

GENERAL NOTES

A Feeding Habit of the Herring Gull.—On November 18, 1939, I observed a flock of about 200 Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) in a field in the southwest corner of Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, about ten miles from Lake Michigan. They were eating insects and worms in a newly plowed field and their method of following the plow seemed worthy of note.

Instead of the flock following the plow down the furrow as do grackles and other birds, these Herring Gulls were uniformly distributed the length of the field, which was about forty rods long and half as wide. The farmer was plowing with a two-plow tractor. As he plowed down the west side of the field, the gulls in the furrow on the east side would wait until he came opposite them and then fly across the field and start feeding in the furrows on the west side. Thus as the farmer plowed down the west side of the field a wave of gulls progressed down the field with the tractor. When the tractor reached the end of the field all the gulls were on the west side. As the farmer started up the field on the east side, the wave of gulls flying across the field kept pace with the tractor, so when he reached the other end of the field all the gulls were on the east side.

Thus, although the wave of gulls progressed the length of the field and back again behind the tractor, no one bird ever followed the tractor. Always there were different individuals alighting back of the tractor from that part of the other furrow directly opposite the tractor. In this way the birds all kept the same relative position in the field and each picked up food from a small area of ground. If a gull finished picking up all the food in its area, it did not fly or walk up or down the furrow but waited until the tractor had again passed it on the other side of the field and then flew across and again started to feed in its small area.

Within a short distance there were two other farmers plowing. As far as I could see all conditions on those fields were the same as on the field occupied by the gulls but neither of these two fields had a single gull feeding upon it. There seemed to be no plausible explanation of this unless it was due to the gregarious nature of the Herring Gull.—ALVIN L. THRONE, *State Teachers College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*

Raven in Southwestern Michigan.—According to W. B. Barrows ("Michigan Bird Life," 1912), the Raven was originally an abundant bird in Michigan. However, its range and numbers decreased. By 1912 the Raven population in the Lower Peninsula was restricted almost entirely to the northern part.

On April 27, 1889, Mr. F. H. Chapin of Kalamazoo, Michigan, found the Ravens nesting in a large swamp in Almena Township, Van Buren County, Michigan. One of the two birds which were near the nest was shot. I have examined the skin of this juvenile bird and the original records of Mr. Chapin, which are now in the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology. In 1892, on Mr. Chapin's last visit to the swamp, he heard one Raven, but could not find any trace of a nest. However, on April 23 of the same year he noted Ravens near the Gun River in southeastern Allegan County.

Since that time the Raven has apparently been very rare or absent from southwestern Michigan. It is probable, however, that a few individuals may have occasionally been present and mistaken for Crows, as were the two birds shot in this part of the state during the last 7 years.

On October 15, 1932, a juvenile Raven was collected by Mr. George F. Raz at Union Pier, New Buffalo Township, Berrien County, Michigan. Mr. Raz states that it regurgitated a pellet which upon examination proved to consist of a mass of feathers, remains of many Coleoptera, and three feet from some passerine birds. This Raven was skinned by a taxidermist and not sexed. The skin is now in the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology.