

affording shelter from the north winds, and as a rule the snow has not been so deep as to entirely cover the grass. This year, however, it has all been covered and there has been little picking for any kind of animals or birds.

"And now the story comes from the section that the Magpies, which are unusually thick this year, are alighting on the backs of the horses and cattle and simply picking away the flesh until a good sized hole has been made, when they tackle the animal in earnest and make a fill of his flesh. The story is that Alva Stine has lost two or three horses, and that George Sindlinger has lost a valuable bull from the Magpie attacks."

Each of the accounts here given contains the evidence that this habit of Magpies to attack healthy cattle (free from sores or wounds) was a novelty in the respective localities.—T. C. STEPHENS, *Sioux City, Iowa*.

Notes of the Starling.—The U. S. Department of Agriculture bulletin (No. 868) on the Starling, commented upon in the April 'Auk' alludes to the ability of this bird as a mimic and lists ten native species, the notes of which it has been heard to imitate. The writer, located close to the center of Starling population, can add the names of the following ten native species which he has heard the Starling creditably and in several instances very exactly imitate: Tufted Titmouse, Red Cross-bill, Kingfisher, Crow, Baltimore Oriole, House Wren, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red Headed Woodpecker, Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, and in addition the harsh notes of the Guinea Fowl. On one occasion a single Starling, in a short time was heard to imitate the calls of six different species. The ability to mimic does not appear to be shared equally by all individuals, at least is not equally exercised, and good mimics are rarely met here. During the twenty-one years that this bird has been a local resident I have heard it imitate the calls of other birds on less than fifty occasions, the majority of these falling within the past five years. I do not include the so-called "Wood Peewee" note of the Starling as mimicry. It is so frequently uttered as to suggest that the similarity is a coincidence, though proof of this is only possible by comparison with the notes of the bird in Europe.

The abilities of this bird emphasize the necessity of using the eye as a supplement to the ear in making identifications in the Starling belt.—CHARLES A. UENER, *Elizabeth, N. J.*

A Question Concerning the Cowbird.—Does the female Cowbird take any interest in the fate of the eggs she lays in the nests of other birds?

This question has often occurred to me since an incident I observed in 1915. On June 29 of that year, at Albion, Iowa, I discovered a two-story Red-eyed Vireo nest (*Vireosylva olivacea*). The nest had originally contained one Cowbird egg, but the Vireo had at this time added to the

height of the nest walls and laid a new bottom above this egg. Subsequent to this three Cowbird eggs had been laid and the Vireo was incubating them at the time the nest was discovered.

On the 30th I returned with a camera to photograph this nest, which was in a low oak scrub, and discovered a female Cowbird near the nest. My first idea was, of course, that she was there to lay in the nest. Her subsequent actions were unusual if this was the explanation of her presence. I have several times observed Cowbirds approaching a nest or leaving it after depositing an egg and have always been impressed with the furtive, sneaking actions on such occasions. This bird remained in the tree and was visibly disturbed by our presence. She scolded a little and acted very much like an anxious female alarmed at an intrusion at her nest. On July 1 she was again present when we passed the nest but on my return again to this locality on July 13 I found the eggs broken and the nest deserted. I have often wondered since at the actions of this bird and decided to publish this note in the hope of learning whether any other person has had a similar experience.—IRA N. GABRIELSON, *Portland, Oregon.*

The Nonpareil Wintering in Florida.—On October 28, 1920, I observed two male and three female Nonpareils on the banks of the Miami Canal at the juncture of the Ta-Miami Canal (just outside the city of Miami). On December 13, 1920, I observed two females at the same spot. In the intervening six weeks I made a canoe trip to Fort Myers, Florida, through the Everglades and did not see another Nonpareil.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are common around Miami in the winter.—EDGAR BEDELL, *Waterford, N. Y.*

The Black-backed Kamchatkan Wagtail, *Motacilla lugens* Kittlitz, in Alaska.—During the course of the expedition to the Arctic coasts of East Siberia and Northern Alaska in 1913 and 1914, upon which Messrs. Joseph Dixon and W. Sprague Brooks went as zoological collectors, their power schooner, the "Polar Bear", put into the harbor at Attic Island, the outermost of the Aleutian chain, in early May, 1913. From the deck of the vessel here several black and white Wagtails, recognized as *Motacilla lugens* Kittlitz, were seen flitting about the beaches, and on May 4, one adult male was secured.

This specimen, now No. 21590 collection of John E. Thayer, is the first, we believe to be recorded from North America. It was not listed by Brooks in his account of the birds taken on the trip. (Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., 1915, LIX, No. 5.)

Hartert in 'Die Vögel der paläarktischen Fauna,' treats *Motacilla lugens* as a subspecies of *M. alba*, but the Kamchatkan bird differs so strikingly from its next door neighbor, *M. ocularis* Swinh, that we prefer to give it specific rank.—JOHN E. THAYER AND OUTRAM BANGS, *Cambridge, Mass.*