

## THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Wilson Club members who consider themselves amateur ornithologists are strongly urged to make contributions to our knowledge of bird life. Though they may not realize it, they are quite capable of adding substantially to existing information. Too often the erroneous notion prevails that any contribution, to be important, must be based on weeks of concentrated study, must deal with a rare species, and must involve an expensive expedition. Actually, a worthwhile contribution can be obtained in a few hours of observation on a common species near home.

Among the dozens of gaps in our knowledge of common birds, the following are mentioned specifically in order to demonstrate the variety as well as the ease with which they may be filled.

*Length of incubation period.* The exact length of the incubation period is definitely known in relatively few species. By noting when incubation starts and when eggs hatch, the period can be measured by counting the intervening hours.

*Length of nestling life.* In only a small number of altricial species do we know the exact number of days spent by young birds in the nest from the day of hatching (usually called 0 day). The time involved can be determined simply by marking each nestling at hatching and visiting the nest at frequent intervals as the estimated day of nest-leaving approaches.

*Daily activity rhythms.* We have only scattered data concerning the minute to minute activities of wild diurnal birds from break of day to dusk. When opportunity permits, the movements of individual birds can be followed and recorded in detail with special attention paid to periods of feeding and sleeping.

*Size of clutch.* Much information is desired on the number of eggs in clutches of different species and the external factors which cause variation within species. For example, it is believed that smaller clutches are laid at the end of the season and that cold weather reduces the size of the clutch. Upon finding nests with eggs, a record can be kept of the number finally laid, the time of the year, and the average weather conditions that occurred during the egg-laying period.

*Where diurnal birds spend the night.* Our knowledge of where day birds roost at night is very meager. By watching the movements of individual birds as darkness approaches, it is often possible to discover their roosting sites.

*Water requirements.* Apparently some species of birds drink and bathe, while others drink but do not bathe, and *vice versa*. Amateur ornithologists who maintain bird baths have an excellent chance to find out how different birds use water. At present we are not certain of the water requirements of the majority of species.

Members desiring further instructions either in following the above suggestions, or in pursuing problems of a similar nature, may obtain them by communicating with Dr. Charles G. Sibley, Chairman of the Research Grant Committee, Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

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