



A happy ending for a family of Cooper's Hawks

Description

Intervention leads to the protection of hawks nesting in Saint-Laurent Cemetery

By Doris Potter

July 29, 2021

In April, I was excited to find that **Cooper's Hawks** were nesting in the **Saint-Laurent Cemetery** for the second year in a row. This time they chose a different tree and I watched the male work diligently on the nest over a two-week period. It was interesting to watch him break off small branches to build the nest and then later, pull off pieces of bark to use to line it.



Male Cooper's Hawk gathering twigs for nest

I was able to get some good photographs of the parent hawks, who kindly perched on lower branches during this time. Once the nest was finished, the female spent almost all her time on it and finally, in early June, I was able to see the first fluffy white head of a nestling!



Mother Cooper's Hawk with nestling

Around that time, however, a number of things happened that caused me to fear for the safety of the baby hawks. Trees were being sprayed for caterpillar control and, most alarming, I noticed red ribbons on each of two trees flanking the "hawk tree." This meant that those trees were slated for felling. It became an urgent issue because they could be cut down at any time, and they were so close that their branches overlapped with those

of the hawk's tree. Therefore, the felling of them, with the big trucks, commotion and loud noises, could make the parents abandon the nest.

I immediately wrote a letter to the cemetery administration explaining the location of the nest and my concerns. I received no reply for several days, so I sent a follow-up letter with photos of the occupied nest and asked a good friend, **Georges Dupras**, to write as well. Georges went one step further and copied the mayor of Saint-Laurent, **Alan DeSousa**.



Cooper's Hawk by nest

Regrettably, neither my letters nor Georges' received a reply from the cemetery. Thankfully Mayor DeSousa assigned the issue to a city planning advisor, **Jacinthe Daprato**, for action.



Portrait of a young Cooper's Hawk

In the meantime, I discovered that there were five nestlings! This information and more details were passed on to Ms. Daprato, and I was very pleased to learn on July 5 that the cemetery had been instructed by the city to leave all trees standing until mid-August, to protect these birds.

Her reply to me (translated from the French) stated, in part: "After discussions with the **Ministry of Forests, Wildlife and Parks**, and under the law on the conservation and development of wildlife, the nest must be protected until the young can fly and leave the nest."

I am happy to report that all five young hawks are now adult size and flying well. However, they sometimes still rely on their parents for food and come back to the nest for feeding.

With so much bad news lately regarding birds and butterflies losing their habitats on the island of Montreal, I am pleased that at least these birds have been allowed to raise their family successfully. Thanks go to Mayor DeSousa in particular, for caring enough to bring this saga to a happy conclusion.



Three young Cooper's Hawks

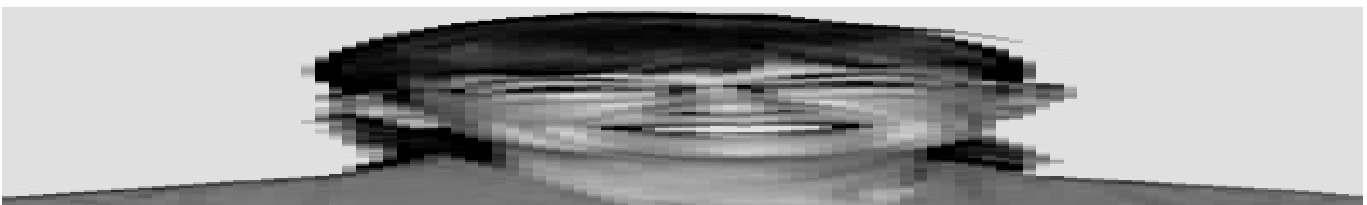
Feature image: Young Cooper's Hawk branching
Images: Doris Potter

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*“There are two main things which are important to me – beauty and compassion. As a photographer, I try to capture and portray the incredible beauty of Nature. As an animal rights advocate, I am a vegan and devote time to helping animals where I can. The key is to treat all lifeforms with respect.” – **Doris Potter***



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