

Saylorville's Cooper's Hawks

In July of 1985 and 1986 a pair of Cooper's Hawks fledged at least two young each year in an area about one mile north of the Lake View Boat Ramp on the west side of the Saylorville Reservoir. This area is part of a strip of river bluff hardwood forest that runs north from Lake View for about three miles. Veery and Cerulean Warblers are regular breeders in this area. This site lies on a main Accipiter flyway along the Des Moines River. From September 15 to 17, 1985, forty-two Accipiters were observed in three hours of viewing. On July 14, 1985, I found a stick nest about twenty feet from the ground in a White Oak with two young hopping in and out of the nest. (IBL 55:90)

Returning to this spot on June 9, 1986 an adult Cooper's was found acting agitated and calling with a loud "kek-kek-kek". The gray back, rusty barred breast and rounded tail were easily visible as it perched about thirty feet above me in good light. Its size was clearly larger than the comparable Sharp-shin. Last years nest looked refurbished, but perhaps by squirrels since leaves were used. On June 29, 1986, I observed the nest for an hour but no activity was seen. On July 27 I returned again and this time was rewarded with two immature birds, both with brown streaked breasts, clearly rounded tails and of a size to eliminate the Sharp-shin. An adult appeared several times, but the young were quite active flying about. They were in an area about fifty yards west of last years nest. I could not find a new nest.

Dinsmore's Iowa Birds calls the Cooper's a rare nester in Iowa. The appearance of successfully breeding pair two years in a row seems to offer hope for this species future breeding increase in Iowa.

22 August 1986

Dear Bery,

I looked over the note you wrote up on the Cooper's Hawk nest and also talked to editor Tom Kent about it. Although it is of interest that the birds nested in the same site two years in a row, there is little other new information that can't be conveyed in the Field Reports section. Thus I don't think that it can be published as a note on its own. I hope this rationale makes some sense and I would be happy to talk with you further about it. I really did appreciate receiving your field report on the Saylorville as you had lots of good observations of the Saylorville area. I look forward to seeing you again when we can talk more than we did on that windy day last fall.

Best,