

## Common Flicker

*I continue my "safari" into Maine's northern forest, spending yesterday and today in Misery Gore. The 90 degree-plus temperatures and warm winds are what would probably be equivalent to the "sirocco" winds of the North African continent. A single raven flies overhead, with its mouth open as it pants in the hot, rising air.*

*These two days are spent in a moist meadow that appears to be an old beaver-made pond that has long since dried. This meadow is a classic example of nature's succession; if beavers do not return, the meadow is destined to revert back to a forest habitat.*

*Even in the searing temperatures, the forest gives me much comfort and solace. Inside my cloth photography blind the temperature reaches nearly 100 degrees, but I am not in hell – indeed I am in heaven. The perspiration dripping profusely off my face does not daunt me. The ants crawling up and biting my legs do not deter me. The temperamental bee that somehow entered the blind does not disturb me. I laugh quietly to myself when a red squirrel mistakes me for a tree and jumps onto my shoulder.*

*I am amused when 4 gray jays land on a nearby tree to entertain me. I treasure the company of blue jays, flickers, woodpeckers, and chickadees. When a small, coyote puppy approaches within 25 feet, and stares into my eyes, I am reminded why we must protect it and its habitat..... heaven on earth.*

*An unidentified species of woodpecker taps its resilient beak on a tall, dead tree trunk. The drum-like sound, with its musical beat, attracts another woodpecker, which I hear responding in the distance with its own tapping.*

*Before departing the Gore on my final evening, coyotes howl a "goodbye" to me.*

*Thomas Mark Szelog*



Maine Woods National Park Photo-Documentation Project  
Thomas Mark Szelog & Lee Ann Szelog, wildlife conservationists  
Bear Brook Cabin · P.O. Box 36 · Whitfield, Maine 04353  
207-549-5151 · info@mainewoodsnationalpark.com

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