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Unusual Interaction Between Two Buteos

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Bagg and Eliot (1937, Birds of the Connecticut Valley in Massachusetts, Northampton, Massachusetts, Hampshire Bookshop) citing the observation of F. A. Stebbins and A. M. Bowen, stated that the Great Egret (*Casmerodius albus*) would "with the aid of his wings, hop straight up clear of the water and come down with stiff, spread toes, and then scrutinized the 'roil' he caused for dislodged prey." This behavior compares more closely with the behavior I observed, and I suggest the term "in-place hopping" rather than just "hopping" because the latter term implies a change of location.

I thank A. J. Meyerriecks, J. A. Kushlan, and D. F. Werschkul for comments on an earlier draft of this manuscript.—Donald M. Kent, Biology Department, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida 33620.

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Unusual interaction between two buteos.—During the early afternoon of 2 January 1981 on Shell Island, Bay County, Florida, I observed an interaction between an immature Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) and an adult Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*). I had flushed the Red-tailed Hawk out of a patch of rushes (*Juncus roemerianus*) while I was walking the bay side of the island. Immediately after it flushed, an immature Red-shouldered Hawk, which had been perched on a nearby snag, attacked the larger bird from above. Both then flew out over the shallow waters of the bay to the north, where the Red-shouldered Hawk proceeded to strike the lower bird several times on the rump with its talons as they circled over the water. Then the red-shoulder left the red-tail and flew a short distance to the beach, where it picked up an oyster shell, flew back to a position over the redtail, and dropped the shell, which struck the back of the other buteo. The Red-tailed Hawk departed to the west, while the Red-shouldered Hawk returned to its former perch.

Although such use of an object to harass another bird seems not to have been previously reported, at least among raptors, related behavior has been documented. In 1977 a Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*) is reported to have dropped a "5 x 7 x 10 cm stone" close to an observer of its nest (Blair 1981, Raptor Research 15:120). Blair concluded that the Ferruginous Hawk was using the stone in "defense of its nest." It might similarly be concluded that the interaction between the two buteos described above involved defense of winter territory, though the possibility that this action simply exhibits displacement activity cannot be ruled out completely.

Few other species of birds are known to carry oyster shells for any purpose whatsoever. One that does is the Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*), which is widely known to drop these shells from the air onto a beach in order to obtain the edible portion of the shellfish (Terres, 1980, p. 460 in The Audubon Society encyclopedia of North American birds). Interestingly, numerous Herring Gulls frequented the area where the two buteos were seen and were observed dropping clam and oyster shells onto the beach. Whether or not their activity could have affected the redshoulder is problematic, but the possibility is present.

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