

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**A Young Black Swift.**—On August 10, 1932, a Black Swift (*Nephoecetes niger borealis*) was brought to me. A tourist had found the bird in a meadow between Camp Curry and Happy Isles, Yosemite Valley, California. It was a young bird that had fallen, or had flown too soon, from the nest. The moment I got the bird in my hand I realized that the Black Swift was quite a different bird from the White-throated Swift. The striking difference was in the feet. This Black Swift had the dainty little feet and slender legs of a song bird—the White-throated Swift has mammal-like feet reminding of the fore paws of a chipmunk.

Never before had I had a Black Swift in my hand, but some years ago I had studied one at close range from the egg shell until time of flight. From what I learned in this study I make the guess that the bird when it came to me was about five weeks old. Every feather on its back, tail, wings and crown was daintily tipped with white. The tiny feathers of its crown and forehead, being fringed with white, gave its crown, and especially its forehead, a frosted appearance. Its wings were very long and extended far beyond its short, broad tail as the bird clung to a perpendicular surface. In this position the swift could turn its head half around and look directly backward in the manner of an owl.

Beetling brows, deep-set, shiny black eyes, a sharply hooked dark bill and a proud mien, all helped to give the young Black Swift a predatory cast of features.

When climbing up a sheer surface the swift used its wings, feet, tail and sharply hooked bill. When in repose it lay flat on its belly in the manner of a poor-will. After its breakfast of milk from a medicine dropper it would stand up straight on its legs and teeter its body back and forth as though for exercise. From a dripping faucet it would catch water in its bill and with a flip of the head would sprinkle the water over its body and in this way obtain its morning bath. After shaking out its wet feathers the bird would perch on the edge of a basket and preen. The legs seemed to have swivel joints, and it was strange to see the bird reach up its foot between the body and wing to comb its back and crown feathers.

After preening, the swift exercised its wings, flapping them in a most vigorous manner. Eight days elapsed after the bird came to us before it made its first flight. On this first flight it flew from the edge of its basket to the window screen, a distance of ten feet. When we first got the swift it spent most of its time sleeping. It would sleep the night through in its basket, covered with a linen cloth, and during the first week was content to stay in bed as long as we did. But after its first flight it no longer waited in bed for breakfast. When we got up we would find it clinging to the window screen, looking out on the passing world.

I was in the habit of taking the young swift daily for a turn in the fresh air. It would ride clinging to my shoulder and always seemed to enjoy the outing. Especially did it enjoy a bath in the cloud mist from the lawn sprinkler. After such a bath it would carefully preen its feathers.

The young swift appeared to thrive on the diet of fresh milk which it took from a medicine dropper. Daily it grew stronger, and daily the periods of exercise were more frequent and more extended. On the morning of August 21 the bird left my hand. At first it was wobbly on the wing, but as the wing-beat increased in speed it steadied itself and began to climb. Off it was now for certain. It lifted over the tree-tops; on it went climbing fast and soon was lost to sight in the high skies.—ENID MICHAEL, *Yosemite, California, October 5, 1932.*

**The Chinese Cormorant on Kodiak Island, Alaska.**—Among a collection of avian bones unearthed in an old Eskimo midden on Kodiak Island by Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, Curator of Physical Anthropology, United States National Museum, in the summer of 1932 is a humerus of the Old World cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo*. On the basis of geography this seems referable to the Chinese form, *P. c. sinensis* (Shaw and Nodder) and constitutes the first North American record for that form. It matches exactly in every way a humerus of a Chinese taken specimen.

The normal range of this cormorant is usually stated to extend as far north as northern Japan, but it is highly likely that it not infrequently occurs farther north.

Thus, Dr. Leonhard Stejneger has kindly informed me that in April, 1883, he saw, but was unable to obtain, a cormorant, apparently of this species, on the southeast shore of Bering Island. In his report on the birds of the Commander Islands (U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull. 29, 1885, p. 318) he noted that Pallas (Zoogr. Rosso-Asiat., 2, p. 297) wrote that *P. carbo* was found in Kamchatka, and he (Stejneger) suggested that the "Japanese form may occur on the western shore near the southern extremity of the peninsula." Dr. Stejneger also informs me that Pennant received a list of Kamchatkan birds from Pallas. On going through the literature we find that Pennant (Arctic Zoology, 2, 1785, p. 581) writes that "*Pelecanus carvo*" ranges, "even to Kamtschatka."

It is quite likely, then, that this bird does range north beyond the Japanese Islands, and it is not improbable that the individual here recorded may have struck the westernmost part of the Aleutian chain and followed the course of those islands eastward. A cormorant could readily negotiate the distance involved, especially as it could feed all the way across. Possibly the abundance of other cormorants in the Aleutian Islands might have been a factor in attracting it eastward, once it had gotten as far as the western outliers of that chain.—HERBERT FRIEDMANN, *United States National Museum, Washington, D. C., November 10, 1932.*

**Trapping of Cowbirds and Chats in Alameda County, California.**—On Sunday, June 5, 1932, my son Donald accompanied me on a trip to Irvington, Alameda County, California, to locate the nesting ground of the Long-tailed Chat (*Icteria virens longicauda*). We left our home in Oakland at 6 a. m., arriving at Irvington about an hour later. Leaving our machine where the road ends at the railroad tracks, we walked along the tracks, possibly a mile, before we heard the song of the chat. A close search inside a wire fence among a tangled mass of blackberry vine revealed the chat's nest containing four young birds. We desired to raise two young chats from the nest, but found the birds too young to remove, so we planned to return a few days later after the tail feathers were sprouted.

Returning to the edge of an open field, we saw several Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*). We decided to make use of our opportunity and, if possible, take a pair home for aviary study. A choice supply of insect life and seed of watergrass was placed in small box cages on the ground in plain view of the birds. About five minutes later a cowbird flew down to the cage and was caught. It proved to be a mature female. We waited for some time in the hope of getting a male cowbird, but other birds kept us busy by insistent visits to our cages. We caught and liberated in quick succession, four Black-headed Grosbeaks, two Mourning Doves, and three Willow Goldfinches.

On Sunday, June 19, another trip was planned for the woods around Irvington. We found our young chats had flown, for we were unable to return as we had planned, a week earlier. However, we were anxious to procure a male cowbird as a mate to the one captured here on June 5. We gave all our attention to this task. We lost no time in placing our small box cages, each containing a tempting meal, in spots where we knew cowbirds were to be found.

It was possibly ten minutes before we heard the clear ringing call note of the cowbirds. They fly swiftly over the fields in a straight line, usually about three feet from the ground. One came on toward us and alighted on a bush only a few feet away. His keen eyesight detected our dangling meal-worms tied in the cage, and down he flew, entering the cage as the door closed behind him. This bird proved to be a fine male, just what we had hoped to procure. Donald went over and removed it from the cage, then events of much interest to us happened in quick succession. As my son walked towards me holding the cowbird in his hand, the bird gave several loud clear calls. Almost immediately cowbirds began to arrive from several directions, lighting in the trees around us, calling incessantly in answer to the newly caught bird. Looking back, I saw another cowbird caught in the cage and two others attacking it from the outside through the wires. Three more cowbirds flew over my head as I ran over to save the second bird captured, from injury, and to drive the others away. This last capture proved to be a female.

In the meantime, the male cowbird responsible for all this commotion was placed on the ground in a cloth covered cage. He was still calling in answer to the cowbirds all around us; he then surprised us by breaking into song. The song imitated closely the sound of water bubbling or gurgling in a brook.