

GENERAL NOTES

Bill Deformities in the Robin, Black-throated Blue Warbler and Willet.—On 21 October 1958, an unusual Robin, *Turdus migratorius*, was mist-netted from a premigratory flock at La Pocatière, Kamouraska County, Québec. The upper mandible was sharply decurved to the left of the lower mandible (Fig. 1). The lower mandible was slightly curved to the right, and its left tomium was partly rolled inward. The tongue was completely exposed to the air and was dried. This bird was still molting to an immature fall plumage and lacked fat, whereas the majority of the flock had terminated this molt and were very fat.

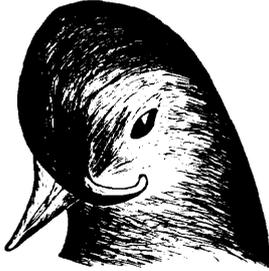


Fig. 1. Bill deformity in the Robin. La Pocatière, Kamouraska County, Quebec, 21 October 1958.

After the Robin was banded and released, attempts to observe its feeding habits were in vain. A few days later, the whole flock left the area, and the unusual bird was never seen again.

In June 1960, an adult male Black-throated Blue Warbler, *Dendroica caerulescens*, was shot at Le Domaine in De la Vérendrye Park, Québec. The bill was deformed in a similar fashion as that of the abovementioned Robin. This bird was molting to spring plumage, had small testes and little fat. Probably this adult was not breeding.

Bill deformations such as those mentioned above have been reported in the American Bittern, *Botaurus lentiginosus* (Batts, H. L. Jr., 1954. *Wilson Bull.*, 66: 142) and the Red-winged Blackbird, *Agelaius phoeniceus* (Morton, E. S., 1963. *Wilson Bull.*, 75: 281).

While collecting at Chiguana, State of Sucre, Venezuela, on 25 March 1966, I shot an adult female Willet, *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*, with a deformed bill

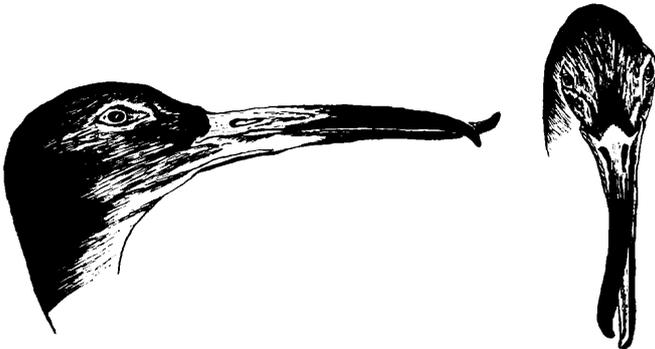


FIG. 2. Bill deformity in the Willet. Chiguana, State of Sucre, Venezuela, 25 March 1966.

(Fig. 2). The extremity of the upper mandible was decurved to the right and crossed over the lower mandible. The extremities of both mandibles were abnormally hooked and the tongue was normal. An almost identical case of bill deformity was reported in the Redshank, *Totanus calidris* (Durnford, H., 1874. *Zoologist*, (2), 9: 3999-4000).

This Willet had very little fat (only in the funiculum) and was not molting. Normally, at this time of the year in this region, the Willets are moderately fat to very fat, and are in full premigratory molt. It is possible that this individual would have stayed in Northern Venezuela as a summering bird.—Raymond McNeil, Département de Zoologie, Université de Montréal, Montréal, Canada.

Observations On Traill's Flycatcher and Goldfinch.—An adult male Traill's Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*) was discovered hanging by the breast integument from the spine of a hawthorn (*Crataegus* sp.) on 9 August, 1964 in Lucas County, Toledo, Ohio. It weighed 11.0 gm and the right and left testes measured 1 x 1.5 mm and 1 x 1 mm, respectively. The 29 mm hawthorn spine had been a partial support for the flycatcher's nest. Heavy rains loosened the nest from this partial support, letting it sag to the side and below the spine. Possibly, the adult bird became impaled on the spine and thrust itself to the proximal end using the nest as a launching site for its upward struggle. The bird was almost dead when discovered and it died less than 20 minutes later. Since the Migrant Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) does inhabit Lucas County, it is possible that one of these birds impaled the flycatcher on the hawthorn spine.

The flycatcher nest was tipped so badly due to the heavy rains and the struggles of the adult bird that probably both young nestlings would have fallen out within a short time. A nearby American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*) nest contained nestlings that hatched on the same day as the flycatchers. The flycatchers were placed in the goldfinch nest to observe 1) the acceptance and feeding of the flycatchers by the goldfinches, and 2) the ability of the flycatchers to thrive on the diet of the goldfinch.

The Traill's Flycatchers weighed 1.7 and 1.4 grams while the two oldest goldfinch young weighed 1.6 and 1.5 grams, on the day of hatching. The flycatchers weighed 1.9 g and 1.6 g and the goldfinches weighed 2.3 g and 1.9 g after one day. The flycatchers were then placed in the goldfinch nest. On day two the oldest goldfinches weighed 3.6 and 3.1 grams and the flycatchers weighed 2.6 and 2.3 grams. Therefore, the flycatchers were gaining weight but not at the same rate as the goldfinches.

Heavy rains, wind and low temperatures on day three and four kept the goldfinches from feeding the young regularly. No weights were taken on day three. On day four both flycatchers were alive but very thin at 0700 hours in the morning. At 1610 of the same day one flycatcher had been removed from the nest, probably by the adult goldfinches. The remaining one (the first hatched) was dead and weighed only 1.9 grams.

Small worms were observed in the crop of the goldfinches but the primary contents of the crops were weed seeds, from which the insectivorous flycatchers probably derived little, if any, nourishment.

Evidently the goldfinches accepted the presence of the flycatchers for at least one day. The young nestlings were the same size as their own but had grey down on the capital tract instead of white down as found on the goldfinch. The flycatchers had a bright yellow mouth, and a wide gape, while the goldfinch nestlings have a red mouth and a narrower gape. The flycatchers uttered a different sound than the goldfinches when begging for food.

The date of nesting reported herein for the Traill's Flycatcher is later than previous records for Lucas County. (Campbell, Toledo Mus. of Sci. Bull., 1: 1940) reported a nest with week-old nestlings found on 6 August, 1929.

Observations of two late Traill's Flycatcher nests in 1963 showed that the nestlings vacated them on 7 August. If the nestling flycatchers in the goldfinch nest had survived, they probably would have left the nest 21 August, at the earliest. Six Traill's Flycatcher nests had been constructed within 100 yards of the reported nest. None of these nestings were successful in producing young. This may account for the extremely late nesting observed, for this nest may have been constructed after one or two previous unsuccessful nesting attempts.—Larry C. Holcomb, Dept. of Biology, Creighton University, Omaha, Nebr.