

scratch synchronous with bill-sweeping. The unilateral scratch together with bill-sweeping was not performed, however, in the Song Thrushes I watched.

I only rarely saw Mistle Thrushes (*T. viscivorus*) on litter and detected bill-sweeping in litter only twice by one bird on 20 March and three times by one on 5 June. I am unaware of previous records of Mistle Thrush bill-sweeping. For the American Robin (*T. migratorius*) in Connecticut I have repeatedly observed occasional bill-sweeps in litter (e.g., Clark 1971) but never detected the use of a foot to excavate litter.

In a review of the occurrence of bilateral scratching Greenlaw (1977) listed no thrushes. However, I have seen this behavior in blackbirds, Redwings, and Song Thrushes, though only when synchronous with bill-sweeping. Considering the apparent rarity of this behavior in Redwings and Song Thrushes it would be premature to conclude from the absence of records for the Mistle Thrush and American Robin that such species entirely lack this behavior.

At Reading I saw bill-sweeping performed by five other species that fed in some of the same sites used by the *Turdus* thrushes: Common Gallinule (*Gallinula chloropus*) on 8 February and 12 March, Magpie (*Pica pica*) on four occasions from 1 October–31 March, Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*) on four occasions from 3 December–9 April, European Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) on 22 January, and Great Tit (*Parus major*) on four occasions from 15 December–9 April. On numerous other occasions these five species fed directly from the surface of the ground.

Bill-sweeping has apparently not been previously reported for Common Gallinules but has been seen regularly in Magpies (Clark 1971) and exceptionally in Dunnocks (Caldow, Br. Birds 67:516, 1974; Goodwin, pers. comm.), European Robins (Goodwin, pers. comm.), and Great Tits (Perrins, British Tits, Collins, London, England, 1979:136).

*Acknowledgments.*—I thank D. M. Broom and D. Goodwin for helpful information and Prof. K. Simkiss for providing facilities at the University of Reading.—GEORGE A. CLARK, JR., *Biological Sciences Group, Univ. Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut 06268. Accepted 22 June 1982.*

*Wilson Bull.*, 95(1), 1983, pp. 157–158

**Northern Mockingbird kills Cedar Waxwing.**—Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) defense of winter territories, usually centered on fruit-bearing trees or shrubs, has been well documented. In California, Michener and Michener (Condor 37:97–140, 1935) reported vigorous defense of date palms (*Phoenix* sp.), hawthorn (*Crataegus* sp.), and persimmon (*Diospyros* sp.). Similar behavior has been reported in defense of hollies (*Ilex* sp.) in South Carolina (Moore, Behav. Ecol. and Sociobiol. 3:173–176, 1978) and pyracantha (*Pyracantha* sp.) shrubs in North Carolina (Stewart, J. Field Ornithol. 51:375, 1980). Moore (1978) concluded that the aggressiveness of the defending mockingbird was directly proportional to the degree of frugivory of the intruding species. He recorded the highest aggression index (proportion of intrusions repulsed) for the Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*), a species dependent almost wholly on fruits in the winter (Martin et al., American Wildlife and Plants: a Guide to Wildlife Food Habits, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, New York, 1951:158). Moore indicated, however, that physical clashes were infrequent. We report here a physical clash carried to the extreme.

Our observations focus on a small cherry-laurel (*Prunus caroliniana*) tree located on our office grounds in the city of Montgomery, Montgomery Co., Alabama. This particular tree is usually fruit-laden in the winter and has, in the past, been visited regularly by flocks of

Cedar Waxwings that often completely strip the tree of fruit in a matter of hours. In late February 1981, we noticed that almost none of the fruit had been used. One afternoon several days later, we saw an aerial clash near the fruit tree between a mockingbird and Cedar Waxwing. The mockingbird pursued and forced the Cedar Waxwing to the ground in a small planter where it pinned the waxwing and repeatedly struck the other bird with its bill, killing it. When we went to retrieve the dead bird, we found another Cedar Waxwing lying dead nearby. Both birds had several similar wounds on their backs. None of the wounds showed any evidence of skin puncture but each was marked by subcutaneous bleeding. In January 1982, we found another dead Cedar Waxwing with a shallow puncture wound on its dorsum lying within 15 m of the cherry-laurel tree. We cannot with certainty attribute the demise of the latter two waxwings to mockingbird aggression, since we were not witness to either of their deaths. However, the similarities of the wounds and the proximity of the dead birds to the fruit tree lead us to strongly suspect it.

We are indebted to R. G. Hooper, Paul Hamel, Frank R. Moore, and R. N. Conner for review of this note.—L. D. HEDRICK, *U.S. Forest Service, 1765 Highland Ave., Montgomery, Alabama 36107*; AND A. D. WOODY, *U.S. Forest Service (Retired), 3430 Woodhill Rd., Montgomery, Alabama 36109. Accepted 25 June 1982.*

*Wilson Bull.*, 95(1), 1983, p. 158

**American Coot apparently suffocates while attempting to swallow lizard.**—On 14 February 1981, along the shoreline of San Pablo Reservoir (approximately 30 km northeast of San Francisco, Contra Costa Co., California) at 13:00 I discovered a dead American Coot (*Fulica americana*) lying face down in shallow water in a small inlet. A dead western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), 16.5 cm in length, had one-third of its body lodged head first in the coot's gullet. The plumage of the coot was still normally waterproof, its eyes were open and glossy, and rigor mortis was not complete. An autopsy was performed on the coot and the cause of death appeared to be suffocation (with verification from Howard Brooks-Korn, D.V.M.). The lizard was blocking the glottis, cutting off air to the lungs. The raised scales of the lizard may have prevented the coot from regurgitating the lizard. It appears the lizard did not try to bite or hold onto the inside of the coot's mouth. The coot's physical appearance seemed normal and no indication of starvation was noted. Opening of the gizzard (the esophagus was empty) revealed fragments of grass and sand. A search of literature yielded only one pertinent paper (Jones, Food Habits of the American Coot with Notes on Distribution, Wildl. Resear. Bull. No. 2, Bur. Biological Survey, U.S. Dept. Interior, 1940) which mentions salamanders and other amphibia in the diet. No previous mention of predation on lizards was found, but fish are taken (Jones 1940).

*Acknowledgments.*—For assistance with this manuscript, I am grateful to Dr. Brooks-Korn, Dr. F. A. Pitelka, Dr. J. D. Rising, Dave Garcelon and Pam Nave.—GARY F. MCCURDY, *119 Las Vegas Rd., Orinda, California 94563. Accepted 10 Apr. 1982.*

*Wilson Bull.*, 95(1), 1983, pp. 158–160

**Head-scratching method of Galapagos finches unaffected by variation in cranial morphology.**—The head and bill of Darwin's finches (Geospizinae) have undergone rapid and extensive morphological change (Grant, *Am. Sci.* 69:653–663, 1981). Thus, the Geospi-