

Near our large-mammal house a Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina passerina*) has established territorial rights and greets me as I walk along the path that leads to the animal house. This little fellow is very friendly and follows me until I drop a few grains of canary seed (*Phalaris canariensis*) upon which it feeds. One afternoon this little bird came up to me and by its behavior I knew it to be in distress. A large seed had become lodged in its beak. The bird had attempted to eat it but, due to its size, was unable to swallow it. As well as I could see, the attempted meal appeared to be a small coffee bean.—MALCOLM DAVIS, *National Zoological Park, Washington, D. C.*

**Parrots and vitamin B.**—Last winter I fell heir to five cacique parrots—three black-headed and two yellow-headed. The yellow-heads and one black-head were compatible and had been kept in a common cage at the Hershey Zoological Garden. One of the yellow-heads on arrival was found to be pretty well denuded of feathers and this one, having practically finished the picking job, extended these services to the other two birds, producing an unsightly mess. Change of diet and other treatment produced no relief.

In the meantime a large yellow-headed Amazon, a family pet for more than a quarter of a century, became droopy, listless, and 'dopey,' and it occurred to me to apply some of the much-vaunted and advertised vitamin-B complex. All of our birds are very fond of toast soaked in coffee. Administration of the drug, therefore, was a simple matter. A large drop of syrupy stuff was placed in a deep saucer, coffee was poured on it and mixed, and the toast was soaked in this. The birds apparently were unaware of the dose. Result: the Amazon picked up promptly and, still more surprising, the three smaller birds are again (June 16, 1943) almost in full feather, and picking and denuding appears forgotten or at least interrupted.

I am mindful of being told by a keeper of birds at the zoological garden that there was practically no remedy for this 'bad habit.' It is for this reason that I wish to bring our experience to the attention of people suffering from similar misfortune.—PAUL BARTSCH, *U. S. National Museum, Washington, D. C.*

**Kingbird behavior.**—The note in 'The Auk' for January, 1943, on Kingbirds' disposition of excrement leads me to write of an exactly similar case to which my attention was called two years ago in North Berwick, Maine. A pair of Kingbirds (*Tyrannus tyrannus*), nesting near my sister's house, brought all the excrement of the nestlings to her bird bath and dropped it in the water. Although frequently washed out, the amount was so profuse that she finally covered over the bath.

Some years ago an interesting nesting of the Kingbird occurred in the eaves-gutter of this house, which is very high—three tall stories. A pair of Kingbirds built in the gutter. For fear that the nest and young would be washed out in the first rain, attempts were made to frighten them away. However, there was a bad drought and just before the first rain, four little Kingbirds sat in a row on the ridge-pole! I believe a similar case was reported in Bird-Lore.—DR. ANNE E. PERKINS, *Berwick, Maine.*

**Nesting of the Laughing Falcon.**—Over most of Tropical America, the Laughing Falcon [*Herpetotheres cachinnans* (Linn.)] is not uncommon, although much better known through voice and reputation than by sight to the average human inhabitant of its territory. It figures prominently in native folklore and superstition and is regarded as a bird of many accomplishments, the most universally known

of which is the ability to forecast rain. Field ornithologists, too, have always been impressed with the personality of this remarkable falcon but, in spite of such widespread and varied interest, nothing authentic seems to have been put on record regarding its nesting. The statement of the Penards in their 'De vogels van Guyana' that it builds a nest of twigs in trees and has two young was admittedly based on reports of Indians, as was probably that of Schomburgk, as quoted by Chubb in his 'Birds of British Guiana,' to similar effect.

In May, 1941, Sheffler visited Guirocoba in extreme southeastern Sonora, Mexico, a locality which, in recent years, has gained some prominence as the headquarters from which naturalists in many fields have explored the surrounding country. By the most extraordinary good fortune, three nests were located, all within a mile or two of the ranch house. The field account of these nests is transcribed below. Preliminary to the notes it may be said that the valley of Guirocoba is roughly and irregularly oval, perhaps four or five miles by two. Most of it was at one time under intensive cultivation but now has largely reverted to mesquite thickets and weeds. A permanent stream, beautifully bordered by giant native cypresses or *Sabinos* is fed by seepage and trickles from wooded cañons in the surrounding mountains and escarpments. It is near the upper limit of the Arid Tropical Zone at an elevation of about 1500 feet, and the primitive cover, aside from the ubiquitous mesquite and giant cactus, is a thin deciduous forest of low average height.

