

GENERAL NOTES

Varied Thrush wintering in the Pocono Mountains: A male Varied Thrush arrived in late November, 1971, at the feeders of Clarence Bonser in Pocono Lake, Pennsylvania. It appeared with a flock of about twenty Evening Grosbeaks and departed when the last grosbeaks left at the end of April, 1972. The bird appeared almost daily, usually in the morning. Bread crumbs seemed to be the principal diet, but seed was also taken.

Bonser, who maintains a feeder complex which attracts an amazing variety of wildlife, recognized the new arrival as a species he had never noted before and identified it through the field guides. He subsequently showed it to others but did not realize the importance of the find, and I regret that more of us were not notified of the occurrence at the time.

Bonser's extensive feeding operation is most interesting. In the winter of 1971-72 he fed approximately seventy deer. Several deer and one bear have fed from his hand, as do the chickadees, chipmunks, squirrels, and some racoons. There are twenty or so bird feeders and trays which have been designed to accommodate birds of various sizes to the exclusion of others. It is little wonder that birds congregate there and that any stray from the west that happened to arrive in the area would gravitate to that teeming place.

This is apparently the third record of the Varied Thrush in Pennsylvania and the first for the Pocono region. Details on the two earlier state records are furnished in *Cassinia*, No. 52, pp. 36-37.

—Phillips B. Street, RFD 1
Chester Springs, Pa. 19425

Red-breasted Nuthatch Breeding in Delaware County: On May 26, 1973, Mrs. John McWilliams telephoned me to say that she had been watching a pair of Red-breasted Nuthatches feeding young in a hole in a tree at Swarthmore, Delaware County, Pennsylvania. I met her at the site about 5:00 P.M. that day, and the adult birds very soon appeared with food for the young.

On the following day the birds were observed on several occasions. When I was present with Stevens Hecksher, he saw at least one young bird poking its head out of the nesting hole. The bird already showed the white eye stripe quite plainly, and it seemed clear that the birds would soon be ready to leave the nest. This proved to be the case, for on May 30 Mrs. McWilliams found three young birds being fed by the two parents in trees not far from the nesting hole. On the following day Mrs. Joseph Brethwaite saw two young there, and that appears to be the last that was seen of them.

The nesting hole was about twenty feet from the ground, in a nearly dead maple tree. There were several holes, apparently made by Downy Woodpeckers, and the one used by the nuthatches faced south and was sheltered by the stub of a broken branch just above it. The tree stands at the side of the Swarthmore High School playing field, and so most of the week the site must have been very noisy. Fortunately, the discovery was made on a Saturday morning, and so on that day and the next the birds could be watched in comfort from the road while all was quiet.

This appears to be the first successful breeding record of Red-breasted Nuthatches in any part of Pennsylvania away from the mountains. The location is barely two hundred feet above sea level and is only a few miles from the Delaware River (Ed—In late March, 1973 Jesse Grantham discovered a pair of Red-breasted Nuthatches at Longwood Gardens, Pa. The female was working on a nesting site in a limb which was subsequently cut down).

—Horace G. Alexander, 305 Rutgers Avenue,
Swarthmore, Pa. 19081

Red-shouldered Hawk feeding on earthworms: On 30 December 1972, in the village of Greenwich, Cumberland County, New Jersey, I was enjoying an unusually good view of a Red-shouldered Hawk that had perched low in a tree on a lawn. After I watched the bird a short time, it left the tree and flew down on the lawn where it immediately began to pick at something here and there that I at first couldn't see but eventually made out to be earthworms. The bird made no use of its talons but pulled the worms with its beak only and swallowed them so quickly that only occasionally could the worm be seen before it was devoured.

The weather had been unusually wet and the temperature much above normal for this season of the year. There was a light rain the day of the observation with the temperature at 50° F.

Earthworms have been known to be a part of the diet of the Red-shouldered Hawk. Bent (Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey, *U.S. National Museum Bulletin 167*, 1938) mentions that of 220 stomachs examined by the Biological Survey, one contained earthworms.

—Joseph A. Jacobs, 1928 Hillcrest Avenue,
Pennsauken, New Jersey 08110

Swallow-tailed Kite in Cape May County: On May 12, 1972, I was enjoying a leisurely spring day in my yard when I noticed a large black and white plumaged bird soaring some distance away. The bird's identity as a Swallow-tailed Kite was immediately evident when I used my binoculars. The bird remained in the area in constant view from the time I first spotted it at 3:45 P. M. to 5:05 P. M., and during that time several other people were able to see it. A bit later, at 6:35 P. M., my wife Doris and I saw the bird dive into a wooded area of the nearby Rutherford farm.

I was out early on the following morning and, in fact, I spent much of that day searching for the bird in lower Cape May County. My search was not successful. However, the bird was reported soaring over Pond Creek marsh on the 13th and 15th by Alfred Nicholson. I observed the Kite in the same general area on the 16th, 17th and 18th.

On May 19-20 the annual spring meeting of the New Jersey Audubon Society was held in Cape May. As if not wishing to disappoint the large number of observers on hand the bird reappeared. A number of people saw it on May 20 in the Higbee Beach area and it was, needless to add, the bird of the weekend.

I know of no reports of the bird after May 20.

—Frank W. McLaughlin, Box 609, R. D. 2,
Cape May, N. J. 08204

Chuck-will's-widow in Center City, Philadelphia: On April 16, 1972, a group of some thirty members of the Academy of Natural Sciences located a Chuck-will's-widow near the Philadelphia Art Museum. We observed the bird at very close range and flushed it a number of times before it last sat for us on the south side of the museum, along a sloping part of the stone wall.

Mr. Paul Herley was able to obtain 8mm movies of the bird, and prints from his film show the very large size of the bird, the large tail extending some distance beyond the wing tips, and the general light coloration. These features would differ in the Whip-poor-will.

Insofar as I know, this is the third Pennsylvania record and the first confirmed by photograph. Poole (1964) lists two previous records, both from the Philadelphia area, in 1942 and 1943 (*Pennsylvania Birds*, p. 42).

—Stephen T. Harty, 450 Timberline Drive,
Mt. Holly, N.J. 08060

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Tinicum: While patrolling the Tinicum Wildlife Preserve on October 10, 1972, for possible game law violations, I heard and saw a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in flight. The bird flew over at a height of about 150 feet, and the long tail and pink sides were readily apparent. With the morning sun to my back I had excellent views although I did not see the bird perched.

—John C. Miller, 1220 Prospect Ave.,
Prospect Park, Pa. 19076

Purple Sandpiper in Gloucester County: While studying bird populations along the Delaware River shore between Birch Creek and Raccoon Creek (approximately one mile west of Bridgeport, New Jersey) on 21 November, 1972, I observed a Purple Sandpiper. The bird was quite tame and permitted me close views over a period of fifteen minutes or so. The bird finally flew off, and I relocated it a bit later several hundred yards northeast of the spot where I first saw it. When the bird took off a second time, it flew due north over the open river, possibly bound for the Pennsylvania shore.

Although the Purple Sandpiper has been observed as far up Delaware Bay as Pickering Beach and Bombay Hook, Delaware (*Audubon Field Notes*, 1968, 22(2): 179 and 22(3): 426), I know of no prior records as far north as Gloucester County. The species was not mentioned by Edward R. Manners in his article "Shorebirds Along the Delaware" (*Cassinia*, 1945, 35:23). Poole (1964) reported no records from the Delaware Shore in Pennsylvania and only four recent sight records in the state, all from Presque Isle on Lake Erie.

