

(The Biology of Birds, 1953:76) reports that the incubation period of North American hummingbirds is 15 to 17 days. The nestling period is 20 to 23 days and pinfeathers appear on the sixth day. If these data are used, it can be calculated that the female we observed laid between January 8 and 13.

The dominant plants in the area included creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), brittle bush (*Encelia farinosa*), and ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*). Several plant species were in bloom including the large yellow-flowered century plant (*Agave* sp.). At least one ocotillo was commencing to flower. In 1961-62 precipitation in southern California was greater than normal and several times that of the preceding year. It is conceivable that an early luxuriant plant growth may have been partly responsible for early nesting because of the flowering of some species and, perhaps even more, because of the concomitant large initial insect population.—GERALD J. BAKUS, *Department of Biology, San Fernando Valley State College, Northridge, California, March 14, 1962.*

Prairie Falcon Displays Accipitrine and Circinine Hunting Methods.—The stoop of the falcon as a method of catching prey is well known and it seems to be commonly accepted that this is the nearly universal method employed by the larger North American falcons and indeed the large falcons in general. The stoop may be to strike or merely to grasp the prey, but usually it is done from a vantage point from above. Bond (*Condor*, 38, 1936:72-76) in his discussion of hunting and eating habits of falcons, notes some of the usual and normal methods of the stoop and its variations. The literature, however, indicates that many raptors, upon finding a successful method of obtaining prey, which may or may not depart from the normally observed and employed manner, resort regularly to this method, usually with a characteristic pattern. This has been noted by Sick (*Auk*, 78, 1961:646-648), Cade (*Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool.*, 36, 1961:217), and Jennings (*Falconry News and Notes*, 1(5), 1954:15-19) for the Peregrine and by Farb (*Audubon Mag.*, 60, 1959:124-129) for the Cooper Hawk. The following observations corroborate a departure from the usual falconine stooping method and indicate utilization of methods usually associated with other groups of hawks, namely the behavior of bird and marsh hawks.

On January 30, 1960, a few miles west of Salt Lake City, Utah, a female Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) was seen perched on a telephone pole. An effort was made to trap the bird for banding. Just before the bird was about to strike the bait, which was a pigeon with trap attached, a low-flying, Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) appeared on the scene, possibly attracted by the actions of the falcon. The falcon immediately left the pigeon to pursue the Rough-legged Hawk. After the falcon stooped several times at the buteo, the hawks parted company going in different directions. The falcon soon returned to the vicinity of the lure and alighted on a nearby telephone pole. After sitting for several minutes, it took off at a height of about 100 feet in the direction of a flock of Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) milling in the air about three-fourths of a mile away. After flying at this height for about 200 yards, she dropped very low, barely missing the tops of the sage brush and fences. She proceeded, with great speed, passing under several small trees along a fence row. Upon emerging, she was directly beneath the flock of Starlings. At this point, she made a nearly eighty degree turn upward into the flock, grabbing with both feet but failing to capture a bird. She returned to the pole at a relatively high elevation of about 200 feet and alighted. The same tactics were employed again, this time in another direction, seeking prey which we could not discern. The falcon was lost to our vision owing to the haze, but it returned in about five minutes, again at a relatively high elevation. This time she had a Starling clutched in her foot.

The falcon's actions had a very practiced appearance which suggested that these tactics had been utilized with success and expediency at various times and were, therefore, not just accidental. This concealed, low, "hedge-hopping" type of flight is very characteristic of accipiters (see Farb, *op. cit.*, for the Cooper Hawk). Another noteworthy item in this connection is that falcons are assumed to obtain their prey in the early morning or late evening except during the nesting season; however, this falcon was actively foraging about 11:30 a.m.

