

## THREE-LEGGED BIRDS AT ISLAND BEACH

By Mabel Warburton

In 1966 at the Island Beach Operation Recovery Station, we caught two birds that had extra legs growing from the abdomen. The first, a Baltimore Oriole (Icterus galbula) was captured on September 2, 1966 and banded. The leg-like appendage was not well developed but appeared to be a part of a tarsus. It was about an inch in length, and covered with the blue-gray scutellate skin of the oriole. There were no toes, as such, but rather an undifferentiated-looking mass, suggesting arrested development.



On September 25 the second bird was caught, a Great Crested Flycatcher (Myiarchus crinitus). This bird's third appendage was much more developed than that of the oriole, and emerged near the vent. Positioned so, (see photograph at left) it was encrusted on the lower third, from the heel downward, with excrement. Where the net cut through the crust and broke it away, the heel was rubbed raw and bleeding. I was able to feel three distinct parts, which may have represented the femur, tibia and tarsometatarsus. On the end were wart-like knobs, suggesting toes. The bird held this third appendage close to the body. Aside from the slight bleeding, the bird appeared to be in good condition, but was released unbanded.

Reginald D. Manwell, in The Auk (Vol. 81, No. 3: July 1964, p. 438) writes of a "Congenitally One-legged Cowbird". Also in The Auk (Vol. 79, No. 3: April 1962, p. 278) Robert G. Frankowiak describes a "Mourning Dove with Three Legs". In this instance, however, the Mourning Dove is described as having one leg that was normal, and the third leg as growing from the tibiotarsus joint of the second leg. In the Island Beach birds, two legs of each were entirely normal, and the third leg in each case was a separate leg growing from the abdomen.

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