

When I arrived at shore the bird seemed to be gasping its last few breaths. On stethoscopic examination, the heart sounds were barely discernible. We attempted an intra-cardiac injection of adrenaline which apparently had no effect. A second dosage still showed no change in the bird's condition, and shortly afterward it succumbed. Whether we did succeed in inserting the hypodermic in the heart muscle is a matter of conjecture. Then again, we employed a very small dosage of the drug, which might not have been sufficient.

We did not perform a post mortem, so I can not state in just what manner the trauma inflicted by the snake, caused the bird's demise. Nevertheless, I have never heard or read of any previous duel between these two animals, and thought this note might be of interest. The final analysis of the event would lead one to the obvious conclusion that the merganser had attempted to make a meal of the snake, with an unfortunate reversal!—DR. MALCOLM A. JACOBSON, 57 W. 57th St., New York, N. Y.

Starlings catching insects on the wing.—In summer, it is common to see the Starling (*Sturnus v. vulgaris*) catching insects on the wing as does a flycatcher around its perch. However, I believe it is an unusual behavior for the Starling in full flight to feed on insects, as is customary for a swallow.

On April 12, 1945, at the Quebec Zoological Garden, Charlesbourg, Quebec, I saw in the distance a flock of birds circling rapidly like swallows. Knowing that the swallows at that time were not yet back from their wintering grounds, I approached the birds more closely, and with my binoculars, at about 200 yards, I saw that they were Starlings. It was about 11 A. M., the sky was clear and the temperature was from 65° to 70° F. Many insects, mostly Coleoptera, were slowly flying about in the calm, warm air.

About 15 Starlings were flying at a height of 75 to 100 feet, circling overhead, but remaining in the same general area. Some were zigzagging, giving sharp and quick strokes of the wings at each turn; others, likely having missed their prey, fluttered their wings on the spot a few seconds, and shortly pursued the prey vertically toward the sky or to the ground in swift gliding flight. That performance lasted two or three minutes with the entire flock taking part in it. Later in the day, the same flight performance was repeated by single birds at or near the same place. The performance was not observed later in the season, though that particular flock of Starlings nested in the vicinity and was observed almost daily throughout the summer.—RAYMOND CAYOUILLE, *La Société Zoologique de Québec, Charlesbourg, Québec.*

Birds that eat Japanese beetles.—Although the Japanese beetle (*Popillia japonica*) has for some years been one of the East's worst summer insect pests, the only list of its bird enemies that I have been able to find is that of Hadley and Hawley (U. S. Dept. Agric., Circ. 332: 19, 1934), who term the Purple Grackle, European Starling, Cardinal, Meadowlark, Catbird, English Sparrow and Robin "some of the more important" feeders on adult beetles, and credit the grackle, Starling and Crow with feeding on larvae. I have already (Wils. Bull., 55: 79, 1943) mentioned the Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*) and Louise F. A. Tanger (Bull. Lanc. Co., Pa., Bird Club, No. 7: 5-6, 1945, mimeog.) mentions the Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*) as feeding on adults.

Observations in Baltimore in 1945 and 1946 enable me to add the Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*), Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*), Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*), Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*) and Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) to the roll of feeders on adult beetles. Of these, the Red-headed Woodpecker has been the heaviest feeder; a few of the birds visited a badly infested elm



(Top) WARBURTON: COMMON TERN'S NEST. (Middle) PLATH: ALBINO WHITE-THROATED SPARROW. (Bottom) FRIEDMANN: SPOTTED RAIL IN SOUTHERN MÉXICO.

many times a day during more than a week that it was watched, and single birds captured beetles at rates as high as 12 in 10 minutes. As for the other species, I have from two to a number of observations for all but the Mockingbird, which I have only once seen eating beetles.—HERVEY BRACKBILL, 4608 Springdale Avenue, Baltimore 7, Maryland.

Some insect food of the Yellow-headed Blackbird.—Stomachs of fifteen Yellow-headed Blackbirds, *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*, have been collected from marshes and near-by farms of northern and central Utah since 1940. Examination of the stomach contents revealed in recognizable form the following insects: 7 Orthoptera, mostly grasshoppers; 1 larval aphid lion; 7 naiads of damsel and dragonflies; 2 Hemiptera. Of the 96 beetles recognized, 13 were ground beetles, 2 predacious diving beetle larvae, 1 dermestid, 1 ladybird, 2 scarabaeids, 7 leafbeetles and 18 weevils, among them 4 alfalfa weevils, 2 clover leaf weevils and 1 rough strawberry weevil. There were 40 lepidopterous caterpillars recognized, 18 being cutworms and armyworms; of 13 Diptera, 4 were larval and 1 an adult horsefly, and 7 larvae of other kinds; 10 Hymenoptera included 7 ants. In addition were insect, plant and seed fragments, 2 spiders and 109 seeds, mostly of weeds. Cultivated crop seeds recognized were 18 wheat, 22 oat and 6 barley kernels.—G. F. KNOWLTON, Utah State Agricultural College, Logan, Utah.

Common Tern's nest with seven eggs. (Plate 16, top figure.)—On June 27, 1944, I found in a large nesting colony of Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) one nest containing the surprising number of seven eggs. As I was only fifteen at the time, and relatively inexperienced, I did not realize what a rarity this was or I should have reported it sooner.

The nest was one of a very large number on the "Wing Dyke," a long, narrow, artificial island of limestone gravel about a quarter of a mile from the Canadian shore of the Detroit River, and directly opposite Amherstburg, Ontario.

Such a large number of eggs—which I believe might very well be unique for this species—might possibly not be a natural occurrence. A few anglers and other people frequent the dyke and one may have for some unknown reason placed a number of extra eggs in this nest. The eggs, however, were all very similar in shape, size, and markings, and this fact seems to indicate that they were all laid by the same bird. Unfortunately, I had very little opportunity for sustained observation of this nest, and as from a distance it was indistinguishable from the (literally) hundreds of nests surrounding it, I cannot even say definitely whether the eggs were brooded or deserted. When the accompanying photograph was taken one of the eggs had disappeared, but whether it had hatched or been stolen I am not prepared to say.

Several other nests in the colony contained four eggs, but the usual number was two or three as one would naturally expect. It is difficult to estimate the total population of the colony, but I believe that the number of occupied nests would lie between 700 and 1000. An estimate made on May 24, 1944 (long before the height of the nesting season), and based on actual counts made in characteristic areas, was between 500 and 600 nests, with an average of 1.9 eggs in each occupied nest. This estimate completely ignores those nests which apparently were ready for occupancy but did not then contain eggs. This number would probably increase greatly by the middle of June. In some small, especially desirable areas, barely more than a yard separated each nest from its nearest neighbor.—FREDERICK E. WARBURTON, Owen Sound, Ontario.