

An American Bittern with a deformed bill.—On August 6, 1953, James B. Fleugel brought to me an American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) which had been found standing on the shoulder of a road through a marshy area in Kalamazoo County, Michigan. The bird's lower mandible was slightly twisted and somewhat recurved. Its upper mandible was sharply decurved, crossing the lower on its left side. The weight of the living bird was only 256 grams.



Several teaspoonfuls of ground horse meat plus strips of freshly caught fish were force-fed to the bird between August 6 and August 10, 1953, the date when it died. At first the food was promptly expelled from the esophagus, but later it was accepted more readily. In spite of this feeding, the loss of weight continued; the bird weighed 235.5 grams at death.

The bittern was taken to the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology where P. S. Humphrey made the following additional observations. The bird was a juvenal female and contained no fat. The oviduct was visible and about 1 mm. wide, and the ovary was 12 × 3 mm. The breast muscles were much reduced; the gall bladder was probably much enlarged (14 × 11 mm.) and very dark blue-green.

Since the bill of this bird obviously had grown into this aberrant shape over a period of at least several weeks (*i.e.*, it was not suddenly and recently wrenched into that shape), it would be interesting to know how this bird was able to live as long as it did.—H. LEWIS BATTS, JR., *Biology Department, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan.*

Peculiar wall-scaling tactics in the English Sparrow.—During the early autumn of 1953 an estimated 400 English Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) established a roost on an ivy-covered wall at Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois. By October defoliation of the ivy had progressed to the extent that a number of the roosting birds became completely exposed. On October 7, I observed an interesting tactic employed in ascending the vertical walls of the building. An excerpt from my field notes follows: "5:14 p.m.—A female, located about 15 inches below a male, crawled laboriously up the wall to within 5 inches of the male. During this ascent the female braced herself on two different occasions with her widely spread tail and wings. At this point in the ascent the male threatened the female and caused her to withdraw to her original perch. A few moments later the female again began her laborious ascent until she attained a position about 8 inches below the male. At this point she suddenly lost her footing and slipped downward a few inches to a slender twig where she clung crazily for five seconds while in an inverted position."

During these ascents the female at times utilized the slender vine branches for anchorage purposes. On several occasions, however, it was apparent that no leverage was attained other than that provided by the contact of her clutching toes, stiffened and widely disposed rectrices, and the tips of her out-stretched primaries against the weathered brick wall.—OLIVER S. OWEN, *Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois, November 13, 1953.*