—David C. Zumeta, Jack McCormick & Associates,
860 Waterloo Road, Devon, Pa. 19333

Pileated Woodpecker in Gloucester County: While surveying bird populations in a small area of red maple, sweet gum, black cherry, sassafras, and oak forest northwest of and adjacent to Route 150 one mile south of Bridgeport, Gloucester County, New Jersey, on 10 May, 1973, we were amazed to hear the call of a Pileated Woodpecker. Upon locating the bird, which was perched about 35 feet up on the trunk of a dead oak in the northern section of the woodlot, we observed the bright red whisker stripe characteristic of an adult male. After a few seconds the woodpecker called a second time and flew within 50 feet of us to a stand of dead black cherry and sassafras trees in the western section of the area. The bird perched motionless in full view for several minutes and then flew north-northeast for at least one-half mile toward Bridgeport until it was lost from view. We observed the bird in excellent light with 7x50 binoculars from a distance of 50 to 200 feet from approximately 8:50 to 8:55 A.M.

This record constitutes one of the few observations of the Pileated Woodpecker south of Burlington and Ocean Counties in New Jersey since the early 1890's. Witmer Stone (*Bird Studies at Old Cape May*, 1937, p. 662) cites a nesting record in Cumberland County in 1893 and then states: "Our only subsequent record for southern New Jersey is a single bird seen by George Morris on the Egg Harbor River about May's Landing, on March 25, 1908." Fables (*Annotated List of New Jersey Birds*, 1955, p. 45) cites three records for the pine barrens of Ocean County in 1936, 1938, and 1951 but gives no records from further south in the state. No mention is made of additional unusual records in the Umer Ornithological Club's *First Supplement to the Annotated List of New Jersey Birds* (1959). More recent records include one seen on 12 September, 1957, at Cape May by Robert L. Haines (*Cassinia*, 42:31), one observed by "Mrs. Stoner" during the spring of 1962 near Medford Lakes in western Burlington County (*New Jersey Nature News*, 17(3): 108-109), and an individual observed by Harry Goldstein on 24 May, 1970, at Estelle Manor in southwestern Atlantic County (*New Jersey Nature News*, 25(4): 165). None of these records is substantiated with further details.

It is interesting that most records of the Pileated Woodpecker in southern New Jersey over the past eighty years have been between late March and late May. Thus it is probable that the occasional observations of this species during the spring in southern New Jersey may be attributed to a decided but slight southerly movement from central and northern New Jersey.

—David C. Zumeta and Stanley Stahl, Jack McCormick & Associates,
860 Waterloo Road, Devon, Pa. 19333

Black-throated Gray Warbler in Delaware County: At approximately 11:00 A.M. on November 29, 1972, my wife and I came upon a male Black-throated Gray Warbler in a pine tree in a small public park in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. It flew close past us and then settled again some fifteen or twenty feet up in another small pine tree not more than twenty feet from us. It was feeding very actively and so was not easy to get in binoculars. However, within the next two minutes we had very clear views of its characteristic features, especially the strong contrast between the black throat and white underparts, the black cap, the two broad white bands above and below the eye, and the gray back. The bird is not one with which I am familiar, and so I did not look for the yellow spot by the eye. This was seen subsequently by other observers. When the bird flew off, we did not follow it as we wanted to alert other observers.

The bird could not be found later in the day on November 29 or on the following day. A search on December 2 was similarly unsuccessful. However, Mrs. John McWilliams found it at exactly the same spot on December 3, again in mid-morning. Thereafter it was seen by several other observers over a period of several days. To my knowledge, the bird was last seen on December 13.

The bird was twice seen at about 8:30 A.M., with the other observations being about 11:00 or shortly thereafter. It never stayed for more than a few minutes, and no one discovered where it spent the rest of its time. Most of the immediately surrounding area seemed quite unsuitable for an insect-eating bird so late in the season. Two or three observers heard its characteristic call note.

