

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Feeding of Gulls on Pismo Clams.—Low tide at Sunset Beach, Santa Cruz County, California, on February 16, 1939, brought men of several races and gulls of several species together with the common purpose of preying on the Pismo clam. Man took the "legal" clams, over five inches in length, while the gulls took the smaller, rejected ones.

The gulls would follow right after the men digging clams, and pick up the smaller ones discarded as below the legal limit. Clams near five inches were apparently too large for the gulls to carry, but those four inches or smaller were seized in the bill and carried away. The birds would then mount thirty to fifty feet in the air over the hard, water-packed sand and let the clam drop. Often two or three tries were necessary, but finally the two halves would fall apart or the shell would break. Then amid much fighting and thieving the feast would begin, with Sanderlings waiting nearby to pick up any scraps that might fall to them. Attempts by the writer to open clams by methods similar to the gulls' resulted in failure, leading to the belief that there is yet something to be found out about the gulls' method of opening the shellfish.

The above observation has been checked since, at times when the tide was low and clams were dug, and the same procedure was followed by the various species of gulls.—ALBERT C. HAWBECKER, *Watsonville, California, March 21, 1939.*

A Motive for Killing a White-tailed Kite.—On February 17, 1937, a friend brought me a male White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*) which he said had been killed that day by the keeper of a gun club near Vallejo, California. I visited the club a few days later and informed the keeper of the penalty for killing this protected species, advising him also of its beneficial habits and of the fact that these birds had never been known to do anything which might be considered as harmful.

He disagreed with me in my last statement. He said that he knew of three birds of this species on his property and that he had for some time been endeavoring to "get" this particular bird. At night it roosted under the eaves of the club house, splattering the sidewall on one side of the building with excrement. The roosting location was the top rung of a ladder leaning against the north side of the building and reaching to a point just under the eaves. The location apparently offered the bird a satisfactory roosting place, there being no trees on the club grounds or within a mile.

This is the only instance coming to my attention where a kite has been relegated to the English Sparrow class of building splatters. Personally I would be delighted to have such a close acquaintance with this amiable species and would not mind the splattering.—EMERSON A. STONER, *Benicia, California, March 17, 1939.*

Winter Robins and Waxwings in Montana and Western North Dakota.—During the winter of 1936-37, the failure of other employment led me to undertake the use of my natural interest in plants by the collection of native material for planting purposes. The largest single item was seed of the western red cedar (*Juniperus scopulorum*), which is abundant in some parts of the Badlands of western North Dakota. The year 1937 produced quite an abundant crop of berries. About the first of December, the Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) began to congregate in the cedars, where they remained until about March 1, feeding upon the berries. Magpies also ate the berries. Snowfall was unusually heavy that winter and collecting was a laborious, not to say hazardous, occupation.

The year 1938 produced very little fruit on the cedars, perhaps due in part to the fact that they require two years to mature. Hearing that the crop was good in the mountains, I moved to a locality in the region of Butte, Montana, where collecting was good until competition with the Bohemian Waxwings (*Bombycilla garrula*) developed. About the first of January, I estimated that 1000 pounds of berries remained on the trees where I was working. In less than a week's time there was scarcely a berry left. Inspection of other areas in the vicinity showed similar conditions. The fruits of snowberry (*Symphoricarpos racemosus*) had also been eaten and those of wild roses made up a considerable part of the birds' food.

It is interesting to watch the waxwings pillage a tree. The birds are usually so numerous that the tree is covered so thickly that it is difficult to see the foliage. Even though there is an adjacent tree covered with berries, they all stick to the same tree until it is stripped. They usually leave the tree simultaneously, their hundreds of wings making a loud sound, not unlike that of a landslide.

The loss of the berries was a considerable item to me, but I realize that I was disturbing the balance of nature, or rather, trying to effect a wider distribution of the seeds. The birds digest only