

Shrike Feeding on a Cave Bat.—On August 15, 1937, as the writer and two companions entered a mine tunnel in eastern Riverside County, California, in search of bats, we were surprised to encounter a Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) twenty feet within the portal of the tunnel. While birds are often found roosting in the shade of mine tunnel portals, they seldom venture more than five or ten feet within.

The shrike had evidently not noticed our approach, as it did not take flight from the floor of the tunnel until we were ten feet within the tunnel. Taking flight, the bird darted out of the tunnel and alighted on a creosote bush overhanging the open cut in front of the portal. After making certain of the identification of the bird, the tunnel was entered to the point where the shrike had risen from the floor, in order to determine, if possible, what had caused the bird to enter to such a depth.

Upon reaching that point, the beam from a hand lamp revealed the half-eaten body of a cave bat (*Myotis velifer velifer*), a species known to inhabit this particular tunnel. It was evident that the bat was freshly killed, as the blood was uncoagulated and the remaining portion of the body was still quite warm. Blood was also present in wet smears upon the surface of the rock on which the half-eaten bat lay. How the shrike captured the bat remains unknown.—KENNETH E. STAGER, *Los Angeles, California, February 26, 1941.*

Starlings in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico.—On January 15, 1941, at about 10:00 a.m., a small flock of European Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) was observed foraging in a cornfield near old Fort Fillmore, seven miles southwest of Las Cruces, Dona Ana County, New Mexico, in the Rio Grande valley.

The starlings were foraging with White-necked Ravens, Crows, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Three of the starlings were taken, two females and one male. A specimen was made of the male bird and placed in the collection of the New Mexico State College, State College, New Mexico.

This is the second record of starlings in the Rio Grande valley of New Mexico. Their first appearance in the valley was reported in 1939, near Albuquerque, almost 250 miles north of Las Cruces (Borell, Condor, 42, 1940:86).—LEVON LEE, *State College, New Mexico, April 7, 1941.*

The Loon as a Duck Killer.—Any reliable observer who has had experience in the field where loons come in contact with nesting ducks must be impressed by the terror displayed by ducks whenever a loon invades their territory. But the actual destruction of ducks or ducklings is hard to prove. Although dead waterfowl of many species, practically all of tender age, may be picked up, the wounds that produced death might have been inflicted by other birds or mammals. Only in one instance have I heard of ducklings being used as food by loons. In the January, 1941, number of the Ibis an extremely interesting article, "August in Shetland", by Col. R. Meinertzhagen, after detailing the damage done to eider broods and adult eiders by the abundant Greater Skuas, damage which resulted in the total destruction of all the eider broods observed, goes on to relate a definite case of a loon devouring a young eider (p. 110): "On a third occasion a most remarkable instance of combined air and naval action was witnessed against a duck accompanied by three ducklings. A single Skua commenced his tactics of swoop and grab, and whilst this was taking place I noticed a Great Northern Diver swimming towards the scene from about 150 yards distant. He soon submerged, and surfaced near the terrified Eider mother with a duckling in his bill. This was swallowed, and by this time the Skua had sufficiently exhausted a second duckling to strike it dead. The Skua settled and commenced its meal. The third duckling never reappeared, and the disconsolate mother, who had witnessed the baby killers' frightfulness, swam around, in a truly pathetic manner, seeking her ducklings which were not. A local crofter who took an interest in birds informed me that the Immer or Ember Goose, a Norse name by which the Great Northern Diver is known, comes down from the north towards the end of July every year and takes a heavy toll of young Eiders, even more so than do the Skuas. In all we saw four pairs of these Divers near our coast."

The Great Northern Diver is of course the same bird as our Common Loon (*Gavia immer*), and when it is remembered that for one of these birds in eastern North America or Europe we have at least fifty in western North America some idea of the possible damage may be realized. Also the smaller species of loons, especially the forms of *Gavia arctica*, are just as pugnacious in the nesting season and few people realize the incredible numbers of these loons in the Pacific and western Arctic regions of this continent.—ALLAN BROOKS, *Comox, British Columbia, March 31, 1941.*

A Note on the Food of Burrowing Owls.—Several recent notes on the food of the Burrowing Owl (*Speotyto cunicularia*) lead me to report on the debris found at the mouth of an owl den observed several years ago. In April, May, and June, 1932, I frequently passed by an inhabited den in a canal

bank some ten miles northeast of Maxwell, Colusa County, California. During June the cattails in the canal were occupied by a moderate-sized colony of Tricolored Red-wings (*Agelaius tricolor*), and adjoining the canal was a large rice field which was rather heavily populated by nesting Black Terns (*Chlidonias nigra*).

Passing by this den on July 15, 1932, I noted a large quantity of feathers and stopped the car to investigate. The following debris was listed: 64 wings of nestling Black Terns, 16 wings of juvenal Tricolored Red-wings, about 10 inches of the vertebral column of a small snake, 1 pocket gopher skull, 2 giant water beetles (*Hydrous triangularis*), and remains of 1 scorpion (see fig. 57).



Fig. 57. Remains of birds eaten by a family of Burrowing Owls.

It seems quite apparent that this family of owls were opportunists and that much of their food during June was composed of juvenal blackbirds and terns taken from nests within a few yards of the den. Some few young of both species were still in their nests on July 15.

Passing this way fully a month later, I again stopped to inspect the den and found that the current food remains consisted entirely of pellets of beetle fragments, normal food of the species in this area.—JOHNSON A. NEFF, *Fish and Wildlife Service, Denver, Colorado, May 1, 1941.*

A Record of the Northern Flicker in Butte County, California.—Mr. Allan Coon of Durham, Butte County, California, shot two flickers which were drilling holes in his house on a farm two miles west of Durham on November 20, 1940. One was a typical Red-shafted Flicker, *Colaptes cafer collaris*; the second bird was slightly smaller, and the shafts and under sides of the wings and tail were bright yellow. The skin of this second bird has been identified by Dr. Alden H. Miller of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology as that of a typical Northern Flicker, *Colaptes auratus luteus*; it is now in the collection of Chico State College at Chico, California.—E. G. ENGLAND, *Durham, California, January 12, 1941.*

Foraging Behavior in the Western Bluebird.—A loose flock of about ten Western Bluebirds (*Sialia mexicana*) and a Say Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) was observed feeding on a south-facing, open, grassy slope opposite (north of) St. Mary's College, Moraga Valley, Contra Costa County, on March 1, 1941. A strong southwest wind was blowing with consequent strong up-drafts passing along slopes and through the open draws. The birds were perched on dried weed stalks and fence posts, generally facing the wind. The Say Phoebe remained in the same vicinity, apparently indifferent to the bluebirds nearby. The bluebirds would fly to a position in the up-draft some 6 to 8 feet above the ground, there hover for a second or two, and then soar for a few seconds. On a number of occasions, one or two of them remained in a soaring position without movement of wings for 6 to 8 seconds (fig. 58).