

settled down for a sleep. It may be said that the only time the rail seemed perfectly satisfied was during the hour following the consumption of these two snakes. After the hour, however, it was ready once more for food, though evidently not particularly hungry.

Attempts were made to feed the rail on a less carnivorous diet, but all proffered rice and cracked corn was refused, even when the bird showed marked signs of hunger. Finely chopped liver was likewise ignored, and small pieces of bread were merely played with.

GENERAL NOTES.

Concealing Posture of Grebes.—The note under this heading in the last number of 'The Auk' by Mr. Delos E. Culver recalls to my memory a similar and yet different experience with a Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*) on August 22, 1911. Near Addison, Illinois, is a slough of about five acres area and around the edge a fringe of open water, which is two to four feet deep in spring, but becomes shallower as the season progresses, until, in very warm summer, there is sometimes no water left. In the center is a large area grown up with rushes, tall sedges and marsh grasses. On the above-named day I went into this slough, crossed the open water, which now had almost disappeared, then through the large grassy center space. When near the farther edge of this, I noticed a grebe, which was frantically trying to hide itself. Had I come from the shore near which it was, it would have had no difficulty in getting into the grassy wilderness in the center, but since I came from the other direction, it could not do so without being in my vision. When all attempts at diving proved unavailing, it nevertheless suddenly disappeared from view, although I was only fifteen feet from it. Trying to get to the bottom of this remarkable phenomenon, I looked closely and saw that it had swum as closely as possible to a small tussock of grass and stretched its neck and upper part of the body over this. The color of its plumage matching well in general effect the brown and green of the grass, the bird became next to invisible. It remained in this position until I approached to within about ten feet, when it splashed away and performed the same maneuver on another tussock.—C. W. G. EHRIG, *River Forest, Ill.*

The Double-crested Cormorant in the Chicago Area.—November 20, 1914, I saw a Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax dilophus dilo-*

phus) resting on ice at the edge of the water on one of the lagoons of Jackson Park, Chicago. It appeared during an unusually cold wave. Mr. F. M. Woodruff in his 'Birds of the Chicago Area' published in 1907 writes of this species as being a rather rare fall visitant in the area covered by that book, and no doubt since then it has become still more rare. At least, in nearly six years acquaintance with the birds of this region, this is the first cormorant that I have ever seen.—EDWIN D. HULL, *Chicago, Illinois.*

Note on the Feeding of the Mallard.—That the Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) does not dive for its food seems to be the general impression. Therefore an exception which I was fortunate enough to witness would seem worthy of record. January 28, 1914, on one of the lagoons of Jackson Park, Chicago, I saw an adult male Mallard in company with a female Lesser Scaup. When the birds were first seen about 4:30 P. M. the Scaup was diving repeatedly near the middle of the lagoon in deep water, while the Mallard was following her about, rushing up to her every time she appeared at the surface, but unable to rob her of any food. Nearly twenty minutes later the Mallard dove for the first time. A few more dives followed in fairly quick succession. Meanwhile the Scaup had been diving continuously. The diving of the Mallard in comparison with that of the Scaup was clumsy in the extreme, and accompanied with much flapping of wings and splashing of water. The actual time spent by the Mallard under water was very short, in fact, when it dove after the Scaup had disappeared it was still the first to rise. The diving would seem to be unsuccessful, for the bird quit shortly although the Scaup kept up its diving, and later about 5:00 P. M. when the birds swam off to another part of the lagoon and the Scaup again commenced diving the Mallard made no effort to do so. It is highly improbable that sufficient food, if indeed any at all, was secured in these short clumsy dives. At any rate the bird brought no food to the surface, and if any was obtained it was swallowed under water.

I notice J. G. Millais¹ states that young Mallards when about three-quarters grown and before they are able to fly, encouraged by their mothers secure a considerable part of their food by diving. This author states further in his notes on the Mallard that surface-feeding ducks exceptionally dive for choice bits of food, but he does not name the species, although presumably the Mallard is included.

From the few available observations, the most plausible theory, it seems to me, in regard to the feeding of the Mallard is that the species has nearly changed in adult life from a diving to a surface-feeding duck, although diving is habitual in the young. Reversions to this juvenal behavior occur among adults under the pressure of a very strong stimulus, as an unusually choice morsel of food, or in imitation of a diving duck after that bird has

¹ The Natural History of British Surface-Feeding Ducks, 1902, p. 3.