

**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.

I had intended to experiment on feeding it at noon, but upon my arrival home, Mrs. Stoner reported to me that she had found it dead in the dining room late in the morning. Upon preserving it as a skin, I found it to be a female. No evidence of injury was found. In the stomach was a size

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.

The Oroville females are darker than obviously faded and worn series of breeding females from the lower Colorado River region, but they are no darker than five females of the race *obscurus* taken in early May in Clark County, Nevada, opposite Fort Mohave. Also I fail to see any mass differences in streaking on the under parts of the Oroville females as compared with specimens from elsewhere in California. My conclusion is that the Sacramento Valley birds must be placed under the name *Molothrus ater obscurus*.

The facts that the Sacramento Valley cowbirds at hand fail to show the supposed characters of *californicus* but rather conform in their characters to those of *obscurus*, and that there is apparent lack of physical barriers in the Great Valley, serve as additional evidence that the race *californicus* is not "usefully recognizable." There is the remote possibility that the Buena Vista Lake sample of Dickey and van Rossem happened to be an aggregate of unusually large individuals. More likely the population is actually larger in certain measurable characters. Even if such is the case, it would not be an unusual practice to recognize the local situation but not designate so restricted and weakly differentiated a population by name.

Miller (Condor, vol. 37, 1935, pp. 217-218) made the point that if we do not recognize the race *californicus*, we should not allow this to obscure the fact as pointed out by Dickey and van Rossem that there is an increase in size northward in the state to the San Joaquin Valley. My findings with regard to the Oroville examples throw doubt upon the existence of such a trend; if such is present, certainly it continues no farther north than the San Joaquin Valley.

Willett (Pac. Coast Avif. No. 21, 1933, pp. 156) expressed his feelings in regard to the validity of *californicus* in a statement which was later quoted by Grinnell (Condor, vol. 36, 1934, p. 214) to the effect that *californicus* is apparently an intergrade between *obscurus* and *artemisiae*, somewhere nearer the former. The Oroville series at hand proves with certainty that the cowbirds from the Sacramento Valley do not show even an approach to *artemisiae* which seems restricted in the breeding season to the east of the Sierra-Cascade chain of mountains. It seems likely, then, that the increase in size of the southern San Joaquin Valley population may be accounted for by a relatively late infusion of *artemisiae* stock coming, not by the way of the Sacramento Valley, but around the southern end of the Sierra Nevada through the Kern River gap. If this inference is tenable, another likelihood is that a further northward extension of this inpushing stock would account for the apparent arrival within recent years of large-sized cowbirds in the San Francisco Bay region, as Miller (*op. cit.*, p. 218) has suggested.—WILLIAM H. BEHLE, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, June 30, 1937.*

**Some Additional Records of Birds for Northeastern California.**—Extensive travel is always productive of ornithological things of interest. The following notes are results of such, in addition to those recorded in the January, 1936, issue of the *Condor*.

On November 8, 1935, while driving from Grasshopper Valley to Termo in Lassen County, in company with Mr. A. L. Brown of the Division of Fish and Game, we saw a large white bird some distance ahead of the car. It was standing on the edge of a small pool of water on the edge of a little meadow formed by Bailey Creek. We drove the car up to within thirty feet of the bird as it stood on the opposite side of the fence from the road. It was an adult swan, extremely large, with no yellow spot on the bill in front of the eye. The bill and head were not shaped like those of a Whistling Swan.

I had seen Trumpeter Swans at close range in Yellowstone National Park, and Mr. Brown had seen them as a boy in Honey Lake Valley, Lassen County; so we both were convinced that the bird was one of this species (*Cygnus buccinator*). After several minutes the bird flew a short distance and gave a deep resonant call, not at all like that of the Whistling Swan. It stopped on the other side of the grassy field near another water hole. Much of our observation was made with an 8-power binocular which at close range brought out every marking distinctly.

On January 9, 1936, while driving up Chimney Canyon, back of Doyle, in southern Lassen County, I noted a large hawk flying along rather low in the cottonwoods. The bird kept about one hundred and fifty yards ahead of the car, flying from one tree to another. At first I thought it was just another red-tail, but on one occasion it turned around facing the car after perching on a limb overhanging the road. I then noticed the peculiarly marked breast and therefore collected it. It was a female Harlan Hawk (*Buteo borealis harlani*). On February 17, 1936, I collected another of these hawks, five miles southeast of Standish, in Honey Lake Valley, Lassen County. These specimens are quite differently marked from the ordinary melanistic Red-tailed Hawks which are quite common in the region. The first of these two specimens is in my own collection, and the other is in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at Berkeley.

I was looking at a flock of Gambel Sparrows about three miles southeast of Standish, in Honey Lake Valley, on March 18, 1935, when an immature male Harris Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*)