

hit or run over. The stomachs of all of them contained fine gravel, presumably from the roadways, mixed with unidentified vegetable material. Calcium chloride is reported as injuring a dog's feet when the animal had been running over paths treated with this chemical and its effect in a bird's stomach might be serious. Mr. Lee S. Crandall, Curator of Birds of the Bronx Zoological Park, informs me that the Veterinarian of the park, Mr. L. J. Goss, states that calcium chloride is definitely poisonous and would kill the birds that ate it or gravel coated with it.

The unusual congregation of individuals in the locality still requires explanation. It may have been due to the attraction of the gravel, to a craving for salt, for which the chemical may have provided an erroneous substitute, or to moisture gathered by the hygroscopic chloride. The fact that the birds' stomachs contained gravel mixed with food strengthens my belief that the gravel, itself, may have formed the attraction. A cleared, unfrozen roadway in the Adirondacks in winter would have provided an unusual opportunity to get this needed material, in this case with unfortunate results. In any case, the circumstance raises the question of the advisability of using calcium chloride where it might cause a repetition of the disaster.—EDITOR.]

A bird tragedy.—On June 6, 1941, near Marshall, Harrison County, Texas the writer saw a Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) fluttering in the window of a small cabin adjacent to a lake. On approaching the cabin the bird was found to be trapped inside. The door was opened, and the Bluebird escaped. Its manner of flight indicated that it was in a weakened condition. On entering the cabin seven dead Bluebirds were found on the floor. Some appeared to have been dead several weeks. They were all in an emaciated condition, probably dying from exhaustion and starvation. In addition to the Bluebirds, two dead Carolina Wrens (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) also were found. These apparently died in the same manner as the Bluebirds.

Further investigations in the small cabin revealed the presence of a nest, containing four young Carolina Wrens, located in one corner of an old ice box. Leaving the cabin, the writer remained nearby to watch. Presently a wren flew to the cabin and entered through an obscure opening in the wall about one and one-half inches wide. A Bluebird that had been flying around went into the stovepipe chimney and down its six-foot shaft to the L-bend where the pipe entered the cabin. On going back into the cabin, a small rusted hole was found in the under side of the stovepipe adjacent to the cabin wall. Within the hole, toward the outside, were nest materials, presumably a Bluebird's nest.

A possible explanation for the disaster was that the birds had descended the chimney and, by mistake, entered the cabin through the rusted hole. The lighted window attracted the trapped birds. This attraction, no doubt, reduced their chances of finding other means to escape. The nesting wren, on the other hand, was able to find its way in and out through the crack in the wall.—ROLLIN H. BAKER, *Texas Game, Fish and Oyster Commission, Lufkin, Texas.*

Longevity and other data on a captive English Sparrow.—Recently, in Albany, New York, occurred the death of a rather remarkable captive male English Sparrow (*Passer domesticus domesticus*). Certain information concerning this bird was furnished through the kindness of the owner, Mrs. Alfred Stromberg, 129 Main Avenue, Albany, New York, while other data were obtained through my own per-

sonal examination of the sparrow following its demise. While some of the points of interest are of purely sentimental value, others possess merit from a strictly ornithological viewpoint and on that account may well become a matter of record.

The bird in question was the sole survivor of a family of five nestlings, aged two and three days, which in some way had been dislodged from their nest about twenty feet up on the ivy-covered chimney of a residence in Bloomfield, New Jersey, on June 25, 1929. The left wing and left side of the surviving nestling were injured in the fall. However, due largely to the effective ministrations of its rescuer in the person of Mrs. Stromberg, the young sparrow gradually recovered and continued to grow and thrive.

Most of the time, the sparrow was confined in a cage of the ordinary type used for canaries and other small house-birds. Occasionally it was freed in the room, when it would fly about. During adult life its food consisted principally of whole-wheat bread and warm milk, prepared bird food, yolk of hard-boiled egg, greens, bone and seeds. Typical male plumage was first acquired in September, 1930. At all times the bird appeared to be healthy and the annual molt was undergone without difficulty.

During the course of his life 'Peggy' (diminutive for Pegasus), in company with his benefactress, traveled several hundred miles by automobile, train, boat and airplane. Usually he rode in a small cage held in her lap. Movement of the vehicle appeared not to inconvenience the bird; indeed, as interpreted in terms of human response, he seemed to enjoy travel.

This unique sparrow possessed various types of vocal ability which he utilized to express insistence concerning certain kinds of food, absence of the cage cover at night, general well-being, disgust and the like. Moreover, he acquired a remarkable proficiency in singing ability through the medium of two canaries which were his companions—in separate cages—for about six years. His imitations of the 'rolling' notes of the one and the 'chopping' notes of the other were sometimes so well done as to deceive even his mistress.

