

Shortly before dusk on the afternoon of April 12, 1942, the writer was much surprised to see one of these owls about *one hundred* feet in the air *hovering* in exactly the same manner as a Sparrow Hawk or Kingfisher. So strange was the maneuver, and unlike anything seen before in connection with this owl, that it was difficult to believe for a moment that the individual was indeed a Burrowing Owl! It remained perfectly motionless on rapidly beating wings, sharply outlined against the glow of the western sky, for several moments, then dived suddenly earthward with startling rapidity, alighting in the prairie grass. It was so near dusk that it could not be ascertained whether any prey was secured. Two or three occasions of this sort left no room for doubt that this is a habit which must be indulged in with some frequency.

The writer was in company at the time with Audubon Warden Marvin Chandler, who patrols that area, and who has known the owl all of his life. He stated that he had long known of this habit and had witnessed it often. It did not occur to him that it was anything out of the ordinary and was surprised that it was new to the writer. Chandler further stated that he had watched owls performing in this manner at night, by the aid of his strong 'frog-light', an electric lamp worn on the head by a band, and powered with storage batteries. His attention was drawn to the birds by their notes overhead, and by holding his light on the hovering bird, he could see it plainly. The dives to earth are performed with the wings closed. It would appear that, at times anyway, this performance has a flavor of sport in it as well as a search for prey, for Chandler states that he has seen several doing it, the birds rising and falling in a way that suggests play. That area where the writer observed it was in Highlands County, Florida, in what is known as the Fish Branch section of the Kissimmee Prairie.

Search of the literature has failed to reveal much mention of this habit. Zimmer (Proc. Nebr. Orn. Union, 5, no. 5: 76, Apr., 1913) makes a brief mention of it as observed in the Western Burrowing Owl (*S. c. hypugaea*), and Hoffman ('Birds of the Pacific States': 169, 1925) is equally brief when he states that these owls (again *S. c. hypugaea*) "are occasionally seen in the twilight hovering about twenty feet above the ground, evidently hunting." In the case of the Florida birds, the hovering is performed at much greater elevations, anywhere from 75 to well over 100 feet. It is a most interesting performance and seems strange that it has escaped greater comment.—ALEXANDER SPRUNT, JR., *The Crescent, Charleston, S. C.*

Albino Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna neglecta*).—On June 26, 1942, I received a call from a farmer, Mr. H. W. Tucker, that his young son had found a very rare bird, a white meadowlark. The children had been walking through a pasture three miles south of Ord and had found this bird with other normal young. It had left the nest and could fly a little, but they ran it down. The bird was in perfect condition when I received it except that it was hungry. I had hopes of keeping it alive and worked for three days, feeding it any insects that it would take. The third day it developed paralysis in its legs and died.

The bird was a true albino, with the flesh, bill and toenails white, the pupil of the eye red, and the iris a light blue. Typical of the albino condition, its eyes were weak and it struck to one side of any object it tried to pick up. The feathers were pure white except for a beautiful tinge of yellow on the breast and a slight gray pattern over the back where normal coloration is dark and striped.

The bird could give the typical call of a young meadowlark and had all of the mannerisms of a normal individual.

The bird is now mounted at the University Museum in Lincoln, Nebr.—H. ELLIOTT McCLURE, *Ord, Nebraska*.

Red-shouldered Hawk caught in mink trap.—On November 24, 1941, I examined a live adult male specimen of a Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) that had been caught in a mink trap in Avon, Connecticut. The details of the incident were given to me by a local trapper. In the dark of early morning while he was 'working his trap line' along the bank of a small stream he found a hawk desperately trying to lift a mink trap, in which it was caught, off the ground. The bird had been caught directly above the base of the toes on the tarsus. The trap used was an Oneida Victor two-jaw spring trap, size 2, which was set in three inches of water, unbaited. Over the center trigger there was a piece of sod to aid in the concealment of the trap.

Since the bird was caught on the tarsus it might well have been pursuing (by wading) some form of aquatic life, possibly batrachians.¹ It seems unlikely that the bird was hovering over its prey when it was caught. The trap was entirely inconspicuous, even to men, when seen in the daylight. The bird was not exhausted but was vivacious and alert. This might lead to a supposition that it was caught in the early hours of morning and had not been in the trap all night. It was released later as it was practically unharmed.—DAVIS W. PRATT, *The Avon School, Avon, Connecticut*.

Berberis bealei as a spring food of songbirds.—The probable great value of *Berberis bealei* as an ornamental plant attractive to birds in the eastern United States was forcibly brought to my attention while walking through the Capitol grounds in Washington, D. C., on May 27, 1942. Passing within ten feet of a clump of this Chinese species, most of whose relatives in the western United States are known as hollygrapes, I was surprised to observe a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Hedymeles ludovicianus*), several Olive-backed Thrushes (*Hylocichla ustulata swainsoni*), and a Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) so intent upon securing the fleshy, blue, grape-like fruits that they did not flush upon my close approach. During the period from 1:30 to 2:00 p. m., at least five Robins, eight Olive-backed Thrushes, one Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*), one Rose-breasted Grosbeak and six House Sparrows (*Passer d. domesticus*) were seen avidly eating the fruits. Excepting the grosbeak, which chewed the fruits and discarded the skins, and the House Sparrows, which took bites, all species swallowed the berries whole.

When first seen, about 50% of the original crop of fruits was present. When again visited on May 29, only about 30% remained. Between 10:00 and 10:15 a. m. on the latter date, three adult and two fully-grown juvenile Robins and a Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) were seen taking *Berberis* fruits. One adult Robin carried two away, apparently to its nest. A female Black-poll Warbler (*Dendroica striata*) nibbled at a berry and a male Black-poll, a female (or immature male) Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*), and a Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*), flitted about in the spiny foliage. The grosbeak and Olive-backed Thrushes seen previously had evidently continued their northward migration as they were not observed during the second visit. On both occasions, many Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) were seen nearby but they did not appear to be attracted to the

¹ The bird may possibly have been bathing.—Ed.