

Notes on the Feeding Reactions of Some Spring Birds during a Late Snow Storm.—The New England snow storm beginning on April 12, 1929, and continuing spasmodically for two days with low temperatures, about which Wendell P. Smith has a communication in the October, 1929, number of 'The Auk' also struck southern New Hampshire with results as interesting, but differing somewhat, and not quite so drastic. The spring birds mentioned in Mr. Smith's note were also present here with two exceptions:—the Horned Lark and Meadowlark; with such additional species as: Belted Kingfisher, Savannah and Field Sparrow, Tree Swallow and Yellow Palm Warbler. Besides these and many winter residents there were the Phoebe, Song Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, Robin and Bluebird in greater numbers and which came to the house in quantities, visiting the feeding trays and any places that afforded food. Their feeding reactions were particularly interesting. Correspondingly with Mr. Smith's note, I saw not only Phoebes, but Hermit Thrushes, Robins and Bluebirds catching flying insects attracted to manure heaps outside of barns as well as under the eaves of houses and outhouses. On and around one small pile I counted twenty-six individuals consisting of six species, mostly Thrushes. The Hermit Thrush is a very common fall migrant, usually not so common in the spring, but never had I seen so many as during this storm and immediately following it. The Slate-colored Junco, Tree and Song Sparrows were commonly caught dashing in a mad frenzy against windowpanes inside barns where they had been attracted by the scattered hayseed.

Back of the house near the brook where drainage from springs kept the wet ground free of snow, Song Sparrows, Hermit Thrushes, Robins and Bluebirds made efforts to find earthworms and forms of insect food. Seeing that they were unsuccessful and that they repeatedly visited the feeding trays where the food placed out for the winter birds was apparently not to their liking, I resorted to digging earthworms in the garden and was rewarded by having six species cluster about the spot where I had spaded. Taking a hand-full of worms and depositing them on a bee hive and on stones around the wet springy ground, the birds hunting for food there ate them eagerly. I was a little surprised to find the Song Sparrow such a worm devotee! One male Robin was markedly demonstrative in showing his objection to having the other birds eat these choice servings, dashing at every individual daring to come too close. Later I saw him still there, standing on a heap of crawling worms so that no other bird could feed, mouth agape, and crop bulging. All the birds made gluttons of themselves after the day's famine. The Hermits became so tame in the offering of worms as to take them from my fingers. Most of the birds at some time appeared to be in song, but all were suffering from the cold.

Several of the earlier migrants had commenced nesting and one interesting instance has to do with the Phoebes. Before the last cold snap they had begun carrying nesting material under the bridge, working off

and on even during the days of the storm,—and then disappeared for more than a week, finally coming back to complete the nest.—LEWIS O. SHELLEY, *East Westmoreland, N. H.*

An Ancient Bird Skin.—When I was in Salt Lake City in 1895, some men came from southern Utah bringing a large collection of cliff dweller relics. Among these was a skin of the Mountain Bluebird. The bird had been skinned through an incision along the line of the breast bone, as we do it now, but the bones of the upper legs and wings and the skull had been removed. The skin was pliable and free from grease and was perfectly preserved in the dry dust where it had lain hidden.

Pueblo Indians, like more southern tribes, used feathers extensively for adornment, weaving strips of the skin, with feathers attached, into the fabrics of articles of attire. It seems perfectly logical that they would capture birds at the most favorable season and preserve the skins for future use.—C. E. H. AIKEN, *Colorado Springs, Colo.*

An Unpublished Letter of John K. Townsend.—In indexing the extensive historic correspondence of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, I found among other interesting letters one from John K. Townsend, written from Independence, Missouri, on the threshold of his expedition to the Pacific Coast with Thomas Nuttall. It was addressed to Dr. Thomas McEuen, at that time (1834) Recording Secretary of the Academy.

As the letter contains some information on the abundance of Prairie Chickens and Sandhill Cranes at that rather remote period, Dr. Witmer Stone suggested that readers of 'The Auk' would find it of interest and value. The Dr. Morton referred to in the letter was Dr. Samuel G. Morton, the anthropologist, later President of the Academy.

Independence, Mo.

Ap 23rd 1834.

Dear Dr.

My family will send you a few birds that I shot on my way to this place. I am sorry there are not more of them but my mode of travelling from St. Louis to this place (on foot) prevented my carrying a number of rare ones that I shot. I found the Prairie Hens immensely numerous some miles below & could easily have prepared some but I expected to find them as abundant here & concluded not to encumber myself with them;—I have been very much disappointed therefore in not being able to find one in the neighborhood. They are said to inhabit the prairies about 8 miles above, but since our arrival here I have been so constantly engaged in preparing for the journey that I have not had time to look after them.

I have seen a number of Sandhill Cranes but always flying high—they are said to alight at night in heavy marshes in the neighborhood of streams, but are seldom seen resting during the day. I have offered a reward for the capture of one, but none have yet been brought me.