"May 10, 1941 . . . One of the boys returned saying that he had found a 'Huaco' but no nest, and would like to borrow my gun . . . In an hour he was back with the bird [and] said that he had now found the nest near where he had shot it, as the mate had flown off when he had shot this one, which was a male. In the meantime another boy came about a second nest. We first visited the site where the male had been killed and a natural hole in the perpendicular wall of the cañon was pointed out as the nest. This was reached from above without too much difficulty. Back in this pothole about one foot from the entrance was a depression in a very large pile of leaves, those in the depression being green or nearly so. In the depression was one white egg, in appearance like a typical owl egg about the size of a spotted owl's. No bird was seen although the male had been shot within a very few feet of the nest. This cañon is dark and very heavily wooded, and although the nest cavity is on the straight cañon wall it is so dark and gloomy here and the wall itself [so covered] with orchids and other clinging plants [that] the site is very difficult to see. . . . Left with the other boy for nest site number two, [which] is about one and one-half miles south of number one. Cañon about the same as the first although not quite so well wooded. Nest site within seventy-five yards of a well travelled trail . . . and impossible to get to without lots of rope. Bird flushed from the nest site and was collected,— . . . a female which had long been incubating.

"May 11, 1941. Left early for nest number two. Nest a deep depression in lots of leaves [those in the depression green as before]. Contents one very young and very hungry Huaco . . . probably not over four or five days old.

"May 12, 1941. Visited number three nest today. Not much luck, for although two Huacos were seen in this dark cañon it was not possible to get within gun range. Nest located similar to numbers one and two and about one mile northwest of number one. Nesting material same [but] nest cavity larger and nest of loose leaves much farther back from the entrance. Nest contained a single egg . . . with incubation almost completed. The nest was forty feet from the cañon floor and ten feet from the top of the cliff.

"The McCarty sisters say that although they have seen this bird several times over a period of almost twenty years, yet they have rarely seen it more than once or twice in any one year, . . . usually when the rainy season starts about the twentieth of June. At that time they laugh and play in the very tops of the great *Sabino* trees in the evening before the rain. They saw five playing at one time. There is said to be an old Indian drinking song called 'The Laugh of the Huaco.' The Mexicans call them Rain Crows."

An attempt to keep the young bird alive was without success and it was prepared as a specimen. Colors of the soft parts were as follows, all of them except the bill and claws from a Kodachrome film and not from the living bird: Iris, dark brown; bill, black, with base and cere putty color; tarsi and feet, grayish blue; claws, black. There is no color plate in Ridgway's 'Color Standards and Color Nomenclature,' 1912, which matches the rather uniform body color of this chick. It may be described as immaculate, light brownish buff, perhaps nearest to pale 'Clay Color,' distinctly paler on the chin and throat and deepening gradually to between 'Clay Color' and 'Sayal Brown' on the crown, back, and wings. The outstanding feature is the black facial mask and collar around the nape, precisely as in the adult except that there is no white spot on the lower eyelid. The down is very soft and dense and exceeds in this respect any downy hawk with which we are acquainted; in fact it compares favorably with a newly hatched duckling.

The eggs, as before noted, resemble those of an owl. They are bluntly 'Rounded Ovale,' pure white, and rather smooth in shell texture. Measurements of the two collected are 44.2 x 37.6, and 43.5 x 37.7 mm.

Selection of natural cavities in cliffs as nesting sites in a district where they are abundantly available, together with the peculiar nest which, in each of the three instances, consisted only of a mass of detached leaves, naturally leads to speculation as to the choice of sites and type of nest construction employed in forest areas where cliffs are non-existent.—W. J. SHEFFLER AND A. J. VAN ROSSEM, 4731 Angeles Vista and Dickey Collections, University of California, Los Angeles, California.

**Notes on the nesting of the Song Sparrow.**—In both 1941 and 1942, a pair of Eastern Song Sparrows (*Melospiza melodia melodia*) have nested in the writer's back yard.

On June 7, 1941, four flightless young were in the yard being fed by their parents. In the following October, the nest was found in a barberry hedge, 41 inches from the ground. It contained one unhatched egg.

In 1942, on April 23, an adult was carrying nesting material. On June 3, a nest was found 94 inches from the ground. The nest, which contained four eggs, was between a brick wall and a wire netting that was covered with a dense growth of roses. When examined on June 6, the eggs were gone and the nest was disturbed. The birds nested again in 1942, and on June 24 four small young were in the yard being fed by their parents. In the fall, when the leaves were gone from the roses, two nests were found. The second nest behind the wire was almost directly above the nest of June 3 and eleven inches higher. The young seen on June 24 probably came from this nest.

The above account differs from several statements of Margaret Morse Nice (Wilson Bull., 43: 92-94, June, 1931). Her findings in that paper, based on the study of sixty-four nests, were that a second nest was never placed closer than thirty-two feet from the first and that no nest ranged more than thirty inches from the ground.