This appears to be the third Pennsylvania record. Poole cites a 1912 record from Wyoming County (*Birds of Pennsylvania*, p. 56), and on September 20, 1972, a female was seen and photographed at Whitehall, Pennsylvania (*American Birds*, Vol. 27, No. 1, p. 39). (Ed.—The fourth state record was not long in coming. On January 15, 1973, one—either a female or immature male—was picked up dead in Gladwyne, and a skin was made by Jean Milmine of the Schuylkill Valley Nature Center. According to G. Bernard Van Cleve, there have apparently

been no records of the Black-throated Gray Warbler in western Pennsylvania, although there are a few for nearby portions of Ohio and New York).

—Horace G. Alexander, 305 Rutgers Ave.,
Swarthmore, Pa. 19081

Alcids on Long Beach Island: During the winter months it is not uncommon to find an occasional Dovekie or Razorbill washed up on the beach. Usually they are found dead, oiled, and in poor condition. Very seldom do we find a Murre.

In March and April, 1973, no less than nine alcids were found on the beaches from Barnegat Light to Margate, New Jersey. Of these, seven were found alive, brought to a home in Beach Haven where they were fed and watered and, except for human error, might have survived.

Immediately after a severe easterly storm in late February, 1973, the birds began to appear:

- March 1 Dovekie, found dead, oiled, at Beach Haven.
- March 4 Razorbill #1, immature, found alive, oiled, at Beach Haven.
- March 7 Common Murre, found alive, oiled, at Beach Haven.
- March 10 Razorbill #2, adult, found alive, oiled, at Barnegat Light.
- March 10 Thick-billed Murre, found dead, oiled, at Barnegat Light.
- March 14 Razorbill #3, adult, found alive, oiled, at Brigantine.

The live birds were taken to the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Chamblin in Beach Haven. Mrs. Chamblin was able to feed them, forcibly at first but then from her hand. In addition, she taught them to drink water from a dish. This is particularly remarkable when you realize that these birds caught their food alive from the sea and surely never had occasion to get a drink of water. Mrs. Chamblin was also able to remove the worst of the oil with cornstarch.

Efforts were made to find a home more suitable than a bathtub in an apartment. Arrangements were in progress to transfer the birds to the Washington, D.C., Zoo. At this point the four birds were accustomed to their surroundings and to the presence of humans, and they were happily eating frozen squid and small frozen bait fish to the tune of several packages a day. To reduce the food bill, some live minnows netted in the bay were tried. There was no question that the birds enjoyed the food, but with fatal results to the three Razorbills. It was learned that the fish were infested with a parasitic worm that quickly invaded the birds and so damaged their internal organs that all three were dead within 24 hours. Somehow, the Murre was not affected. This bird was taken to the Washington Zoo where it became the pet of the curator and his staff. Regrettably the Murre died of unknown causes after more than eight weeks with its friends. However, this was not the end of the alcid story. The following additional birds were found:

- March 30 Razorbill #4, immature, found alive, oiled, at Beach Haven.
- April 12 Razorbill #5, adult in breeding plumage, found alive, oiled, at Margate.
- April 15 Razorbill #6, immature, found alive, badly emaciated, at Beach Haven.

Again Mrs. Chamblin fed the birds, taught them to drink water, attempted to clean their feathers, and finally sent them to the Washington Zoo. This time two of the birds died within a few days. The third was still alive three weeks later, and I have no word on its ultimate fate.

It has been suggested that the reason the birds died was that they could not adjust to the drastic change in their environment. We do not agree. The cause of death of the first three Razorbills has been definitely established. The others were weak and emaciated when found and could be held only a few days before being sent to the Washington Zoo. The remaining Razorbill had nearly two weeks in which to regain strength and was able to withstand the trip and change. Also, it was not allowed to come in contact with as many people as was the Murre, but rather was kept in more isolated quarters. We believe that with the proper facilities, time, and money, disabled birds such as these could be saved.

I was involved from the beginning in studying and photographing these birds. It was quite an experience to pet a Murre, to have a Razorbill nibble your finger in search of food, and to find difficulty in focusing on another Razorbill that persisted in waddling toward the camera and thrusting its beak toward the lens.

