

or fifty American Pintail, is an adult of undetermined sex. It has been mounted and presented to the American Museum of Natural History.

The association of this duck with the American Pintail (*Dafila acuta*) is interesting because examples of the latter species are known to winter in the Bahamas and West Indies, and also because of the apparent predilection that *bahamensis* has for closely related ducks. In southern South America, for example, the Bahama Pintail commonly associates with the Brown Pintail (*Dafila spinicauda*) and the American Museum possesses a hybrid between these two species.

The fourth edition of the A. O. U. 'Check-List' (1931) records only two earlier occurrences of the Bahama Pintail in continental North America, namely, one on the east coast of Florida and one in Wisconsin.—ROBERT CUSHMAN MURPHY, *American Museum of Natural History, New York City.*

**Blue-winged Teal in unusual numbers at Fort Erie, Ontario.**—For the past year or more it has not been unusual, during the late spring and again in the latter part of summer, to see small parties of Blue-winged Teal (*Querquedula discors*), up to six or eight in number, feeding among the shallow reedy waters of certain parts of the Niagara River near Fort Erie. Such seasonal occurrences of small numbers are not particularly surprising for the species is known to breed sparingly in relatively nearby territory in New York State, but the occurrence of a flock of from 75 to 80 in the river at Fort Erie on August 22, 1938, and the finding of what must have been that same flock swollen to an aggregate of not less than 125, in the above-mentioned reedy shallows, a few days later, on August 27, would appear to be worthy of record.—R. W. SHEPPARD, 1805 Mouland Avenue, Niagara Falls, Ontario.

**American Scoter at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.**—During a flight of several thousand ducks on the Susquehanna River, April 19, 1939, three White-winged Scoters (*Melanitta deglandi*) were seen. The ducks were mainly Scaup and Oldsquaws, with numerous Buffleheads and some Golden-eyes; Black Ducks and Mallards had preceded them by a week or two. The White-winged Scoters have occasionally been found here, as three times during May 1935. The following day, April 20, 1939, I found a female American Scoter (*Oidemia americana*) on Wildwood Lake within the city limits and a mile from the river. This American Scoter was easily identified at a distance of 150 feet with a binocular, and constitutes a first record for this locality, as far as I have learned. There is nothing to account for its presence here, except the excessive flight of ducks.—HAROLD B. WOOD, *Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.*

**Feeding habits of Black Vulture.**—On October 31, 1936, when banding Black Vultures (*Coragyps atratus atratus*) in a large, open hayfield on the east side of Avery Island, Louisiana, I noticed a three-quarters-grown skunk (*Mephitis mesomelas*) going leisurely across the field. The grass was short, having recently been cut. The trap contained that morning something over one hundred vultures, some of which had been in it twenty-four hours. One of the yearling vultures, after having been banded and liberated, alighted near the skunk which was then about two hundred feet from where I stood at my banding work. The skunk immediately stopped and raised its tail. Other vultures that were sitting around on the ground soon joined the one that was near the skunk, and when six or eight of them had gathered about the animal, one suddenly attacked it from the side. The skunk immediately discharged its musk, but this seemed to have no effect on the vultures, which, on its discharge, attacked in a mass. As soon as the attack was made, other vultures that were circling above the meadow or sitting in the trees nearby, joined the group, until

there were probably twenty-five or more around the skunk. They piled on to it, and with much flapping and croaking, pulled it about until it was dead, then devoured it.

As this was a most unusual occurrence, I made note of it, and thought no more of it until October 1, 1938, when I saw exactly the same thing happen, except that I did not see the beginning of the attack, but did see a number of vultures pulling something about in a freshly cut hayfield and upon driving near them, found they were attacking a full-grown skunk. On my walking near, the vultures hopped away a short distance from their victim. An examination of the skunk showed it to be still alive, but with most of the hair torn from it, both eyes pecked out, and a number of fresh wounds through its skin. As soon as I got back into my car, the vultures again piled on their victim and in a few minutes as I watched, they tore it to pieces and devoured it.

The boy who was with me, son of my game warden who takes care of the east side of the Island, told me that within the past few weeks he had seen a number of such attacks by Black Vultures upon live skunks. The vultures always killed and ate the skunk. I had made note of the scarcity of skunks about the place during the past three or four weeks. Previous to that time, that is, during July, August, and early September, skunks had been extremely abundant, and on some cloudy afternoons as many as one hundred or more could be seen in a drive of but a couple of miles about the place. As it is my desire to allow Nature to balance itself on the Island, skunks are not disturbed and therefore, are fearless and can be seen almost any time of the day in the meadows searching for insects. It was not uncommon during August and September to see as many as five, eight, or more skunks at one time in the grassy meadows and on the open hillsides. For the past couple of weeks, however, I had not seen a skunk. After my experience on October 1, I spoke of the occurrence to my game warden, Alva Perrera, who looks after the east side of the place, and asked him why he thought skunks were so scarce. His reply was: "The buzzards have killed them all." By 'buzzards' he meant Black Vultures. On questioning him, he said that on many occasions during the past two or three weeks, he had seen 'buzzards' alight near a skunk in an open field, attack it and destroy it.

