

of the tops of the salt marsh or the surface of the Cut, only to climb aloft once more and repeat the performance. In its swoops to regain the straw, the martin went through practically every aërial maneuver known to 'stunt' pilots! It performed nose dives, falling leaves (waving downward in pendulum-like drops from side to side) and at one time did something which was difficult to credit even while watching it. At the top of an upward climb it slanted its body sharply and went into what airmen know as a stall. For a second it hung motionless, then glided *backward, tail first* for an appreciable distance! As if this were not quite enough, it also accomplished a feat which the writer has never seen any other bird perform except the Wood Ibis (*Mycteria americana*). It turned over easily and completely and sailed along in inverted flight for several yards! As on the two occasions when the Ibis has been seen to do this, there was no movement of the wings whatever. They were held rigidly outstretched, and the bird soared, or glided, upside down. This was done four times in the twelve or fifteen minutes we watched (there were three observers).

The termination of this thrilling performance transpired when the martin finally missed the straw which fell into the water, whereupon the bird flew off in a southerly direction toward James Island. Though I have known the martin intimately for a lifetime, two phases of its behavior came to light in that brief period for the first time in my experience. It indulges in a spirit of play and it is capable of inverted, soaring flight.—ALEXANDER SPRUNT, JR., *The Crescent, Charleston, South Carolina*.

A bird's remarkable concentration of attention.—At seven o'clock in the morning of November 14, 1941, when it was barely clear daylight, three automobiles, approximately fifty yards apart, were traveling at a speed of thirty-five miles per hour in the same direction along a concrete highway in Johnson County, Kansas. The writer was driving the rear car. Suddenly a Downy Woodpecker (*Dryobates pubescens*) was observed to fly across the road well in front of the first car. After alighting momentarily in a tree beside the road, the bird suddenly flew almost directly toward the first oncoming car, alighted beside the highway, not more than four feet from its edge, and began vigorously to peck at something on the ground. While both the first and the second cars passed within a few feet, the bird remained seemingly entirely unconscious of disturbing influences. This seemed quite unusual because the middle car was old and very noisy. Even when the writer slowed down in passing, for better observation and for careful identification, the bird seemed to be utterly oblivious. Unconcernedly he continued at his early breakfast on the ground until the last car was some distance down the road, when he flew leisurely toward the trees.

Later check with the collection in the Dyche Museum at the State University confirmed the identification. It has been regretted that we did not ascertain the nature of the food.—B. ASHTON KEITH, *Institute of Sciences, Kansas City, Kansas*.

A Robin anting.—For the past months I have read in the literature of ornithology numerous articles on the 'anting' of birds. The description of this peculiar phenomenon did not impress me, for I was inclined to regard the observations as fantastic. Then the articles in 'The Auk' for January, 1943, by H. R. Ivor, Horace Groskin, Charles K. Nichols, and Josselyn Van Tyne aroused my interest in the subject and I determined to witness a bird in the act.

The National Zoological Park has many birds in captivity. I collected many forms of ants that are common in Washington, D. C., and put the insects in the birds' cages. But nothing happened; the birds ignored the ants. While making