were crushing the fruits in order to obtain the seeds, and immediately dropping those fruits which were not easily opened.

The method by which they removed the seed from the fruit seems interesting enough to be described. The birds seized the fruit with their beaks, pinching the edges of the blade near the distal end of the enclosed seed in such a manner that the fruit split open. Though they generally picked at the fruits from stretched positions, they sometimes carried one to a branch and held it with their claws. It is possible that this method of feeding is a habit of general occurrence. Wetmore (1919. *Auk.* **36:** 190–197) records an equally unusual food-securing technique in the Bronzed Grackle, whereby the shells of acorns were split in two by repeated impressions around the shells from the keel on the palate.—ROBERT NERO, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

## MORTALITY IN MEADOWLARKS AS A RESULT OF SEVERE WINTER WEATHER

In January and February of 1949, in the vicinity of Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas, there was prolonged sub-zero weather accompanied by sleet and snow. Storms occurred frequently, and the ground surface, particularly in open areas, remained covered with ice which prevented birds from reaching food on the ground. Beginning 3 miles east of Lawrence, birds were observed on a 3.5 mile stretch of highway bordered by cultivated fields and meadows. The observer made a round trip over the highway each day on his way to and from Lawrence. There is an open deciduous forest adjoining the eastern and southern margin of the fields and meadows. There are brush covered hills to the west and fallow fields to the north. In the area studied the Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*) was the most consipcuous species. In early January several species of fringillids, in company with the Meadowlarks, foraged at the margins of the highway. The snow plow, in clearing ice from the pavement, had left a strip 2 feet wide on the shoulder of the highway on either side of the concrete and it was on this open ground that the birds congregated. With the continued icy conditions, fewer fringillids were seen; many individuals probably retreated to the protected wooded area on the eastern margin of the field. However, the Meadowlarks remained, clinging tenaciously to the narrowly cleared strip.

In early February the Meadowlarks were noticeably weakened, and some individuals on being flushed seemed to have difficulty in flying for a distance of as much as 30 feet. As the days passed there were progressively fewer Meadowlarks along the margin of the highway, and on occasion freshly dead individuals were noted.

A brief search of forested and brushy land bordering the fields and meadows was made on February 20, 1949, but there was no indication that the Meadowlarks had sought food and shelter in these areas. Probably they remained along the roadway in spite of inadequate cover and, I suppose, with a constantly diminishing food supply, with the resulting high mortality. There was no evidence of mortality among the fringillids; these birds seemingly dispersed to more favorable areas. The Meadowlark, according to Grinnell (1928, *U. Calif. Chronicle,* XXX. 429–450), "is equipped to get its food safely and in adequate amount only from ground surface which is open-clothed with a low type of plant cover". The fact that these birds failed to use the adequate food in the adjoining, though ecologically different, habitats is testimony to the limited ecological tolerance Grinnell pointed out.—PHILIP H. KRUTZSCH, Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

## EARLY WOODCOCK NESTING FAILURE

On March 17, 1949, Aiden Ripley advised me that he had located the nest of a Woodcock (*Philohela minor*) with 2 eggs in Lexington, Mass. On March 18th it began to snow in the Boston area at about 9 A.M. and by midnight, when the temperature had dropped to approxi-