Among the many persons interested in these birds were officers of the New Jersey Audubon Society, scientists from Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and the Smithsonian Institution, and staff members from the Philadelphia, Bronx, and Washington Zoos. In addition, the U.S. Coast Guard, Atlantic City, issued a special message alerting its men to search for oil spills at sea and to report any more oiled birds that might come to their attention. Finally, the *Asbury Park Press* and local newspapers published accounts of the finding of these birds, with emphasis on the cause of their distress, and giving credit to Mrs. Chamblin for her efforts to save them.

—Benjamin C. Hiatt, 9 St. Andrews Lane,
Tuckerton, N.J. 08087

Heavy Spring Migration of Hawks over Longwood Gardens: On 16 April, 1972, with heavy low cloud cover and strong winds from the south-southeast, I observed quite a few northerly bound Marsh Hawks and Sparrow Hawks passing over Longwood Gardens near Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. Realizing that mid-April was the peak time for northerly bound raptor migrants, I speculated that the birds noted on this day were a probable prelude to an advancing movement of birds held up by several days of inclement weather which was forecast to break the next day.

The following morning, 17 April, I attempted to get in touch with several other observers, but only one, Mrs. Joseph Brethwaite of Villanova, was able to be present. The weather had broken early that morning with clear skies and strong northerly winds. Mrs. Brethwaite arrived at 9:30 A.M., but no meaningful number of hawks had begun to pass over. By 10:30 A.M. from my position on Longwood I began noticing individual hawks passing low overhead and made arrangements to take the remainder of the day off. I arrived at our observation area, a high hill overlooking much of the surrounding countryside, at approximately 11:00 A.M. No substantial number of hawks had begun to move, but an hourly total was begun at this time.

Between 11:00 A.M. and 1:00 P.M. 152 birds passed overhead, and of these eight were Ospreys and 132 were Broad-winged Hawks. The number of birds then steadily increased as the day progressed. Hourly totals for Broad-wings were as follows: 1:00-2:00 P.M., 365; 2:00-3:00 P.M., 644; 3:00-4:00 P.M., 773; 4:00-5:00 P.M., 286; 5:00-5:30 P.M., 43. The total number of broad-winged Hawks on 17 April was 2,243. Also tallied were 28 Sparrow Hawks, 27 Ospreys, four Red-shouldered Hawks, three Cooper's Hawks, a Black Vulture, and substantial numbers of Sharp-shinned Hawks and Red-tailed Hawks. This ended the heavy flight. The following day only fifty Broad-wings and three Ospreys were counted.

As I indicated, the reason for this mass overland flight was undoubtedly the back-up of birds due to inclement weather. The birds had probably moved eastward, gathering along the western shores of Chesapeake Bay. Having no urge or reason to cross the bay, they waited on the western shore for the weather to break. When this took place, all the birds moved up the coastline to the head of the bay, which is on an almost direct north-northeast line below Longwood Gardens.

There were obviously many more birds going north on 17 April, as I imagine the mass of birds had spread out considerably by the time they arrived over our area. We could see many birds quite far off in the distance moving the same northward direction, but it was impossible to count these.

While my research may be incomplete, I have not come across any prior report of such a massive one-day spring raptor migration in this area.

—Jesse Grantham, Longwood Gardens,
Kennett Square, Pa. 19348

Second Nesting of Herons, Egrets, and Ibis: On a banding trip in Absecon Bay, New Jersey, on July 21, 1972, I found numbers of new nests with eggs. These nests were of the Glossy Ibis, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Louisiana Heron, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, and Common Egret. The Glossy Ibis nests were the most common, followed by Little Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Louisiana Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, and Green Heron. There was only one nest of the Common Egret.

On August 19, 1972, I returned to the nesting area in company with Samuel Orr. Most of the nests had young, but there were also young out of the nest. We banded a few hundred birds this day.

