

YASBIL
OVAL TO VIBU
BOON

tionally or in an accidental way pecked the pheasant chicks and had discovered that the tender heads were as tasty as maggots.

There were a number of Brewer Blackbirds about the farm, but as near as I could judge the habit was not common in the flock but only in individual blackbirds. The keeper shot several and killing of the pheasants stopped for that season. It is evident, however, from these and Mr. Anthony's observations, that there is a taint of murder in this yellow-eyed black race.—WILLIAM L. FINLEY, *Jennings Lodge, Oregon, June 6, 1923.*

The 'Following' Habit in Hawks and Owls.—Do certain hawks and owls habitually 'follow' moving objects that pass through their hunting grounds? If so, what is the meaning of the habit and who else has observed it? What species practice it? I have become interested in this subject since learning of the two following instances.

1. A Prairie Owl (*Speotyto cunicularia hypogaea*) made a daily practice of 'pursuing' a bird dog when the dog was turned loose for exercise near the golf links of the Albuquerque Country Club. These links are on open mesa country thinly sprinkled with low plants like snakeweed. When the dog first appeared on the owl's range, he would chase the owl for a short distance. When this was over, the owl would chase him for distances up to 150 yards, flying about five feet behind and above him as the dog hunted. This performance occurred almost daily during May, 1923, between 5:30 and 7:30 A. M. It always appeared to be the same bird, no other being known to inhabit the neighborhood.

2. Several years ago a quail hunter asked me why hawks follow an automobile. I told him I had never seen them do so. He then told me that in a certain locality there was a small hawk which persistently followed his automobile whenever he passed through the locality. He thought the hawk was "waiting for him to cripple a quail."

It seems probable that these instances indicate a habit of following moving objects for such 'game' as they may stir up by reason of their movement.—ALDO LEOPOLD, *Albuquerque, New Mexico, May 31, 1923.*

A Comment on the Alleged Occurrence of *Mesophoyx intermedia* in North America.—In the Canadian Field-Naturalist for April, 1923, xxxvii, pp. 64-65, Mr. Francis Kermodé details the history of the mounted specimen of the Plumed Egret, *Mesophoyx intermedia*, in the collection of the Provincial Museum at Victoria, British Columbia, and seeks to establish the authenticity of this specimen as a natural straggler to that province. Before accepting this extraordinary addition to the North American list it will be as well that all the facts bearing on the case are presented, and I regret that Mr. Kermodé has not submitted these himself.

There is no question that the bird is *Mesophoyx intermedia*, an egret of wide distribution in eastern Asia; I believe that it was originally substituted to represent one of the American egrets, and my reasons are as follows: Mr. Kermodé's personal acquaintance with the specimen in question dates from September, 1890, and he submits the evidence of a photograph taken about that time which proves beyond doubt that this identical specimen was in the museum at that time.

In May, 1891, shortly after this photograph was taken by Mr. A. H. Maynard, I made my first visit to Victoria and to the newly established museum. At that time several taxidermist shops in the city had a number of Japanese mounted birds displayed; among these I can vouch for specimens of *Mesophoyx intermedia* in full nuptial plumage. On inquiry I found that these had been procured from a commission house doing business in the city (F. Davidge and Company). A visit to this establishment showed me a large collection of native-made Japanese skins representing a good proportion of the birds of that country, each species wrapped up in bales of ten or a dozen. Among them were several bundles of these Japanese egrets, mostly with full nuptial plumes. At least two of these bundles had been broken up for customers who had purchased the best specimens. Mr. Albert Maynard informed me that these very much compressed skins relaxed readily and could be made up into mounted form without much trouble.

What probably happened was this: Mr. Fannin, then gathering the excellent series of mounted British Columbian birds for the newly established Provincial Museum, had taken one of these Japanese egrets to represent the Snowy Egret, assuming it to be the same species which he had had in his collection in 1879, taken at Burrard Inlet. That he had at that time one of the two species of American egret, or an albino of some other heron, I do not attempt to deny; but knowing his delightfully inconsequent methods as I did, I do not think he would have regarded this substitution as at all un-ethical. I could quote somewhat similar actions, together with extraordinary lapses of memory on the part of my old friend in the matter of ornithological records, were it worth while; and Mr. Kermodé has told me many amusing anecdotes of this nature in the same connection.

The rule of retaining the original collector's label on a specimen in this museum was honored only in the breach, and it would be difficult to find a single specimen not collected by the museum staff, of which the original label had not been destroyed; this resulted in many errors, both as to date and locality. In short, Fannin, although a born nature lover, and a delightfully unassuming and honest personality, was entirely untrammelled by scientific conventions.

Yet another item that negatives the possibility of this 'record' being that of a genuine straggler is that the bird is in full nuptial plumage. As is well known, all or nearly all extra-limital records of the Herodiones are of juvenile or immature birds which are given to curious northward migrations in late summer after the breeding season.

Captain Harbell's evidence proves that a white heron, which may have been either of the two American egrets, or only an albino of the resident heron, was killed in May, 1879, at Burrard Inlet; Mr. Fannin's catalogue of the birds in the museum in 1891 gives two specimens as being collected on that date. So before admitting the Plumed Egret to the North American list (in which case it would be by far the most extraordinary straggler that has ever found its way to this continent), it would be as well to take into account the evidence here submitted.—ALLAN BROOKS, *Okanagan Landing, British Columbia, June 25, 1923.*

The White Ibis in California.—The danger frequently has been demonstrated of including in the avifauna of any state species that are based upon visual evidence alone. Nevertheless, it also must be admitted that occasionally there are cases when a species involved is so conspicuous in either form or color, or the ability of the observer is of so high a character, that credence must be given by subsequent workers to records so based. It is the belief of the writer that the following record comes within this category. Accordingly the full details are submitted for the benefit of those interested.

While engaged in working up the sections on geographic distribution for Mr. A. C. Bent's forthcoming Life Histories of North American Marsh Birds, a California record of *Guara alba* contained in the files of the Biological Survey attracted my attention. The record, which cites a letter from Mr. Harry S. Swarth, dated October 2, 1914, states that this species was "reported by Hornung as seen in the spring of 1914 at Blythe." A letter to Dr. John Hornung, at the Museum of History, Science, and Art, at Los Angeles, elicited the following reply:

"In answer to your inquiry about *Guara alba* will say that, as far as I remember, it was in March, 1914. I was at the time in Palo Verde, collecting material for the Panama Pacific Exposition, when I noticed the bird on the margin of a shallow lagoon. I was about 30 yards away and with no shell in my gun, and while I tried to get one in the barrel a flock of night herons that had seen me gave the alarm and my bird was lost in the impenetrable jungles of the Colorado. As you probably surmise, I am very familiar with the bird, having had occasion to observe it for months and months in front of my tent on the Acaponeta River (Tepec), and in several localities in Central America."

Palo Verde is in the northeast corner of Imperial County, within a few miles of the Colorado River.—FREDERICK C. LINCOLN, *Biological Survey, Washington, D. C., June 28, 1923.*