So far as could be determined the sparrow exhibited no reaction to any other color than red. To this he persistently displayed fear whether it was in his food, the cover of his cage or even in the apparel of anyone who viewed him at close range.

As it does to all living things, death came to this sparrow. Suddenly and unexplainably he passed away at 2:10 P. M., July 2, 1941. He then had attained the age of twelve years and seven days of which all but two days had been spent in captivity. At autopsy the internal organs appeared to be in a healthy condition but our Museum taxidermist reported that two or three small blood clots showed on the left side of the brain. Possibly they may have been accountable for the bird's sudden demise and were associated with the then-current period of extremely warm weather. Perhaps, too, the indisposition of the bird during the three or four days preceding his death may have been correlated with this condition.

Further examination of the viscera disclosed a single testis, the right, 0.28 inch x 0.30 inch. The sparrow was in typical adult-male breeding plumage, the feathers entire and in good condition. Due to the fact that the grayish tips of the black feathers on the throat and breast had not been worn away this area is slightly suffused with the light color.

As indicated by the following measurements this English Sparrow is of normal size: length, 5.65 inches; wing, 3.2 inches; tail, 2.7 inches; bill, 0.5 inch; tarsus, 0.6

inch. Weight, 0.9 ounce, 24 hours after death ensued. The bird now reposes in the zoological collections of the New York State Museum in the form of a study skin, catalogue number 6244.—DAYTON STONER, *New York State Museum, Albany, New York.*

Speed of the Starling.—While driving westward on March 7, 1941, near Clarence, Erie County, New York, I was fortunate in making a rather accurate timing of the speed at which a Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) was flying. It flew parallel with our car for over half a mile, and maintained a speed of 55 miles per hour. This is slightly faster than the greatest rates previously recorded: 48.5 m.p.h. by Meinertzhagen, and 51.4 m.p.h. by Campbell (Cooke, U. S. D. A. circular no. 428, 1934). My companion and I who had been walking a half hour before, had commented on the fact that the air was quite still; and it is likely that the air had little, if any, influence upon the speed of the bird's flight.—EVERETT W. JAMESON, JR., *Ithaca, New York.*

Speed of a Woodcock.—On January 11, 1941, the writers were traveling near Lufkin in Angelina County, Texas, when a Woodcock (*Philohela minor*) flushed in front of the car. It was early evening, the headlights clearly revealing the identity of the bird. It flew in front of the car for some fifty yards before darting into the brush at the side of the road. During this time the car was moving at the speed of 35 miles an hour. The woodcock was flying at a greater speed than the speedometer indicated, since it was moving away from the car when it disappeared.—ROLLIN H. BAKER, AND COLEMAN C. NEWMAN, *Texas Game, Fish and Oyster Commission, Lufkin, Texas.*

A Duck Hawk attacks a Raven.—A short time ago while in Lexington, Virginia, for a few days I witnessed a very strange sight. On the afternoon of April 7, 1939, Mr. John Welles and I took a trip to a nearby mountain to look for a Raven's nest that I had seen there last spring. Just as we located this year's nest, I heard the cry of a Duck Hawk. Knowing that this bird is rare in this vicinity I immediately stopped to look for the bird. From around the end of the range came the Raven with the Duck Hawk flying high above it, calling loudly. The Raven croaked a few notes of protest but continued its slow and deliberate flight along the range. As I watched this unusual sight, I saw something at which I still marvel.

The Duck Hawk stooped at the Raven, calling faster. Just at the point when I expected to see the Raven get a hard blow, it flipped over on its back with its feet up in the air, and warded off the blow. I could not make out whether it used its feet or just assumed an attitude of guard. The Raven did not seem to use its wings in turning over, but was over in a small fraction of a minute. At this the falcon swooped up in the air again, still screaming loudly. The Raven turned over again just as quickly as it had turned upside down, and resumed its course slowly and steadily along the face of the mountain. The Duck Hawk having again reached its position over the Raven, stooped as it had before. Again the Raven turned over on its back to ward off the blow. This performance was repeated eight times as the Raven crossed before me and finally settled in a pine tree at the end of the cliff. The Duck Hawk swooped up to a tall, dead tree nearby and sat there motionless. The next thing I saw was the pair of Ravens flying back along the top of the mountain, and the Duck Hawk was nowhere to be seen. The Ravens were calling as they flew past me again.

The young were calling loudly so I easily located the new nest and climbed up