

Sleeping Posture of a Virginia Rail.—On November 29, 1936, Robert Stall, a Benicia High School student, brought me a live Pacific Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola zetarius*) which he said his dog had caught on the edge of a pond while he was duck hunting four miles northeast of Benicia, California. I released the bird in the house, and, though somewhat bewildered, it was quite active, running about the floor though not attempting to fly. In the evening it perched on a log by the fireplace and, placing its head under the right wing, went to sleep.

In this posture, looking like a round ball of feathers, one would hardly recognize the bird as a member of the proverbially-slender rail family. It struck me as so odd that he should assume this round ball-like form when asleep that I placed two strong electric lamps in front of him and recorded the posture with my camera (fig. 62). Several times during the evening, when disturbed, he withdrew his head from under his right wing, looked about a bit, and replaced his head, each time under the right wing. He was left on the log by the fireplace when we retired for the night, and in the morning, after a little search, I found him bunched up under the chesterfield with his head under the same right wing.



Fig. 62. Virginia Rail in sleeping position.

six, lead shot which it had eaten along with fifteen hard-cased seeds of about the same size as the shot.—EMERSON A. STONER, *Benicia, California, December 23, 1936.*

The Cowbirds of the Sacramento Valley, California.—Much has been written of late concerning the cowbirds in central California. In addition to disclosing new localities of occurrence, doubts have been expressed as to the validity of the race *Molothrus ater californicus* with range in the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley. To date, however, little has been said about the cowbirds of the Sacramento Valley, doubtless, because of lack of representative material from that region.

Important in filling this gap in our knowledge is a series of 24 cowbirds recently acquired by the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology from Oroville, Butte County, California. These specimens were brought to the Museum in the flesh by Mr. William B. Davis who secured them from Mr. A. E. Darby of Oroville, on May 9, 1937. They were captured by Mr. Darby in his pheasant pens, where they had gone through an inch wire-mesh to get to grain inside the pens. Once inside, they were unable to get out. Mr. Davis learned that some 75 other individuals had been caught and killed in this same way just prior to the lot which he obtained, which gives an indication of the abundance of cowbirds in that vicinity.

The testes of the males in this series were in general about 5 or 6 mm. in length while the largest ova of the females were about $1\frac{1}{2}$ or 2 mm. in diameter. Thus the birds seemed to be in an early breeding stage. Individuals varied in the amount of fat present, although most of them were comparatively fat-free. The 15 males had an average weight of 41.2 grams, the 9 females 30.4 grams.

Average and extreme measurements of the Oroville examples are as follows. Males (15 specimens): wing, 101.2 (98.3–104.3); tail, 69.2 (65.3–72.0); culmen 16.3 (15.0–17.8); bill depth at base 10.0 (9.3–10.9); tarsus, 24.5 (23.1–25.6). Females (9 specimens): wing, 91.2 (90.1–93.9); tail 62.9 (60.9–85.2); culmen 14.5 (13.8–15.5); bill depth at base, 9.0 (8.4–9.6); tarsus 23.0 (22.2–24.9). To assure my measurements being comparable with those of other authors, I have checked results on specimens measured and recorded by various others.

The measurements that Dickey and van Rossem (*Condor*, vol. 24, 1922, pp. 206–210) gave for their race *californicus* indicated a considerable increase in size for the southern San Joaquin Valley population over the average for *obscurus*. However, my measurements for the Oroville series conform closely to those for *obscurus*, rather than to those for *californicus*. Consequently the Sacramento Valley examples are several millimeters smaller in wing and tail lengths than those of the southern San Joaquin Valley. Only for the tarsus measurement is there evidence at all of slightly larger size for the Sacramento Valley birds.