

CORRESPONDENCE

BIRDS AND WIND

Editor of 'The Auk':—

THE writer has waited a considerable period for the impression to disappear but it refuses to do so: he refers to the thought that airman Neil T. McMillan oversimplified matters in his article 'Birds and the Wind' (*Bird-lore*, 40 (6): 397–406, Nov.–Dec. 1938). That author said, "Anything suspended in air cannot feel its movement." But surely birds are not suspended in air; they can remain there only through muscular exertion that in the great majority of cases is strenuous.

Again he says, "A flying bird, which is essentially part of the wind, cannot be struck by it." But must we forget that birds are solid flesh of many times the specific gravity of air? How can they be "essentially part of the wind"? As to not being struck by it, the fact is that they are sometimes so struck and killed.

There was a shower of birds at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1896, hundreds of individuals of numerous species falling to the ground, all dead (*Osprey*, 1 (4): 56, Dec. 1896). Two similar phenomena were reported six years apart in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the later in 1890 when twenty-one species were identified among those falling during a severe rainstorm (*Oölogist*, 7 (6): 109–110, June 1890). Over a considerable area about Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1922, large numbers of birds fell to the ground dead. Their plumage was not wet (C. G. Gammon, letter of March 3, 1922).

McMillan goes on to say, "Even if he rides a hurricane that is spinning at well over a hundred miles an hour, the bird will feel not an ounce more of pressure or have a single feather ruffled." I will let the assertion be answered by another written, presumably, by an expert on aviation. It is: "Pilots give thunderstorms a wide berth, if possible, for within their cores often lies turbulence in which no airplane can live" (*Time*, 37 (15): 19, April 14, 1941).

Our author admits that, "Long dirigibles, slow for their size, have been literally sheared apart when straddling strong opposing currents" and goes on to say, "It is possible that birds receive painful wrenches under like conditions." This should be recognized as a masterpiece of understatement.

The reviewer believes that ornithologists will do well to retain their traditional belief in the importance of wind in the bird world. Many stragglers have been recorded as birds blown off their wonted courses by the wind and in all probability that explanation is correct. Wind is a visibly unfavorable factor in the everyday life of birds, as we see them fly low, or collect in sheltered places, to escape its force.

Some of the most expert flyers seem to enjoy a gale but the majority of birds shun the wind. Does it then become their great and good friend, once they launch into protracted flight? The probabilities seem to be against that conclusion.

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PRESENTATION OF NESTING DATA

Editor of 'The Auk':

DATA on attentiveness of adults at the nest and frequency of feeding young are a necessary part of any study of nesting behavior. At present there seems to be a need for some agreement as to the methods of organizing and analyzing such data for publication. Only if methods are standardized can the data be of greatest