

Vestigial Claws on the Wings of a Red-winged Blackbird.—During a recent trip from Madison, Wisconsin, to Regina, Saskatchewan, we saw many dead birds along the highways but stopped to examine only one (during a temporary lull in the traffic). This was on June 20, 1955, a few miles south of Little Falls, Minnesota; the bird was an adult male Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*). Much to my surprise this bird had vestigial wing claws, 2 on the right wing and 1 on the left (see figure). These claws were large enough to be immediately detected. This was the first time I had observed this phenomenon, although I had previously closely examined the metacarpal area for other characters in several hundred Redwings. The claw on the tip of digit 2 on the right wing was parallel to and touching the first primary shaft. It had grown out to one side at the point of contact. It was 4 mm. long (chord). The claw in the similar position on the other wing was 3 mm. in length and projected slightly toward the palmar surface. Both of these claws were oval in cross-section and gray to black in color. The claw on digit 1 of the right wing was 9 mm. long, pale gray in color and rounded in cross-section. It was nearly parallel to the metacarpal. Upon handling, this claw broke in half, revealing a pointed inner horny core. In the course of further dissection of the claw-tube, two additional pointed cores were found. This suggests a spasmodic or possibly annual growth increment. All three claws were attached directly to the tip of the digits, no bony cores being present. This is apparently the first report of wing claws on an icterid and the third record for a passerine species (see Fisher, *Amer. Midl. Nat.*, 23: 234–243, 1940). Wing claws have been previously reported for a member of the Tyrannidae (Friedmann, *Auk*, 69: 200, 1952) and a corvid (Baumel, *Auk*, 70: 373, 1953).—ROBERT W. NERO, *Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina, Sask.*

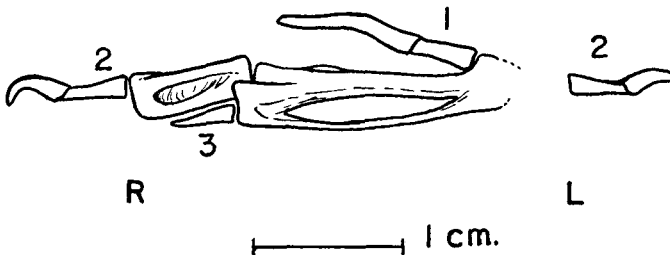


FIGURE 1. Vestigial Claws on the Wings of a Red-winged Blackbird.

Swallow-tailed Kite in Ohio: A Retraction.—In 1928, I published a sight record of the Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*) in Ohio (*Auk*, 45: 272–273). I have since become convinced that the bird in question was not sufficiently well identified to warrant publication of the record. The bird when seen was perched and was not observed in flight. It was at too great a distance to permit unquestioned recognition of diagnostic features. The observers were then not acquainted with this species in life or in motion pictures. No known specimen of a Swallow-tailed Kite has been taken in Ohio since 1898. Under the circumstances, I feel that the record should be withdrawn.—ROBERT B. GORDON, *Department of Science, State Teachers College, West Chester, Pennsylvania.*