

includes, 'Life Histories of North American Gallinaceous Birds' by Arthur Cleveland Bent; 'Game Management' and 'Game Survey of the North Central States,' Aldo Leopold; and 'Winter Food of the Sharp-tailed Grouse and Pinnated Grouse in Wisconsin' by Frank J. W. Schmidt. The only reference made to Sharp-tailed Grouse budding *Prunus* was in Schmidt's review of D. A. Dery's 'Preliminary Report on the migration in Quebec of the Northern Sharp-tailed Grouse' (Bull. Quebec Zool. Soc., no. 1, 1933) in which mention is made that cherry buds are among its winter foods.

Since so many of the apparently preferred winter foods (buds of ironwood, birch, aspen, willow, balsam and cottonwood as observed by Schmidt, Judd, Coues, Dery and Bent), were available to the birds in the immediate vicinity, the observation bears some significance. Acknowledgment directly to the writer or in 'The Auk' of similar substantiating observations on the above report will be appreciated.—ADRIAN C. FOX, *Park River, North Dakota.*

Incubation period of Virginia Rail.—In a cat-tail swamp in Wildwood Lake, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, I found a nest of a Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola limicola*) and was able to determine the incubation period of this species as twenty days. When first seen on the morning of May 12, 1937, the nest contained four eggs; the next morning five eggs were present. On May 25 there were eight eggs, the maximum laid, which means the last egg was laid May 16 and incubation was begun May 17. When seen on May 12 at about 9:30 a. m., three eggs were cold and one warm, indicating that the mother bird sat on the nest only long enough to lay an egg, and suggesting that no incubation would be started until all eggs were laid. This latter theory is supported by the equal development found in the downy embryos. It is, of course, advantageous for such birds to be hatched all the same day. The nest was not the flattened mat of reeds as often described in books, but resembled an enlarged Red-wing's nest, being lined with dead grass inside a cup of reeds, four inches in inside diameter and four inches deep. It was attached to old cat-tail stalks, six inches above the water. The eggs were elliptical, creamy white with many purplish and fuscous dots, most numerous about the larger end. Seven eggs all measured exactly the same, 34 by 25 millimeters, and one egg was 32 by 24 mm. The smaller egg was later found to be infertile, showing no incubation whatever. At one visit one egg was found outside the nest and was replaced, but it was not determined which egg this was. When visited May 24, the female bird was sitting on the nest and remained there about two minutes while I stood only three feet away looking at her. Then she moved off absolutely noiselessly. So as not to frighten her I stayed away from the nest until hatching time was supposed due. On May 31 and June 1 the eight eggs were seen and found warm. On June 3 the nest was again visited and one side found broken down and the clutch destroyed. Three whole cold eggs, a downy embryo with its legs eaten off, parts of another eaten bird and broken eggshells were found. The eggs had been broken and showed indented edges as though punctured by a round instrument, perhaps the mother's bill, although I had seen three blacksnakes in the same swamp. Since the eggs were cold, it is doubtful if the destruction occurred that morning. In the afternoon I again visited the nest and found more destruction. Four embryos were whole enough to show that their development was equal, that incubation began the same day for all. The eggs contained no nourishment whatever, the vitelline sac was entirely empty; neither was any stored nourishment found within the dissected body. The birds were ready to hatch. Mr. Frederick C. Lincoln after seeing an embryo declared it certainly would have hatched within two days, probably one. I believe they would

have hatched in one day, making the incubation period for this Virginia Rail twenty days.

Audubon states that the Virginia Rail lays four or five eggs, seldom more than six or seven, and does not give the incubation period. Forbush does not record the incubation period, nor does Dr. W. H. Bergtold in his 'Study of the Incubation Periods of Birds.' Thomas R. Gentry in his book, 'Nests and Eggs of Birds of the United States,' 1882, wrote: "The number of eggs laid ranges from 6 to 10. These are deposited in daily installments of one, the first being usually extruded on the third day subsequent to the completion of the nest. The female takes to the nest almost immediately after the last egg is laid and continues for a term of 15 days." I have found no other record of this incubation period.—HAROLD B. WOOD, M.D., Harrisburg, Penna.

Golden Plover in Florida during winter.—On January 17, 1937, an American Golden Plover (*Pluvialis d. dominica*) was collected on the shore of Big Lagoon, about a mile east of Gulf Beach, and eighteen miles southwest of Pensacola. The bird was in the company of three Black-bellied Plovers, with which it was compared before collecting, and a mixed flock of Piping Plovers, Cuban Snowy Plovers, and Sanderlings. From all appearances the Golden Plover was not injured in any way. Before it could be collected, it flew at least four miles, and there was nothing in its flight to indicate injury. When it was skinned, only recent wounds were found. As far as we can determine, this is the first specimen taken in the United States during January, and constitutes the second record for that month, Torrey (Condor, 11: 207, 1909) having seen one during January, 1908, at Coronado, California. This is the third published record of an American Golden Plover observed in Florida in winter. A. H. Howell ('Florida Bird Life,' p. 222) lists two specimens taken in winter by R. D. Hoyt, one in December, 1900, the other on November 19, 1901. Subspecific identification was made by Dr. H. C. Oberholser, and the specimen is now in the National Museum.—FRANCIS M. WESTON, *U. S. Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida*, and ROBERT C. McCLANAHAN, *Bureau Biological Survey, Washington, D. C.*

Western Willet in Ohio.—On September 12, 1936, the writer collected a Western Willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus inornatus*) along the beach of Lake Erie at Ashtabula in extreme northeastern Ohio. The bird was an immature female and was in very poor condition, weighing only 271.9 grams. The bird, several weeks previous to collection, had broken its left leg an inch above the ankle joint. This had healed without juncture of the bone edges and at a 30-degree angle from the normal position, giving the bird a peculiar limp and making feeding difficult. Several dozen Mallophaga and several hundred mites (species undetermined) infested the body. The skin of this specimen (no. 7124) has been placed in the Ohio State Museum collections.

Dr. Kirtland (1840) considered this species a common visitor in spring and autumn, Dr. Landon and Dr. Dury recorded it as a rare spring and fall migrant in the Cincinnati region, and Dr. Wheaton (1879) had no records for central Ohio. All available data would indicate that this species a century ago was uncommon to rare in nearly all of Ohio except along the Lake Erie shore where it occurred locally and regularly in some numbers. The oldest Ohio specimen still in existence is probably an unpublished record furnished me by Mr. John W. Aldrich of a bird taken at Cleveland, August 20, 1868, and now in the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

No additional published records are known previous to 1900. Though this species