

always by a single observer, never previously acquainted with this species in life in its proper range. Of the reports given by Forbush, the first two can scarcely be questioned, as the observations are recorded in detail and were made by observers of known competence and experience. Messrs. Bagg and Eliot publish another (Birds of Connecticut Valley, p. 525, 1937) from Northampton, May 17, 1936, where the detailed account with a drawing was even more convincing than their summary of it. The other reports in both books can scarcely be regarded as certainties or real additions to scientific knowledge. One or more may be possible or even probable, but this is a matter for speculation only. At present the Kentucky Warbler is proved to be a very rare spring vagrant north of its breeding range. Sight records in New England by inexperienced observers in midsummer and fall require confirmation.—LUDLOW GRISCOM, *Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, Massachusetts.*

Hooded Warbler flying backward.—In view of meager data hitherto presented regarding backward flight in birds, the fact is considered noteworthy that late in August 1940, the writer watched a male Hooded Warbler (*Wilsonia citrina*) in an act resorted to by very few avian species. The bird under observation, in a damp, shady thicket, was accompanied by a Kentucky Warbler (*Oporornis formosus*), the latter being extremely sedentary in comparison. With tremulous wings and "flashing" tail-feathers, the hooded creature moved about restlessly. Presently, at a height of five or six feet, it was momentarily seen to float downward and backward at an approximate 50° angle, fluttering tail-first with its body parallel to the oblique direction of flight. It has not been determined whether a desired insect, an aberrant impulse, or merely pent-up energy was responsible for this unusual feat. The lighting and distance were favorable, and the only obstruction was a slight wisp of hanging vine.

Although this individual scarcely suggested the dexterity of a hummingbird, it is believed that the radical ability is there but is not realized since the warbler seldom has occasion to exercise it. Apparently, but one other recently published account has disproved the general belief of the hummingbird's sole ability in this respect (cf. Williams, *Auk*, 57: 255, 1940).—ROBERT NORRIS, *Fitzgerald, Georgia.*

Hooded Oriole again recorded in the United States.—During the course of field work in Texas this past spring (1939) a limited amount of collecting was carried on at the mouth of the Pecos River, approximately forty miles northwest of Del Rio, Val Verde County. Among the birds taken there on April 25 was a male Hooded Oriole, that was later found to represent the Mexican race, *Icterus cucullatus cucullatus* Swainson. Until taken by Dr. George M. Sutton near Marathon, Brewster County, Texas, on April 17, 1935 (J. Van Tyne and G. M. Sutton, *Miscell. Publ. Mus. Zool., Univ. Michigan*, no. 37: 92, 1937) this race had not heretofore been recorded from the United States. This appears, therefore, to be the second record for this subspecies north of the Rio Grande. It is possible that further field work will reveal this oriole as of more than casual occurrence within the United States.—THOMAS D. BURLEIGH, *Bureau of Biological Survey*, and GEORGE H. LOWERY, JR., *Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.*

Cowbird on the Virginia and North Carolina coasts.—The breeding range of the Eastern Cowbird (*Molothrus ater ater*) as usually given does not include eastern

Virginia or North Carolina. The following records may thus be of some interest. The writers saw a flock of nine Cowbirds, mostly males, at the Virginia National Guard Camp, just south of Virginia Beach, Princess Anne County, Virginia, on May 22, 1940. Courtship display was in progress. This and the date seem to indicate that the birds were breeding there. The Rev. F. H. Craighill, of Rocky Mount, North Carolina, informs us that he saw two males between Jamestown and Williamsburg, Virginia, on May 30, 1940. For the North Carolina coast Mr. Craighill has furnished us with several records: Bodie Island, June 27, 1936, one brown-headed male; Roanoke Island, June 28, 1936, several small flocks (of ten to fifteen birds), mostly young birds but some adults; Roanoke Island, June 8, 1937, fifteen at Manteo, including brown-headed males; Roanoke Island, June 1, 1938, adult male and female.—JOHN H. GREY, JR., *Raleigh, North Carolina*, and J. J. MURRAY, *Lexington, Virginia*.

'Anting' by Summer Tanager.—" 'Anting' by the Song Sparrow" in the October 'Auk' recalls a Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra rubra*) which I observed 'anting' on September 26, 1938, at my home in North Little Rock, Arkansas; I trapped and banded the bird while it was engaged in this curious performance. It had come to a table on which, all summer, I had kept a small cup of sweetened water for Orchard Orioles, and, after their departure, for the occasional Mockingbird or Tufted Titmouse with a taste for sweets. The cup was nearly empty and, I had noticed a short time before, swarming with red ants. The tanager, squatted on the table, slid back and forth in the most grotesque way, its tail often bent beneath its body. It continually picked at feet and legs, worked under its wings with its beak, then shook out all its feathers. A second tanager flew to the edge of the table, but was driven off by the first. Then the 'anting' tanager thrust its beak into the cup of ants, next plunged its head under a wing. It seemed, from a distance, to be stowing the ants away. Close to the cup was a one-cell trap, Potter type, baited with peanuts; and this bird, as if on sudden impulse, ran into the trap. I examined it at once, but could find no ants in its plumage, although on the table were many maimed and writhing ants. The tanager was an immature male, with a few red feathers showing in the olive-green, and was given the band no. 138-109010.—RUTH HARRIS THOMAS, *Route 4, North Little Rock, Arkansas*.

Rufous-crowned Sparrow of southeastern New Mexico.—Brodrick (Auk, 57: 421-422, 1940) records a Rufous-crowned Sparrow from Carlsbad Caverns National Park, New Mexico, which I had identified for him as *Aimophila ruficeps eremoeca*. After reporting to him, there came to hand the description by Burleigh and Lowery (Occas. Papers Mus. Zool., Louisiana State Univ., no. 6: 67-68, 1939) of a new race of this species from the adjacent Guadalupe Mountain section of Texas. This description of *A. r. tenuirostra* served to clear up certain discrepancies between the Carlsbad specimen and typical *eremoeca* that I had noted, and shows that the former belongs to the rather distinctive new race. The Carlsbad specimen (no. 79190, Mus. Vert. Zool.) has the dark coloration and slender, less conical bill of *tenuirostra*. The bill is, however, as long and massive otherwise as in our specimens of *eremoeca* and *scotti*. Because we were unaware that Mr. Brodrick planned to record this specimen immediately, word of our revised opinion concerning identity unfortunately was not sent to him prior to the publication of his note.—ALDEN H. MILLER, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California*.