Insofar as I know, this nesting colony had no earlier nesting failure due to heavy rains or abnormally high tides. This is the first time in ten years that an apparent second nesting occurred en masse.

—John C. Miller, 1220 Prospect Ave.,
Prospect Park, Pa. 19076

An Unusual Nesting of the Mourning Dove: While looking for bird nests in the Old Fort Mifflin grounds on April 28, 1972, Samuel Orr and I flushed a Mourning Dove from the ground. We found a nest containing two eggs in the honeysuckle. In a number of years of hunting for nests this is the first time I have found a Mourning Dove's nest on the ground.

—John C. Miller, 1220 Prospect Ave.,
Prospect Park, Pa. 19076

Mockingbird Building Dummy Nests: On June 3, 1972, I noticed a pair of Mockingbirds carrying small twigs to one of the pine trees in my yard. I easily located the nest, which was about half completed. I watched for another half hour or so as the birds continued to take twigs to the tree, and then I noticed one bird carrying twigs fly out of my yard to a neighbor's yard. The bird returned without the twigs, and then the second Mockingbird went through the same motions. This second nest, located in a bush and constructed by the same pair of birds, was also about half completed.

Several days later I checked both the pine tree and the bush and found both nests still unfinished. There were no Mockingbirds around at the time.

It appeared to me as though this were a case of the birds building dummy nests, a habit with which I was not previously familiar in the Mockingbird.

—John C. Miller, 1220 Prospect Ave.,
Prospect Park, Pa. 19076

Albino Canvasback in Camden County: Between June 16, 1972, and June 15, 1973, I made daily waterfowl counts in the Pennsauken, Camden County, New Jersey, area. Most of my attention was concentrated on the north end of Petty's Island where large flocks of bay ducks gather. These daily counts were taken each morning over time spans ranging from thirty minutes to two hours.

On the morning of April 5, 1973, I noticed an all-white Canvasback in with a group of 18 other Canvasbacks. On that particular morning I could not spend much time afield. A closer look would have cost me about thirty minutes in walking time, and I could only hope that the albino would be there the following morning.

I returned with my brother about 6:00 A.M. on April 6 and immediately spotted the bird again, this time with a group of 40 Canvasbacks. We were eventually able to work our way to a point only some fifty feet from the bird. The bird was pure white, but the head appeared to exhibit just a slight off-white shade. The eye color was light, and we had to assume it was pink. I must add that in the case of the color pink, both my brother and I are color blind.

I did not see the albino Canvasback on April 7 or any subsequent date.

Cases of complete albinism in waterfowl must be unusual indeed. C. Chandler Ross, however, lists several prior records and specimens ("Albinism among North American Birds," *Cassinia*, No. 47, 1963, pages 6-7).

—Kenneth Tischner, 1744 43rd Street,
Pennsauken, New Jersey 08110

Fall Occurrence of a western Sapsucker in Pennsylvania: At the western border of its range the eastern Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius varius*) becomes a darker bird with more red in its head. The race that occupies the eastern Rocky Mountains is known as *S. v. nuchalis* and is typically red in the nape, malar stripe, and auriculars. *S. v. varius* is usually not red in the auriculars or malar stripe and seldom red in the nape. For a detailed discussion of these plumages, see: Howell, T.R., 1952, Natural history and differentiation in the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker," *Condor* 54:237-282.

While reviewing the specimens of sapsuckers in the collection of The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, I came across an interesting specimen that was part of the D.V.O.C. collection. The specimen (ANSP 70163) had been collected by Witmer Stone on July 17, 1901, in Sullivan County, Pennsylvania. The bird has a mostly black back with white restricted to the central portion. Individual black and white feathers of the back bear very little white. The black malar stripe is red for its posterior two-thirds. These are all characters of *S. v. nuchalis*. The specimen lacks red in the nuchal area or the auriculars. These are usually characters of *S. v. varius*.

