to leave the burning tree in which it had been nesting; as it touched upon farmland, the blaze spread. Burton theorizes about the origin of the fire: perhaps some other bird had been performing like a Phoenix in the owl tree and raised a conflagration which caught the owl unawares as it dozed in a hollow.

Less speculative is Burton's reference (*op. cit.*, p. 107) to a newsclipping from the *Courier–Journal* of Louisville, Kentucky, for January 14, 1958. Fire Chief Kenneth Reeve of Franklin placed the blame directly on a bird. To quote from the account: "He said there simply was no other way the fire, which caused very little damage, could have started in a downtown building. He reported a sparrow must have picked up a lighted cigarette and carried it to a nest in the eave of the structure . . ."

Most convincing is this communication from Ann Arbor, Michigan. My father, A. D. Moore (letter, Dec. 27, 1959) wrote after an interview with Harold Gauss of the Ann Arbor Fire Department:

I stopped Harold and said I had a serious question. What about birds starting fires? The answer was immediate and positive. Of course they do. Incident: in 1925, the Old Methodist Church had a roof fire. Harold remembers it clearly, for water pressure was often low in those days. When he climbed the ladder with the hose, and got within a few feet of the fire, no water came. He held the hose vertical, looked down the hole, and saw the water, doing its best, but stopped a yard or so down from the nozzle. When the pumper was started, he got water. The ridge row of the roof had collected a lot of nests, sparrow and pigeon, as he remembers it. The nests were afire.

Harold says they have had to put out nest fires more than once on top of the Allenel Hotel; and more than once on another downtown building he named.

It must be emphasized that two facts are inescapable: (1) some birds ant with or near smouldering substances or flames; (2) certain fires have been traced to birds. The implications are tremendous. To what degree are birds responsible for sprouting and spreading fires under tinder-dry conditions? Those crows and ravens along the road . . . could they be interested in cigarette butts as well as carrion? Those fires which start unaccountably on roof tops, in isolated trees or palms, on the side of a billboard . . . could an ember-carrying sparrow be to blame? Those jays hopping about the picnic tables . . . could a dying campfire, unattended, be far more irresistible than the tidbits?

It is obvious that a fund of information is needed to fill out the story of *aves incendiaria* and their kind in the Western Hemisphere. I would welcome any observations to this end.—JEANNE MOORE GOODMAN, *Cedar Crest Cabin, Fallsvale (east of Redlands), California, March 31, 1960.*

Marsh Hawk breeding in northwestern Arkansas.—Nesting records of the Marsh Hawk (*Circus cyaneus*) are sparse for the state of Arkansas. Baerg in his "Birds of Arkansas" (1951. *Univ. of Ark. Col. of Ag. Bull.* no. 258:52) states that the Marsh Hawk nests uncommonly in the northwestern section of the state. Bent (1937. *U.S. Nat. Mus. Bull.* no. 167:92) excludes Arkansas as a part of the breeding range for this species. The 5th edition of the A.O.U. Check-List (1957:115) does likewise.

On April 13, 1954, I discovered a solitary Marsh Hawk nest (no eggs) quite accidentally while on a field trip within the confines of Fort Chaffee Military Reservation, 8 miles south of Fort Smith, Arkansas. The nest site was located in a remote locality 2 miles west of the camp proper. This area was formerly a firing range for military training.

The nest was situated on dry ground at the base of a 5-foot persimmon tree about 500 yards from a well-traveled gravel road. The nest was surrounded by lush vegetation, which included pubescent paspulum (*Paspalum pubescens*), persimmon (*Diospyros*

TABLE 1
INCUBATION PERIOD OF THE MARSH HAWK

Egg numbers	Date laid	Date hatched
1	April 14	May 6
2	April 16	May 8
3	April 17	May 9
4	April 20	May 13
5	April 22	May 14
6	April 23	May 16

virginiana), sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), and patches of running blackberries. A natural spring occurred about 300 yards east of the nest site.

The nest cover was composed largely of dead arrow grass (*Aristida purpurascens*). A few small twigs surrounded the exterior of the nest, which was about 20 inches in over-all diameter.

From April 13 to May 19, 1954, I made daily trips to the nest site, a total of 40 trips and 196 man-hours. By April 23, six eggs had been laid (Table 1). Incubation period of the last egg lasted 24 days. Only the female incubated during the period of study.

Between April 14 and May 15, I obtained food data from 63 pellets regurgitated by the adult and young (Table 2). I collected the pellets within a few feet of the nest.

TABLE 2
PELLET ANALYSIS OF THE MARSH HAWK

	No. pellets containing remains
Reptiles	
Plains garter snake (*Thamnophis radix*)	14
Unidentified snakes	7
Amphibians	
Leopard frog (*Rana pipiens*)	3
Unidentified amphibians	1
Birds	
Redwinged Blackbird (young) (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)	16
Unidentified passerines	2
Others	
Crayfish (*Cambarus diogenes*)	11
Eastern cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)	9
Total	63

Table 2 shows that snakes and young Redwinged Blackbirds, prolific and widespread forms, were the primary food items. An interesting food item was the crayfish, which ranked third in frequency. Young cottontail rabbits also ranked high as a food item.

On May 20, 1954, the Marsh Hawk nest was found to be completely destroyed, with no trace of the six young. The cause was unknown, but it is my belief that man was involved since well-traveled roads nearly surrounded the nest site.—EUGENE J. WILHELM, JR., *Dept. of Geography & Anthropology, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, September 24, 1959.*