

the surface were so abundant that it does not seem likely that the birds were attempting to capture those still under water, but I can offer no other explanation for the splashing. This feeding activity continued for the remaining half-hour of daylight.—CARL D. RIGGS, *University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.*

House Wren feeding a Cowbird.—Three times during one period of observation on July 20, 1946, I saw a House Wren (*Troglodytes aëdon*) feed a large (40.5 grams) Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) near our house on the Edwin S. George Reserve, Pinckney, southeastern Michigan. Friedmann (1929, "The Cowbirds," p. 255) states that the House Wren is a "rarely imposed upon species. It is merely mentioned as a molothrine victim by Bendire and also by Davie, while Kells, (Auk 1885, p. 106), in Ontario, writes that during 1884 he found young Cowbirds in the nests of several species among which he lists the present one."

The only Wren family near our house had four young Wrens two or three days old in a nest box eight paces from where the Wren was feeding the Cowbird. It seems possible that the male Wren was caring for a Cowbird from an earlier Wren brood while the female was looking after the newly hatched young; on the other hand, he may have adopted a young Cowbird that had been reared by other foster parents.—FRANCES HAMERSTROM, *Edwin S. George Reserve, Pinckney, Michigan.*

Birds eating blossoms.—Search of a considerable number of publications discloses only a few records of the eating of blossoms by birds other than the gallinaceous browsers. In Baltimore in 1945 and 1946 I occasionally found English Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) feeding on the petals and stamens of apple, pear, and cherry blossoms, and once saw a Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) feed similarly between phrases of song in an apple tree. Mention of this to fellow-members of the Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Bird Club produced in the club's *Bulletin* (No. 9, 1946:10-11) notes by Louise F. A. Tanger on a Cardinal (*Richmondia cardinalis*) eating forsythia blossoms and by Mary Grebinger on Cedar Waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) in an apple tree "tearing the petals off, holding them in their beaks for a moment, and then letting them fall." I have found records of English Sparrows eating pea and bean flowers (*U.S. Dept. Agric. Tech. Bull.* 711, 1940:30), Galapagos Finches (*Geospiza* spp.) eating various flowers (*Condor* 47, 1945:179, 188), and (in England) the Marsh-Tit (*Parus palustris dresseri*) and Wood-Pigeon (*Columba p. palumbus*) feeding on plum blossoms (*Brit. Birds*, 36, 1942:141).—HERVEY BRACKBILL, *4608 Springdale Avenue, Baltimore 7, Maryland.*

Period of dependency in the American Robin.—Observations on five American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) color-banded as nestlings in Baltimore, Maryland, make it possible to elaborate on the following statement by Howell (1942. *Amer. Midl. Nat.*, 28:583): "It appears that the young are dependent on the parents, and the male in particular, for less than four weeks. While young that are four weeks old do beg from their parents, they receive little assistance." Of the five birds I watched, two were from first broods, and three from a second brood. Attempts at self-feeding began at about the age of 20 days; most of the fledglings remained partly dependent through the age of 28 to 31 days; and they remained in the home territories through the age of 30 to 38 days. The observations on each bird are as follows:

O-RA: Hatched night of April 21-22, 1945; left nest May 6, aged 14 days; next seen May 12, aged 20 days, picking at ground ineffectively; first seen to obtain food (inanimate) May 16, aged 24 days; last seen fed by parent May 23,

aged 31 days; last seen in territory May 30, aged 38 days. (This bird, the only one raised from its nest, was cared for entirely by the female parent both in the nest and out. May 23, on the evening of which it was still being fed, was the day on which the female completed her second set of 4 eggs; both daytime incubation and night-roosting on the nest began on this day.)

O-WA: Hatched May 2 or 3, 1945; left nest May 16, aged 13 or 14 days; next seen May 20, dependent; first seen to pick at ground, apparently effectively at times, May 23, aged 20 or 21 days; last seen fed by parent May 23, but still in close company of one parent and probably fed May 31, aged 28 or 29 days; apparently independent June 1, aged 29 or 30 days; last seen in territory June 5, aged 33 or 34 days.

A-RG: Hatched June 4, 1945; left nest June 17, aged 13 days; partly independent by June 24, aged 20 days; last seen fed by parent June 28, aged 24 days; definitely independent July 9, aged 35 days; last seen in territory July 11, aged 37 days.

AR: Hatched June 4, 1945; left nest June 17, aged 13 days; partly independent by June 24, aged 20 days; last seen fed by parent June 27, aged 23 days; last seen in territory July 4, aged 30 days.

AW-O: Hatched June 4, 1945; left nest June 17, aged 13 days; partly independent by July 1, aged 27 days; fed by parent as late as July 4, aged 30 days, and probably July 7, aged 33 days; last seen in territory July 8, aged 34 days.

Observations of fledgling O-RA throw some light on the development of self-feeding ability. As stated above, this bird at the age of 20 days sometimes pecked sharply at the ground in a way that looked purposeful but was entirely ineffective; watched at close range as it stood on bare ground, no targets of the pecks could be discerned, and no swallowing was apparent afterward. At 24 days, however, O-RA was successfully picking cherries from a tree.

At 28 days, O-RA was having a little success with animate food. Foraging over lawns, it ran and paused, and gazed intently, like an adult. But it was usually too slow in snatching at its quarry, and I repeatedly saw the insects it struck at fly safely away. It was also making erroneous food choices, as shown when it once picked up some object and then promptly dropped it.

At 30 days, O-RA spent more of its time than before in quest of live food, but still seemed to stab too slowly to catch many insects, still erred in its choices, and learned only slowly from its mistakes. Once, for instance, it picked up some rotted leaves—and this with a quick pounce, as if they were moving prey—but immediately dropped them with a shake of the head that seemed to mean that they were distasteful; nevertheless, it almost at once picked up another piece of rotted leaf, discarding it in the same way.

An incident that seems to show a parent influencing its offspring to feed itself occurred during my observation of fledgling O-WA. Occasionally picking up some food itself, but chiefly being fed by its male parent, this bird when 20 or 21 days old once flew up onto my pull-string banding trap. Shortly the male parent appeared with a billful of bread. He did not fly directly to the fledgling and feed it, however; he alighted on the ground a few yards away, walked a little nearer, then flew up and past the young bird, landing on the ground a couple of yards beyond; he repeated this several times. Then, a few times, he walked toward O-WA and retreated again. Once he put his whole load of bread down on the ground, and then picked it up again, piece by piece. During all of this time the fledgling had been begging on the top of the trap, and now it finally flew down to the male on the ground and was fed, following which, the male flew away. The male's behavior was not caused by fear of the trap; he had been feeding there regularly himself, and just before this occurrence, he had got food there and fed O-WA beside it.—HERVEY BRACKBILL, 4608 Springdale Avenue, Baltimore 7, Maryland.