Based on this evidence the bird was probably hatched in the area between northwestern South Dakota and west-central Alberta. Since it is in adult breeding plumage (alternate) and shows the feather wear typical of a bird that has just bred, it may have made at least one fall and one spring migration prior to the fall when it was killed. The collection location is about 1500 miles east and 300 miles south of its place of origin. It is extremely uncommon for a sapsucker with this plumage to be found so far east.

—James Tate, Jr., Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University
Ithaca, New York 14850

A Questionable Swainson's Hawk Specimen from New Jersey: In December 1970, I published "The Hawks of New Jersey" as New Jersey State Museum Bulletin 13. Since Fables (*Annotated List of New Jersey Birds*, 1955:74) listed only one hypothetical Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) record for New Jersey—a 1947 sight record—I considered it inappropriate to include this species in Bulletin 13.

However, in his review of the Bulletin, Collins (*The Auk*, 89:214-215) suggested that the lack of inclusion of the Swainson's Hawk was unaccountable as a New Jersey specimen had been collected. John Bull, cited as the source for this record, confirmed the existence of an unpublished specimen in the Buffalo Museum of Science and provided me with its label data: immature female, Essex County, New Jersey, 12 October 1915, Mathes Collection. Since such a specimen would place the Swainson's Hawk solidly on the New Jersey list, I asked Robert F. Andrie of the Buffalo Museum to confirm the details of the specimen. He replied (letter of 18 April 1972) that the label on specimen number 1029, a Swainson's Hawk, has the data mentioned above.

It was then agreed that Andrie would publish the record in a suitable ornithological journal. However, upon critical comparison of the bird's label with the Buffalo Museum's catalog, Andrie (letters of 17 January 1973 and 6 February 1973) discovered certain circumstances involving previous cataloging and labeling which caused him to suspect the specimen's geographic authenticity and its validity as a New Jersey record. However, because the bird was mentioned in *The Auk*, and a remote possibility exists that someone in the future might wonder about the specimen and why nothing further was published on it after Collins mentioned it, this note is offered as an explanation for the rejection of the bird as a first New Jersey record.

My appreciation is extended to John Bull and Robert F. Andrie for their interest and assistance in this matter.

—Donald S. Heintzelman, 629 Green Street,
Allentown, Pa. 18102

Dickcissel breeding in Atlantic County: On June 4, 1973, John Danzenbaker discovered a singing male Dickcissel in a corner of the Atlantic City Airport grounds near Pomona, Atlantic County, New Jersey. The bird was still present when John and I visited the area at noon on the same day, and on this occasion John thought he might have seen a female as well. On June 7 the presence of a female was definitely established. During this interval the male favored a particular patch of vetch, and we assumed this to be his territory.

This was verified on June 8 when the female was observed carrying nesting material and copulation occurred in the process. Another trip with nesting material was made ten minutes later. It was not until June 15, however, that the nest was finally located in vetch about a foot above the ground. At this time the nest contained five eggs.

The male was last seen or heard on June 8, and apparently the female carried on the endeavor alone. On June 25 the nest contained two eggs and two recently hatched young. On June 27 only three young were found, and these were fully feathered by July 2. The nest was empty but intact on July 6. It is assumed that the young successfully fledged, but no further evidence of the presence of Dickcissels was subsequently noted.

This is apparently the first nesting record in the state since 1904. David Fables, Jr. cites a record that year from Union County (*Annotated List of New Jersey Birds*, 1955:66). In the early part of the last century the Dickcissel was, of course, a summer resident in many parts of the state.

—James Akers, 209 South 30th Street,
Brigantine, N.J. 08203

Unusual Common Gallinule at Brigantine Refuge: On July 8, 1973, James Akers, Edwin Bloor, and I observed a rather oddly marked Common Gallinule at the northwest corner of the west pool at Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge. The bird had a completely bright yellow frontal plate, with no sign of red anywhere. A normally colored gallinule has, of course, a red frontal plate with yellow showing only at the tip of the bill.

We observed the bird in ideal light in company with another gallinule. It appeared to be an adult.

