

## GENERAL NOTES

**A roosting area of the Bald Eagle in northern Utah.**—In view of the increased concern being focused on the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) throughout North America, the following observations from northern Utah may be of interest.

During the years 1962–63, the observer has noticed individual Bald Eagles scattered throughout the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, Box Elder Co., Utah. These birds are strictly winter residents and have been observed during the months of January through March by many of the refuge personnel. I have seen them as far south as Zion National Park. Although the origin of these birds is unknown to this writer, it is possible that they come from northern Wyoming, Montana, and Canada.

When watching the eagles on the refuge, I have noticed that they were either sitting on the ice or were soaring high above the marshes. The marsh itself is the basic feeding area, with carrion providing the main item of diet.

On the wintering grounds of the Bald Eagles on the Mississippi River in northern Illinois, and in Florida, the surrounding habitat always includes deciduous or evergreen trees of considerable height, which provide a suitable roosting or nesting niche near the feeding area. The habitat at Bear River delta is composed primarily of salt grasses, alkaline flats, and cattail marshes—with large trees almost nonexistent. Do the birds, then, spend their roosting hours on the ice floes?

East and west of the Bear River marshes, lie the parallel ranges of the Wasatch and Promontory Mountains. These might be capable of providing suitable roosting sites, but potential roosting places would probably be found only at elevations of approximately 5,600 feet or higher. Below this elevation there are many cultivated deciduous trees located approximately 15 to 20 miles out from the refuge feeding area, but possibly because of human encroachment they are not utilized for roosting.

In January 1962, several Bald Eagles were seen flying toward the Wasatch Mountain range apparently with great intent and using a continuous wing flap. The specific area they went to was the Willard Peak, which has an elevation of approximately 9,700 feet.

On 24 February 1963 at 7:30 AM, I climbed up into the Willard Canyon to a height of approximately 6,000 feet before I encountered too much snow to continue. From a high vantage point an adult pair of eagles was seen flying toward the Bear River delta feeding area, riding the high thermal air currents. During the next 7 hours two adult eagles and one immature bird were seen flying about the area at very high elevations. On several occasions Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*), breeding birds in the area, were also seen, but no interspecific strife occurred between the two species.

At 3:15 PM on the west fork of the basin of the Willard Canyon, which is about 15.5 nautical miles from Bear River, I began counting the eagles, using 7 × 50 glasses, as they circled very high over the area. The numbers increased until the eagles had almost assumed a gregarious behavior. After a first pair dropped down into a large dead Douglas fir, the others were observed descending, one by one, into this same tree, until nearly every limb was occupied—14 birds being counted in all. The white heads of two other adult birds were also seen in contrast with the evergreen foliage. This roosting area is at an elevation of approximately 7,500 feet. The number of birds counted was 16 adults and 1 immature bird.

On 29 March 1963 the roosting area was almost devoid of eagles. Although the majority of birds had left the feeding and roosting areas, one adult was seen feeding on a dead Coot (*Fulica americana*) in the marshes.

To determine the amount of use the area had received during the winter, on 1 June 1963 I climbed to the trees which had been used for roosting. Eagle pellets were

found to be scattered quite profusely throughout the entire area. Approximately 90% of the pellets found contained duck feathers.

Therefore, it is this writer's opinion that if proper roosting habitat is not available near their feeding grounds, the birds will commute great distances to seek it. In studies of the Bald Eagle of the Midwest (Southern, 1963. *Wilson Bull.*, 75:50) roosting areas were found to be available near the feeding areas along with hunting perches. Here on the Bear River marshes this is not the case and the high mountain passes provide the only suitable roosting places for eagles.—JOHN F. SWISHER, JR., 117 North 10 East, Brigham City, Utah, 28 June 1963.

**Unseasonable record of Gannet in North Carolina.**—On 23 July 1963, an adult Gannet (*Morus bassanus*) of undetermined sex was found on the ocean side of Shackleford Banks, located 3 miles southeast of Beaufort, Carteret County, North Carolina. This island is one of a series forming the outer banks of the coastline. High and steady winds had prevailed from the ocean for a 3-day period from 18 July through 20 July. The state of decay indicated that the bird had been dead less than a week. Extreme dates for the Gannet in North Carolina are 26 May and 20 August with none recorded during the summer interval according to Wray and Davis (1959, "Birds of North Carolina"). There have been no subsequent published records of the Gannet in North Carolina during this summer interval. The specimen was not banded.—WILLIAM H. ADAMS, *Department of Biology, Tennessee Wesleyan College, Athens, Tennessee, 24 October 1963.*

**Observations on sun-bathing in the Yellow-billed Cuckoo.**—Published accounts of the behavior of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) and of sun-bathing in birds are few. It therefore seems noteworthy to record the following observations.

At 0800 hours on 3 August 1963, I was searching for birds near headquarters at Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge, Jet, Oklahoma. I saw a Yellow-billed Cuckoo alight on a branch, spread and droop its wings, and spread and bend its tail laterally at an 80° angle to the bird's body. The posture was held approximately 3½ minutes. A Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) startled the cuckoo and it moved to a nearby branch and preened for 10 minutes. The bird again assumed the above-described posture, but faced the opposite direction; the tail was bent in the same direction as in the first observation. One side of the bird and the tail, which was lowered slightly to expose it fully to the sun, were in direct sunlight. This second posture was held for 5½ minutes. A slight turning of the head was the only movement during the sun-bathing postures. The air temperature at the time of the observations was approximately 80 F.

Gibb (1947. *Brit. Birds*, 40:174) states that the sun-bathing posture "is typically the fluffing out of the body feathers, opening of the wings and fanning the tail. The odd postures at times described may usually be attributed to the bird's inclining its body towards the oblique rays of the sun." Hauser's observations (1957. *Wilson Bull.*, 69:80) indicate that the bill is usually open while sun-bathing. The postures of the cuckoo differed from most sun-bathing postures in the sharp bending of the tail, the closing of the bill, and the absence of fluffed feathers.

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