

# MACALESTER COLLEGE

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA 55105

■ DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

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Subject: An UNBANDED JUNCO at ORDWAY.

The particular April Sunday was a sunny day, calm and dry. It was a day on which the small birds were rather active. The Tree Sparrows and Juncos were going through those restive flockings which indicate they are on their annual return to their northern nesting-grounds; the Song Sparrows and Field Sparrows were beginning to make their reappearance as summer residents; there was quite a bit of coming-and-going.

A single-celled trap (McCamey chickadee type) entrapped a Junco at about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. The trap was located within a foot of the lower story of the building and was under surveillance from the upper story. Descending to the ground level to remove and band the captive I startled a handsome male Sparrow Hawk (Falco sparverius) from the vicinity of the trap. It proved to be a fatal visit for the Junco, which had apparently not retreated from the thrust of its attacker. The smaller bird's skull was crushed, probably from the action of the hawk's beak and its body was still in the last paroxysm of death. The hawk had risen to a perch about thirty feet up in an overlooking tree but flew away at my approach.

The death of a bird is usually accompanied by some feelings as to the loss but it is my practice to treat such happenings as a natural consequence of events. I opted to replace the victim of my trapping activity in its natural surroundings and therefore placed its still-warm body atop a large granite boulder situated nearby, almost at the foot of the tree.

Within ten minutes the Sparrow Hawk had returned to its roosting-branch and after a two-minute survey of the situation reclaimed the provender of which it had almost been cheated, swooping down to the level of the dead bird and making a ninety-degree turn which displayed the finery of his spring plumage and brought his talons into position to reclaim the meal he had killed. Continuing in typical falcon fashion he bore the Junco's body away to a utility pole and there on the crossarm he leisurely completed his feeding, the bobbing of his russet tail giving him leverage and balance while he tore portions from the small carcass. By 5:40 the hawk had flown away.



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