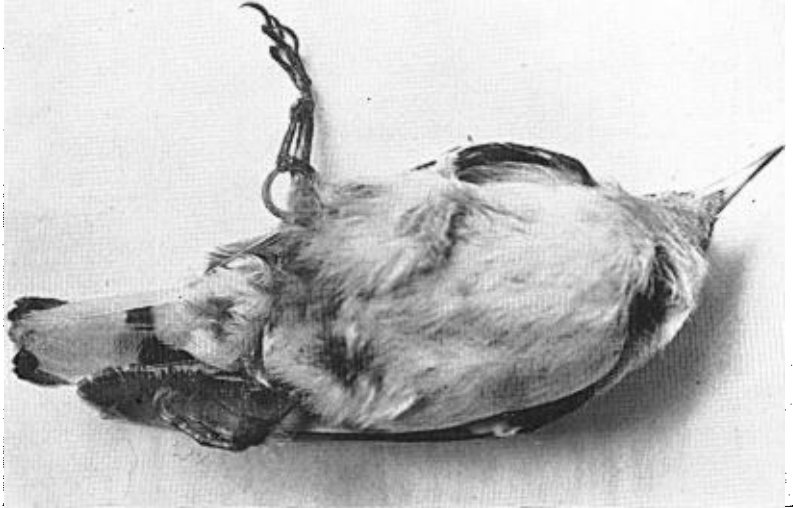


Nuthatch claw caught.—In *Bird-Banding*, 24: 110, July, 1953, I reported having trapped a Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*) in which the claw of the hallux was caught behind the tarsus, and had become somewhat overgrown.



Recently a dead White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*) was brought to me exhibiting the same condition, but to a worse degree. As shown in the accompanying photograph the claw had completely encircled the tarsus. Presumably a Nuthatch would be more handicapped by such an accident than would be a Grackle.—Sally Hoyt Spofford, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York 14850.

On the Cause of Death of a Barn Owl.—In labelling specimens for our ornithological collections, I usually indicate how the specimen was obtained—e.g., shot, road kill, picture window casualty—but often have to resort to the incomplete designation “found dead”. The Bird-Banding Office’s “Report on Recovery of Bird Band” (Form 3-1807) also has an entry “How obtained—shot, trapped, found dead or injured (state cause if known)”. Field tags used by the Michigan Department of Conservation even include an “Autopsy No.”, emphasizing the importance of determining the cause of death. The following record on a Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) illustrates (1) the difficulty in determining the exact cause of death and (2) the danger in assigning a cause on the basis of an incomplete or casual examination.

On 1 January, 1963, Robert C. Ball found the solidly frozen carcass of a Barn Owl in a campus parking lot at Michigan State University, East Lansing. The minimum Lansing temperature during the preceding day was -7°F , climaxing a 14-day cold spell in which temperatures ranged from 1 to 22 degrees below normal. Barn Owls are known to suffer from low temperatures at the northern extremes of their range (Errington, 1931. *Wils. Bull.*, 43: 60; Keith, 1964. *Bird-Banding*, 35: 26); hence I assumed that the bird had frozen to death.

However, an examination of the carcass disclosed that it was severely emaciated, with the keel of the sternum protruding from the shrunken pectoral muscles. Since the prey of local Barn Owls consists of about 98 per cent small mammals (Wallace, 1948. *Tech. Bull.* 208, MSC Agr. Exp. Sta., E. Lansing, pp. 46-55), which would be difficult to obtain under the 4-inch snow and ice cover that prevailed for 6 days preceding the find, it seems likely that starvation contributed strongly to the owl’s demise.

Additionally, in preparing the specimen for our skin collection, I found two bullets in the thigh muscles. Two bullets in the leg would not necessarily be an