In the afternoon, especially on cloudy days, skunks go into the open meadows in search of insects. A vulture, seeing a skunk thus engaged, will alight near it and walk along with it as it moves about. Other vultures will quickly join the one following the skunk, and as soon as eight or ten have assembled, one will attack the skunk from the side. The skunk usually discharges its musk as soon as attacked, and this seems to be the signal for a general attack by the assembled vultures, and they will quickly kill and eat it. At times as many as fifty or more will be gathered around one skunk, each bird trying to get hold of a morsel of the flesh. Alva said he has seen 'buzzards' kill skunks in this way for several years, but only in the months of September and October. The probable reason for the vultures' attacking the skunks at this time of the year is that these months are usually dry, and when there is a protracted dry spell, there is little or no mortality among the livestock on the ranges of Avery Island, therefore, no food for the vultures.

On October 12, 1938, about 4.30 p. m., I saw a Black Vulture come from high in the air and alight near two full-grown opossums that were following a narrow cattle trail which led from the cypress swamp at the foot of the hills across a wide piece of open land to the timber on the hills. The first vulture was almost at once joined by many others that dropped down from the sky with almost unbelievable swiftness, until there were probably between seventy-five and one hundred Black Vultures

following the opossums,—some on both sides, some in the rear. Suddenly, three or four of the vultures attacked one opossum at the same time. In less time than I can write it, both opossums were covered with a swarm of hissing, flapping birds, and within fifteen minutes there was nothing left of them but the larger bones and the hides, and these were stripped of every vestige of flesh.

It is also of interest to note in the feeding habits of these birds, that during dry periods when food is scarce, Black Vultures congregate in the early morning where the herds of cattle are bedded down for the night, and as the cattle move off to graze shortly after sun-up, the vultures feed on the fresh excrement which the cattle drop as they begin their day's grazing. This is a common feeding habit of the Black Vultures which I have observed for many years. The Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura septentrionalis*) apparently has not this same food habit, nor have I ever seen it attack a living animal.—E. A. McILHENNY, *Avery Island, Louisiana*.

**Eastern Sparrow Hawk feeding on big brown bat.**—About 6.30 o'clock (eastern daylight time), on the morning of May 5, 1939, while observing birds in Washington Park in the heart of the city of Albany, New York, my attention was drawn to a female Eastern Sparrow Hawk (*Falco s. sparverius*) perched high up in a large elm. As I watched, the bird, evidently unaware of my presence, suddenly darted from its vantage point to the trunk of an adjacent tree of similar kind and size, seized and carried away what appeared through the binocular to be a small bat. The color of the victim, its shape and a brief view of the tip of a weakly flapping wing afforded the bits of evidence for my first and provisional diagnosis.

On following the flight of the hawk it was observed to alight well out on the limb of another elm, about fifty feet above the ground, where at once it began vehemently and greedily to devour the prey. The first struggles of the victim, manifest principally in the flapping of one wing, soon subsided as the hawk continued to tear it to pieces. Perhaps two minutes elapsed before the bird had finished the meal. As I continued to watch these proceedings through the binocular, I wished that some way might be found to determine definitely on just what the hawk was feeding. Then, as though in answer to this thought, it arose in flight and in so doing dropped from its claws a fragment of the prey. Upon examination this proved to be the facial portion of the head of a big brown bat, *Eptesicus fuscus*. Although the brain case had been removed by the hawk, the furred facial skin, the intact left ear and the complete dentition provided sufficient evidence for positive identification of the bat. All the other parts of the animal had apparently been eaten by the hawk.

I have never before observed this feeding habit of the Eastern Sparrow Hawk and so far as I have been able to ascertain, records of the occurrence of this or any other bat in the stomachs of Sparrow Hawks appear to be very rare.—DAYTON STONER, *New York State Museum, Albany, New York*.

**Falcon, Buteo and Harrier eat Herring Gull.**—That many if not all of our hawks are occasional carrion eaters is a long-established fact and yet all too seldom is this factor mentioned or at least given sufficient significance when an analysis of the stomach contents of one of these birds is published. The writer has had several occasions to see how erroneous it might be for a stomach-contents analysis to be taken as a sign of exactly what the raptors might be killing. A recent observation even though extreme, strongly illustrates this point. While driving along an extensive mudflat on the south shore of Long Island my attention was attracted to a bird ripping apart a dead Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*). The bird turned out to be a large adult Duck Hawk (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) which circled