

female was taken with one downy young of about three to four days old. Those two specimens are now nos. 118 and 119 in the Quebec Zoological Garden's bird-skin collection.

On July 23, at least three broods of Ring-necked Ducks were seen on the lake, making a total of about thirty young.

Actually there are two other breeding records from Quebec known to the writer. One is from Rush Lake, Frontenac County (*The Auk*, 60: 600, 1943) and another from Messines, Gatineau County, known to the writer through personal correspondence with Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson. In a letter, Doctor Gabrielson states: "On July 4, 1941, I saw a female ring-necked duck with eight newly hatched young near Messines, Quebec."

Special acknowledgement is due to Dr. Harrison F. Lewis and to Mr. Howard L. Mendall for information concerning the status of the Ring-necked Duck in Quebec. The record of Lake St. Edmond constitutes as far as known the third authentic breeding record of the species in the Province of Quebec.—RAYMOND CAYOUILLE, *Quebec Zoological Garden, Charlesbourg, Quebec.*

Red-eyed Vireo's incubation.—To the recent instance by Petrides (*Auk*, 61: 298, 1944) of a Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*) beginning to incubate before the clutch was complete, I can add another. A nest found in Baltimore on July 9, 1943, held four eggs; single inspections daily then yielded this hatching record:

July 11—noon —4 eggs.

July 12—evening—1 young, 3 eggs.

July 13—evening—2 young, 2 eggs.

July 14—evening—3 young, 1 egg which proved to be infertile.

Incubation of this clutch must have begun with the laying of either the first or the second egg.—HERVEY BRACKBILL, 3201 Carlisle Avenue, Baltimore 16, Maryland.

Leach's Petrel in Florida.—On May 12, 1944, the first recorded Florida specimen of Leach's Petrel (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa leucorhoa*) was found in the edge of the surf at Daytona Beach, Florida. The bird died a few hours after its capture, by an old wound—the right foot was missing. Bailey, in his 'Birds of Florida,' p. 13, states that Leach's Petrels "can be seen off our coast in the Gulf Stream during April and September." Howell, in his 'Florida Bird Life,' did not accept this statement as sufficient evidence to include the bird in his Florida list, but he does mention Bailey's statement in the Hypothetical List at the end of his volume. With the collection of this specimen at Daytona Beach, Leach's Petrel is now properly an addition to the avifauna of Florida.—R. J. LONGSTREET, *Daytona Beach, Florida.*

A Raven's nest near Lexington, Virginia.—Egg dates for the Northern Raven (*Corvus corax principalis*) from the southern mountains are so few that it seems advisable to put on record a set of six eggs from Virginia. I shall not give a definite location for the nest except to say that it was in a cliff at the top of a mountain in Rockbridge County, near Lexington, Virginia. On February 28, 1944, Col. Robert P. Carroll, Mr. Jacob Hostetter and I visited the nest. Placed in a recess about forty feet up a sheer cliff and under an overhang, the nest was inaccessible, but we were fortunate enough to discover a place which could be reached from the top of the cliff and from which we could look into the nest. It was almost completed but empty. Seventeen days later, on March 16, Mr.

Hostetter, my son Jimmy, and I again visited the nest, this time to find six eggs. Since it would have taken several days after our first visit for the completion of the nest and since there had been unusually cold weather up until four days before our second visit, the likelihood is that the eggs were fairly fresh on March 16. However, the fact that one of the birds left the nest as we approached and returned as soon as we started down the mountain would indicate that incubation was under way. The eggs were decidedly elongate. The nest was thickly lined with sheep's wool, probably with other animal hair also, as we found tufts of opossum fur at the base of the cliff. This nesting is probably somewhat late. Last year another nest had feathered young on March 28, although in most years it is mid-April before the birds are large enough to stand up in the nest.—J. J. MURRAY, 6 White Street, Lexington, Virginia.

Wherein lies the economic value of birds?—In the latest installment of Bent's Life Histories (U. S. Nat. Mus., Bull. 179: 330, 1942), I find the following statement relative to one of my papers.

"W. L. McAtee (1905), in his paper on the relation of horned larks to agriculture, publishes a long list of the vegetable food, mainly seeds, and the animal food, mainly insects, eaten by these birds, most of which does not apply to the northern horned lark. He has much to say about the injurious effect of weeds on agriculture and the cost to farmers in their control. Horned larks feed largely on seeds, perhaps mainly weed seeds, and so do many other birds, but I have always felt that the good that birds do in destroying weed seeds is a myth. Nature is so prolific in the production and so effective in the distribution of the seeds of plants, that only an infinitesimal percentage of those distributed can possibly find room to germinate; and no matter how many the birds pick up, there are always many times more than enough to cover the ground with verdure in a remarkably short time. Has anyone ever known of a case where birds have kept even one square yard of ground free from weeds by eating the seeds? I certainly have not. Therefore, it seems to me that the eating of weed seeds is a neutral rather than a beneficial factor in the economic status of birds."

This seems rather belated comment on a statement made nearly forty years ago. In fact, the economic status of a bird is almost certain to change in that length of time. In this instance, of the Horned Lark, it has decidedly changed, particularly in California, so that a publication of the year 1905 is no longer pertinent for quotation. More cogent references are:

McAtee, W. L. The need for studies in bird control in California. Calif. Dept. of Agriculture, Monthly Bull., 21: 273-275, 1932.

Piper, S. E., and Neff, Johnson A. Procedure and methods in controlling birds injurious to crops in California. Biological Survey and California State Dept. of Agriculture, 3 pts., 1935-1937 (mimeographed).

However, let us see what I said that started Bent's train of thought about the value of weed-seed eating by birds. My strongest statement seems to be:

"To limit the loss caused by them [*i. e.* weeds] an unending warfare must be waged by the farmer. Any allies in this defensive warfare should be welcomed, and of such allies the seed-eating birds are the most important. The farmer, by the expenditure of time and labor, can destroy the weeds when they have sprouted, or later before they have ripened seed. But the seeds which are on and in the ground and which remain there for an indefinite period awaiting favorable opportunity for germination, it is not practicable for man to destroy. This portion of