On December 27, 1961, at Coyote Springs, Wyoming, another female Prairie Falcon was observed, this time employing a harrier-type hunting method. The bird was seen flying with a slow, languid flight, low over the scant, snow-covered ground and even laboriously hovering momentarily at various times above clumps of small desert brush. The bird dropped to the ground several times while harrying near clumps of brush, apparently seeking some small rodent or bird, but each time it arose un-

successfully. The characteristic harrier-type flight continued as the falcon slowly worked its way out of sight. It may be significant that this behavior was performed by an immature bird. The food obtained from this method would scarcely be worth the energy expended which suggests the behavior was a method which may have been a result of inexperience. Williams (Wyo. Game and Fish Dept. Bull. No. 5, 1948:65) suggests that young, as a result of inexperience, may feed on grasshoppers until they can take larger quarry, but he does not mention the method employed in the capture of grasshoppers.

It is entirely possible that the bird I observed was "playing" and not seeking food. Munro (see Cade, Wilson Bull., 65, 1953:29) observed a Prairie Falcon of undetermined age "playing" with cow manure, alternately swooping down, picking it up, dropping it, and picking it up again. The bird that I observed did, however, appear to be entirely absorbed in a food hunt and seemed to be earnestly seeking something. Gabrielson and Jewett (Birds of Oregon, 1940:202) mention that the stomach contents of one Prairie Falcon contained a white-footed mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*) which possibly might have been taken in the manner just described.

The Gyrfalcon has been reported by several naturalists as similarly coursing low over the ground like harriers (Cade, *op. cit.*:232). Also, Kessel and Cade (Biol. Papers Univ. Alaska, No. 2, 1958:83) cite this method for Gyrfalcons along the Colville River, Alaska. Some ornithologists, for example Otto Kleinschmidt (*in* Voous, Atlas of European Birds, 1960:76) and Meinertzhagen (Birds of Arabia, 1954:334) consider the Prairie Falcon and the Gyrfalcon to be very closely related, belonging to the same group (possibly even representing one species) along with the other large desert falcons of Eurasia. Perhaps this would account for the similarity of behavior between the two kinds, and indeed the harrier method so often seen in the Gyrfalcon may be more common in the Prairie Falcon than the literature indicates. However, my experience is that the normal mode of hunting for the Prairie Falcon is the expected falcon method of a swift, direct flight about 30 to 200 feet in the air with a long low-angle stoop at the potential prey.—CLAYTON M. WHITE, *Department of Zoology, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, March 21, 1962.*

A Breeding Record of the Redwinged Blackbird in Alaska.—Gabrielson and Lincoln (Birds of Alaska, 1959) cite Bailey (1930) and Webster (1948) for the only published records of the Redwinged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) in Alaska. These records were based on specimens of the race *arctolegus* collected in widely separated geographic localities, two in extreme northern Alaska and two in southeastern Alaska. As far as I am aware, no breeding records have been published for this species in Alaska. Observations of the Redwinged Blackbird reported in this note were made during the summers of 1957 and 1958 while I was conducting an ecological study of the Trumpeter Swan for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in south-central Alaska.

On July 15, 1957, I observed from eight to ten adult male and female Redwinged Blackbirds in the vicinity of the Bremner River. The Bremner River is located approximately 70 miles east of Cordova, at 61° north latitude and between 144° 00' and 145° 15' west longitude. These birds were scattered around the edge of a large pond and occasionally made short flights from the bordering alders (*Alnus crispa*) to the emergent vegetation in search of insects. No nests or young were found at this time.

On August 7, 1958, a female and two short-tailed young were seen along the border of a slough draining into the Bremner River. Both young were being fed by the female who, during the course of the observation, made numerous trips to capture flying insects. Occasionally, other adult Redwinged Blackbirds were noted in this general area in July and August, but no other young were seen.—PETER E. K. SHEPHERD, *Alaska Department of Fish and Game, College, Alaska, March 5, 1962.*

Birds Observed Wintering on Middleton Island, Alaska.—The birds that breed on or visit Middleton Island in Prince William Sound, Alaska, during the summer have been reported by Rausch (Condor, 60, 1958:227-242). The writers visited the island from February 24 to February 26, 1961, and the following birds were observed during that period. All information cited on wintering ranges in Alaska is from Gabrielson and Lincoln (Birds of Alaska, 1959).

Acanthis flammea. Common Redpoll. Flocks of 20 to 25 individuals were commonly seen flying over the upland meadows. They were the most abundant species of bird observed, and they commonly winter in Prince William Sound.