

An injured Meadowlark.—The actions of a Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) at Mount Shasta, Siskiyou County, California, have demonstrated the remarkable ability of some birds to survive seemingly fatal handicaps. This bird had in some way suffered the loss of all toes and portions of both tarsi. The right tarsus ended in a knob-like stump at about the point where the toes should have been, while about two-thirds of the left tarsus was missing, leaving a stump about one-half inch long. This bird was totally without any means of grasping a perch, yet was apparently vigorous and healthy. It could alight or take flight from the ground with no apparent difficulty, although its handicap was evident during feeding. The bird walked upon the stumps of the tarsi, and was abnormally low to the ground. The wings were occasionally used to aid balance, but the progress in walking and feeding was nearly as rapid and efficient as that of a normal individual.

The lark was seen almost daily between Christmas, 1940, and February 15, 1941. Probably the melting snows then allowed it to return to its former feeding grounds outside of town. It fed in the short lawn grass nearly every afternoon within five or six feet of the writer's window, and ample opportunity was afforded for close observation both with the naked eye and with 8-power binoculars. The injuries were completely healed when the bird was first seen, and whether frost, a trap, or some other agency was responsible for them can be no more than conjecture.—CLARENCE F. SMITH, *Fish and Wildlife Service, Mount Shasta, California.*

Calcium chloride—a death lure for crossbills.—The crossbills' appetite for salt is well known. That this liking may result in the death of large numbers of the birds is fortunately not a frequent observation. The present report of such a sequela of events was sent to me by an eyewitness, Mrs. Fred Heise of Trudeau, New York. It seems worthy of record as an unusual cause of avian mortality.

During the first two weeks of March, 1941, reports were received by Mrs. Heise that large numbers of birds were being crushed by automobiles on the road between Saranac Lake and Tupper Lake, New York. Upon investigation she found that the road had been covered with a mixture of sand and calcium chloride. The chloride was apparently added as a binder for the sand to prevent its scattering by cars.

She says, "For several days great numbers of White-winged Crossbills and small numbers of Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins settled on the road to eat the salt. The roadbed was covered with them and it was almost impossible to scare them away even by using the horn. They appeared to be too sick to rise and even though motorists drove slowly they were killed in great numbers. The surface of the snow-covered road was actually reddened by the blood and feathers of the birds. My estimate is that there were at least a thousand birds killed."

Whether these birds were actually made ill by the salt ingestion or whether their sloth can be accounted for by eagerness for this material and their well known lack of fear cannot be decided from the facts available. This question might well be investigated by other observers if the opportunity occurs.—GORDON M. MEADE, M.D., *Strong Memorial Hospital, Rochester, New York.*

[The foregoing account coincides with information received from another source. In February, 1941, Mr. William A. Rockefeller of New York brought me a number of dead White-winged and Red Crossbills and Pine Grosbeaks from near Saranac where he reported that they were suffering exactly as described by Dr. Meade, commenting also on the local use of calcium chloride on the roadways. Some of the birds showed no obvious outward signs of injury but most of them had been

hit or run over. The stomachs of all of them contained fine gravel, presumably from the roadways, mixed with unidentified vegetable material. Calcium chloride is reported as injuring a dog's feet when the animal had been running over paths treated with this chemical and its effect in a bird's stomach might be serious. Mr. Lee S. Crandall, Curator of Birds of the Bronx Zoological Park, informs me that the Veterinarian of the park, Mr. L. J. Goss, states that calcium chloride is definitely poisonous and would kill the birds that ate it or gravel coated with it.

The unusual congregation of individuals in the locality still requires explanation. It may have been due to the attraction of the gravel, to a craving for salt, for which the chemical may have provided an erroneous substitute, or to moisture gathered by the hygroscopic chloride. The fact that the birds' stomachs contained gravel mixed with food strengthens my belief that the gravel, itself, may have formed the attraction. A cleared, unfrozen roadway in the Adirondacks in winter would have provided an unusual opportunity to get this needed material, in this case with unfortunate results. In any case, the circumstance raises the question of the advisability of using calcium chloride where it might cause a repetition of the disaster.—EDITOR.]

A bird tragedy.—On June 6, 1941, near Marshall, Harrison County, Texas the writer saw a Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) fluttering in the window of a small cabin adjacent to a lake. On approaching the cabin the bird was found to be trapped inside. The door was opened, and the Bluebird escaped. Its manner of flight indicated that it was in a weakened condition. On entering the cabin seven dead Bluebirds were found on the floor. Some appeared to have been dead several weeks. They were all in an emaciated condition, probably dying from exhaustion and starvation. In addition to the Bluebirds, two dead Carolina Wrens (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) also were found. These apparently died in the same manner as the Bluebirds.

Further investigations in the small cabin revealed the presence of a nest, containing four young Carolina Wrens, located in one corner of an old ice box. Leaving the cabin, the writer remained nearby to watch. Presently a wren flew to the cabin and entered through an obscure opening in the wall about one and one-half inches wide. A Bluebird that had been flying around went into the stovepipe chimney and down its six-foot shaft to the L-bend where the pipe entered the cabin. On going back into the cabin, a small rusted hole was found in the under side of the stovepipe adjacent to the cabin wall. Within the hole, toward the outside, were nest materials, presumably a Bluebird's nest.

A possible explanation for the disaster was that the birds had descended the chimney and, by mistake, entered the cabin through the rusted hole. The lighted window attracted the trapped birds. This attraction, no doubt, reduced their chances of finding other means to escape. The nesting wren, on the other hand, was able to find its way in and out through the crack in the wall.—ROLLIN H. BAKER, *Texas Game, Fish and Oyster Commission, Lufkin, Texas.*

Longevity and other data on a captive English Sparrow.—Recently, in Albany, New York, occurred the death of a rather remarkable captive male English Sparrow (*Passer domesticus domesticus*). Certain information concerning this bird was furnished through the kindness of the owner, Mrs. Alfred Stromberg, 129 Main Avenue, Albany, New York, while other data were obtained through my own per-