

Some Observations of birds eating salt.—A note in The Auk of May, 1945 (vol. 62: 455), by John B. Calhoun, describes an incident of English Sparrows eating salt from a block in a barnyard in Indiana. In the course of wildlife studies in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado, in 1939 and 1940, I observed a number of species of wild birds pecking salt blocks that had been placed on the range for the benefit of bighorn sheep. Blocks of pure NaCl and other blocks made up of a combination of other salts, such as calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, and the like, were used. While birds were seen pecking at both types of block, their preference appeared to be for the sodium salt. Band-tailed Pigeon (*Columba f. fasciata*) and American Magpies (*Pica pica hudsonia*) visited the blocks quite frequently. Other species observed obtaining salt included Western Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura marginella*), Lewis's Woodpecker (*Asyndesmus lewisi*), Batchelder's Woodpecker (*Dryobates pubescens leucurus*), Long-crested Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri diademata*), Rocky Mountain Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis nelsoni*) and Rock Wren (*Salpinctes o. obsoletus*). These and some other birds were quite often seen obtaining gravel near salt blocks, and one spot where blocks had been placed for several years so that the soil had become impregnated with salt, appeared to be especially favored for this purpose.—LT. FRED MALLERY PACKARD, U.S.N.R., 34 Randolph Street, Passaic, New Jersey.

English Sparrow eating salt.—On page 455 of The Auk for July, 1945, Mr. John B. Calhoun has drawn attention to the above curious habit of the English Sparrow. If Mr. Calhoun will refer to an article of mine in The Auk for October, 1921, p. 606, he will find that I not only gave an account of some Purple Finches at Hatley, P. Q., that were addicted to this same habit, but also drew attention to a reference in 'Bird-lore' (22: 286, 1920) to House Finches (*Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis*) that were similarly addicted. It has also been recorded in the March-April number of this same magazine for 1921, pp. 90-91, how English Sparrows, Mourning Doves, Crows, and some other common birds have been seen around a trough in a pasture apparently picking up grains of salt. Chickens are also said to eat it greedily. Like Mr. Calhoun, I am unable to offer an explanation for the physiological need of such large quantities of salt.—H. MOUSLEY, 4073 Tupper St., Montreal, P. Q.

Mortality notes on the Trumpeter Swan.—On March 16, 1945, while on an army maneuver in British Columbia, Canada, I found remains of a Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*), on the Bella Coola River, one-half mile west of Stuie. Feathers were strewn over a thirty-yard-square area on a sandbar at the edge of the river. Positive identification was made by the presence of the trachea and the enlarged tracheal bulla in the skeletal remains. Coyote tracks were observed on the sandbar and the bird could have been taken by this predator as it fed along the banks of the narrow river. However, local residents claim that eagles will occasionally knock a swan down in mid-air and wound it, but never recover the bird. The coyote may have made the kill under these conditions.

Exact date of the killing is unknown, but it is assumed to have occurred in midwinter. A census of Trumpeter Swans in February, 1945, at Tweedsmuir Park, adjacent to Stuie, showed 134 birds wintering in that area. The birds are in this country from November to March or April, and many are concentrated on Lonesome Lake near the southern tip of the park. During winter, when the lake is frozen, they often rest on the ice and feed at the lake inlet and along near-by open streams.