—James K. Meritt, 809 Saratoga Terrace,
Turnersville, New Jersey 08012

Fork-tailed Flycatcher at Brigantine Refuge: It was about 6:30 A.M. on 4 September 1972 when I was approaching the experimental pool at Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge that a Kingbird-sized bird with extremely long outer tail feathers flew across the path immediately in front of me. It proved to be a Fork-tailed Flycatcher.

The bird alighted on the tip of a branch of a large maple tree. As I watched, it flew up and snatched an insect and returned to perch at the tip of another branch of the same tree. Its long, streaming, deeply forked tail was nothing short of spectacular. I watched as the bird made several other sorties for flying insects despite some harassment from kingbirds with which it was keeping company. Always it returned to a tip of a branch of the same tree.

My first immediate reaction upon sighting the bird was that it was a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. However, this bird had a clearly black cap and, as I recall, the black continued on down the back. I was able to observe the bird closely, perhaps within 25 feet.

As the morning light improved, I decided to try for a photograph. I ran back to my car for the camera, but when I returned a few minutes later the bird had departed. I saw no sign of it anywhere in the area. Other observers whom I subsequently met continued the search later in the morning, but to no avail.

On the evening of 4 September a Fork-tailed Flycatcher was seen at Cape May Point by Frank and Marguerita Bleier (*New Jersey Nature News*, December, 1972, p. 186). This would almost certainly have to be the same bird.

There have been several prior state records of the Fork-tailed Flycatcher, the last previous one being on August 23, 1968, at Cape May Point (see *Cassinia*, 1970, p. 28). That record was well documented by photograph, as I wish mine could have been.

—John Danzenbaker, 123 Carol Road,
Linwood, New Jersey 08221

Attempts of Gulls to Rob a Common Egret and an Osprey: Gulls are well known for stealing captured food items from one another, but their aggressive behavior can also be directed toward other species, as reported for gulls robbing pelicans (Brown, *The Auk*, 63:96), mallards (Hopner, *Vogelwarte*, 25:268), eiders (Ingolfsson, *Bird Study*, 16:45), mergansers (Lamore, *Wilson Bulletin*, 65:210), and skimmers (Zusi, *Condor*, 60:67).

At Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge on May 11, 1972, I noted two more species subject to the harassment of gulls. On that clear day I first watched a Common Egret catch a ten-inch eel and fly to shore to begin feeding. Not surprisingly, the bird had difficulty in handling its elusive prey, and within a minute an adult Ring-billed Gull appeared and started harassing the egret. The gull repeatedly flew at the egret, passing close to its head, and then circled and returned. Later the gull landed nearby and attempted to snatch the eel from the egret's bill. Eventually the unsuccessful gull departed.

In the afternoon I was watching an Osprey flying with a large fish in its claws. The bird-of-prey was rapidly approached by an immature Great Black-backed Gull that twice dove at the Osprey from above, while the latter made evasive swerves. Again in this example the gull was unsuccessful in its attempted robbery, but both egrets and Ospreys must sometimes lose their prey to annoying gulls.

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Erythrism and Melanism in the Barn Owl: Two unusual specimens of the Barn Owl have recently come to our attention. The first was discovered in a review of the Rutgers ornithology collection (RSU No. 40), a male collected in Union County, New Jersey, on August 30, 1948. It has underparts that are deep ochraceous buff, with a light rufous facial disk and a dark collar that is umber in the lower portions. The rusty plumage is far beyond the normal variation in the species and certainly represents erythrism.

The second bird was found freshly dead on July 16, 1972, along the edge of a major highway at New Brunswick, New Jersey. It is dark gray to sooty black in its entirety, except for scatterings of light brown in the wings. The melanistic plumage is, of course, a very striking contrast to the usual whiteness of the species.

While both birds thus display pigment abnormalities, the rusty bird probably represents a more common genetic expression, similar to the "red phases" of other species of owls.

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