

exact similarity in form to those of the pelvic and pectoral girdles and the syrinx of *Sturnus vulgaris*.

From a taxonomic standpoint, the myological similarity of *Fregilupus varius* to *Sturnus vulgaris* does not necessarily indicate that *Fregilupus varius* is a starling, as the myological differences existing between such forms as *Sturnus* and *Corvus* are so slight that the myology alone is not sufficient to differentiate between such forms.

From a myological examination alone, then, there is nothing to indicate that *Fregilupus varius* is or is not a member of the family Sturnidae. However, such close myological similarity, together with the osteological and external structural evidence, serves to indicate that *Fregilupus varius* is in all probability a member of the subfamily Sturninae.—MALCOLM R. MILLER, 10630 Wilkins Ave., West Los Angeles, California.

Predation of Boat-tailed Grackles on feeding Glossy Ibises.—For the past five years the writer has had considerable experience with the only concentration of Eastern Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis f. falcinellus*) which occurs in this country, viz., certain of the 'reefs' and shoreline of Lake Okeechobee, Florida. Extensive investigations have been made of the bird in both its rookeries and its feeding grounds. The conduction of the Audubon Wildlife Tours in the Okeechobee region in 1940 and 1941 has resulted in dozens of trips by station-wagon, along the road which skirts the northern shore of the lake, and not one of these has failed to exhibit feeding groups of these ibis during the months of February and March. During the winter of 1941, while conducting these trips, the writer noted an occurrence which had hitherto escaped him completely, and apparently has not been noted by others. This has to do with the frequent predation by the inland form of the Boat-tailed Grackle (Weston's Grackle, *Cassidix mexicanus westoni*) on feeding Glossy Ibis. It was noted on at least five different occasions this past winter (February and March) and appears to deserve some comment.

The ibis of this region feed very largely on crayfish, which they secure by probing the holes made by these creatures. Flocks of as many as three to five hundred birds may be watched within a few yards to one hundred and more, from the roadside. More often than not, Snowy Herons are mixed with the feeding ibis, and, as noted this season, many of the grackles. These latter would swarm about the ibis, and no sooner would one of the latter seize a crayfish, than it would immediately tower into the air with it, only to be instantly beset by from one to three or four grackles. A series of aerial gyrations would follow, with the almost inevitable result of the ibis losing the crayfish to one of its sable tormentors. Sometimes, these battles would take place a few feet above ground, sometimes as much as fifty, sixty or a hundred, but only in the rarest instances did the ibis succeed in getting away with its catch!

On one occasion, with a station-wagon full of observers, a full half-hour was spent in watching this performance. Scores of ibis secured crayfish and rose into the air, but only on five occasions, did the grackles fail literally to take the creature out of an ibis's bill. The picture presented was a unique one. In unobstructed short marsh grass, was a black and white blanket-like mass of feeding ibises and Snowy Egrets, with smaller black attendants (grackles). Every now and then, a black form would shoot into the air, instantly followed by several smaller black forms. It looked like huge flakes of black corn popping over an invisible fire. Up they would go, down they would come, while another would spring

up almost at once, with ascending and descending birds in the air constantly. Such a scene was presented off and on during the entire two months.

It would seem that the ibises could easily have swallowed their catch on the ground, but they would apparently always leap upward as soon as they withdrew the crayfish, and this was the signal for the grackles to attack. That the latter were highly successful was evident. It seems strange that this habit has not been noted before in many investigation trips in that area, and it is too much to suppose that it is of immediately recent development. One of the writer's visitors suggested that here was a factor in the general rarity of this species.—ALEXANDER SPRUNT, JR., *National Audubon Soc., Charleston, South Carolina.*

Birds imprisoned by a snowstorm.—An unusually severe and unseasonal snow-storm swept across the north-central States on November 11, 1940, to terminate a mild fall season. The storm commenced with a drizzling rain which changed in turn to sleet and snow with the falling temperature which reached a minimum of 10° F. during the night. The 42-mile wind accompanying the snow produced a blinding blizzard. Wildlife in general suffered a heavy mortality in many sections of the State.

Near the town of St. Peter, Nicollet County, Minnesota, there are seven caves excavated in the sandstone bluffs along the Minnesota River. To escape the storm, many birds of different species resorted to one of these caves for shelter. During the course of the storm, the cave entrance was blocked by drifting snow, imprisoning the birds. Immediately following the storm, Mr. Charles Meyer, who operates the caves as a tourist attraction, removed the snow barrier; and, upon entering the cave was confronted by these many birds flying about excitedly in their confine. He stepped out and to one side of the cave and allowed the birds to escape, attempting to identify and count them as they left. He noted thirteen Ring-necked Pheasants, nearly two dozen Bob-white, three Cardinals, two Robins, a number of Chickadees, several Downy Woodpeckers, and what he called "small woodpeckers" which may well have been White-breasted Nuthatches which were common in the vicinity.

The aggregate of different species in one cave would lead one to believe that the birds were thoroughly familiar with the cave and its protective potentialities.—G. N. RYSGAARD, *Minnesota Museum of Natural History, Minneapolis, Minnesota.*

A noteworthy concentration of birds.—The responses which animals sometimes make to conditions or situations affecting their well-being are sometimes striking, occasionally abrupt and frequently transitory. Recently I encountered such a response as represented by the group-feeding of several species of birds. The celerity of the response, the degree of participation therein and the sudden cessation thereof by these birds in the locality concerned was so conspicuous that the facts pertaining thereto may well be made a matter of record.

About 4.00 p. m. on March 14, 1941, while looking for early-spring birds some fifteen miles northeast of Albany, New York, I noted a conspicuous dark-colored patch on a nearby, open, snow-covered hillside. Inspection at closer range indicated that earlier the same day, several loads of stable manure had been thickly distributed over an area approximately 30 feet wide by 250 feet long. Detailed examination with binoculars revealed the presence of a considerable assemblage of birds that had been attracted to this place on account of food, principally in the way of waste grain, thus suddenly rendered available in a region still covered with