet these so-called butcher birds with their sinister-looking black masks were more bluff than bite when I slipped the light metal bands on their offspring.

Another time, a house wren that had taken up residence in one of our bluebird nest-boxes became more than a trifle annoyed at my intrusion. So much so, that this tiny fidget actually landed on my hat in a bold display of feathered protest.

If you happen near a wetland area these days you will soon be greeted with at least one or more pairs of belligerent red-winged blackbirds.

The males are especially prominent in their disapproval of your presence, often perching on nearby rushes or shrubbery or hovering overhead uttering their metallic "click, click, click" warning.

And if a crow or hawk happens to fly into their territory by design or accident, a whole wave of blackbirds rise up like World War II fighters defending their home base.

Quite often the most persistent blackbirds will pursue the invader well into the next concession before relinquishing their attack.

However, the high point in my mind of a bird protecting its nest occurred this past week when a

tree swallow took exception to a red-tailed hawk flying near its nest-box.

This superb flyer climbed swiftly above the winged predator and, diving suddenly, clasped onto the hawk between the shoulders.

There it remained for some time, riding along and pecking the back of the big bird's head like a jockey in the home stretch applying the whip to boot home a winner.

Singles' group meets Tuesday

Stouffville's Singles Support Group meets again Tuesday, May 30 at 8 p.m. in the rear lounge of St. James Presbyterian Church on Main St. East in Stouffville.

The group is made up of those who are either separated or divorced and offers an informal setting with conversation, support and special speakers.

The upcoming meeting marks

the first anniversary of the group's inception, and members hope to see newcomers added to the list of regulars.

There will be a presentation made by a York Region public health representative on stress management.

Anyone wishing further information should call Gayle at 640-5486 or Bruce at 642-1225.

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SHOWTIMES: 7:05, 9:10
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4 **SEE NO EVIL HEAR NO EVIL**
SHOWTIMES: 7:20, 9:20

PROCLAMATION
The Council of the Town of Markham hereby proclaims the week of May 29th to June 4th, 1989 as "Unionville Village Festival Week" in the Town of Markham.

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