

Pisobia bairdi.—BAIRD'S SANDPIPER.—This species was observed on several occasions in August at the above pond. I took a female on August 15, and another female on August 27.

Limnodromus griseus scolopaceus. LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER.—My only fall record is a male taken August 12, 1926.

Sphyrapicus varius varius.—YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER.—Rare winter resident. A female taken December 25, 1926, is of further interest in that it represents the form with a black crown. The latter had sagittate markings of ecru drab.

Astur atricapillus atricapillus. GOSHAWK.—On the morning of January 1, 1927, near the run in the Wingra woods, a fine adult Goshawk approached me and passed within 50 feet without paying the slightest heed to my presence. The Hawk's passage aroused cries of protest from a Song Sparrow that otherwise would have escaped observation.—A. W. SCHORGER, 2021 Kendall Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin.

Three New Birds for Kansas.—While working under the supervision of Mr. C. D. Bunker at the Kansas University Museum the following important records have come to my attention. All of the specimens reported here are now in the Kansas University Museum bird collection.

Pelecanus occidentalis. BROWN PELICAN.—A single specimen of this species was found dead after a severe storm June 6, 1916 near Parker, Linn County, Kansas.

Callipepla squamata pallida. ARIZONA SCALED QUAIL.—I collected three specimens of this species from a flock of six about fourteen miles north of Elkhart, Morton County, Kansas, on August 19, 1926. They were beneath some low shrubbery at the foot of a cliff and did not flush until I had approached to within about fifteen feet of them. These three specimens are to my knowledge the only ones taken in the State.

Geococcyx californianus. ROAD-RUNNER.—A fine male specimen of this species was killed three miles west and seven miles north of Caldwell, Sumner County, Kansas, September 30, 1926. This species has been reported as occurring occasionally in the extreme southwest part of the state, but as far as I know there have been no specimens taken to make the report authentic. The occurrence of a Road-runner as far north and east as Caldwell, Kansas is unusual and unless absolutely accidental it would indicate that the species was extending its range in that direction.—W. H. BURT, Kansas University Museum, Lawrence, Kas.

The Role of the Snake Skin.—It would seem that before an explanation of a phenomenon is in order it is desirable to make sure that there is something requiring explanation.

In this country at least it appears to be reasonably sure that the recurrent speculation as to why certain birds use the exuviae of snakes, is due to the fact that the Great-crested Flycatchers (*Myiarchus crinitus*) use this material on occasion not only in nest construction but as seeming "scare-crows" dangling from the openings to their nests or prominently employed

in nest construction. Had the use of sloughs by this species been confined to the use of fragments in general construction, no especial problem in connection therewith would have arisen. The "mystery" arises because of the fact that entire sloughs or large pieces are either left hanging from the nesting holes or are conspicuously placed along the rim of the nests.

Since many species of birds have their young and eggs destroyed by snakes, and since old birds at nesting time are greatly concerned when a snake is seen near their nests, as I have often observed to be the case, it seems obvious that if such species, and presumably the Great-crest does not escape their depredations, in seeking nesting material recognized snakes' sloughs as sufficiently snake-like to act as scare-crows to other birds, or other animals, they would themselves be too much alarmed on discovering the sloughs to use them in nest building. Hence two corollaries appear to be justified: (1) that since birds gather snakes' sloughs, they do not associate the flimsy, lifeless material with their former wearers; and (2) that they themselves, not recognizing that sloughs resemble snakes, do not employ them in nest building as scare-crows, but in the same manner that birds occasionally use fragments of birch bark, leaves, strings, newspaper, etc., as nesting material.

Sloughs are conspicuous objects as seen from the trees and no doubt their availability as nesting material is investigated by many species of birds, but it is only the larger species that are able to utilize entire specimens, especially from our larger species such as the black snake, on account of the difficulty of carrying them to their nests and their manipulation afterwards.

If, in the process of nest construction, the casts be built into the structure inconspicuously, they would have little of the alarming aspects often attributed to them. If, however, birds happen to place the slough along the upper edge of the nest where it is likely to be easily displaced and consequently subject to frequent rearrangement by the sitting bird, as chronicled by Bolles,¹ it becomes a prominent object and consequently has given rise to a theory involving the matter of *purpose* in its use other than as nesting material, notably "to scare away intruders," as was suggested by him. This theory, however, fails to account for the fact that *crinitus* and four of its races, as well as birds of other genera, are not themselves frightened when they come across snakes' sloughs, but instead they collect them even as they collect other nesting material, and *crinitus* often includes also, as stated by Coues, a great variety of other objects, "trash of the most miscellaneous description, sometimes accumulated in astonishing bulk."—CHARLES L. WHITTLE, *Boston, Mass.*

Snakes' Sloughs as Nesting Material.—The Western House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon parkmani*) may be added to the list of birds mentioned

¹"Snake Skins in the Nests of *Myiarchus crinitus*," *The Auk*, 1890, p. 288.