

of the tops of the salt marsh or the surface of the Cut, only to climb aloft once more and repeat the performance. In its swoops to regain the straw, the martin went through practically every aerial maneuver known to 'stunt' pilots! It performed nose dives, falling leaves (waving downward in pendulum-like drops from side to side) and at one time did something which was difficult to credit even while watching it. At the top of an upward climb it slanted its body sharply and went into what airmen know as a stall. For a second it hung motionless, then glided *backward, tail first* for an appreciable distance! As if this were not quite enough, it also accomplished a feat which the writer has never seen any other bird perform except the Wood Ibis (*Mycteria americana*). It turned over easily and completely and sailed along in inverted flight for several yards! As on the two occasions when the Ibis has been seen to do this, there was no movement of the wings whatever. They were held rigidly outstretched, and the bird soared, or glided, upside down. This was done four times in the twelve or fifteen minutes we watched (there were three observers).

The termination of this thrilling performance transpired when the martin finally missed the straw which fell into the water, whereupon the bird flew off in a southerly direction toward James Island. Though I have known the martin intimately for a lifetime, two phases of its behavior came to light in that brief period for the first time in my experience. It indulges in a spirit of play and it is capable of inverted, soaring flight.—ALEXANDER SPRUNT, JR., *The Crescent, Charleston, South Carolina*.

**A bird's remarkable concentration of attention.**—At seven o'clock in the morning of November 14, 1941, when it was barely clear daylight, three automobiles, approximately fifty yards apart, were traveling at a speed of thirty-five miles per hour in the same direction along a concrete highway in Johnson County, Kansas. The writer was driving the rear car. Suddenly a Downy Woodpecker (*Dryobates pubescens*) was observed to fly across the road well in front of the first car. After alighting momentarily in a tree beside the road, the bird suddenly flew almost directly toward the first oncoming car, alighted beside the highway, not more than four feet from its edge, and began vigorously to peck at something on the ground. While both the first and the second cars passed within a few feet, the bird remained seemingly entirely unconscious of disturbing influences. This seemed quite unusual because the middle car was old and very noisy. Even when the writer slowed down in passing, for better observation and for careful identification, the bird seemed to be utterly oblivious. Unconcernedly he continued at his early breakfast on the ground until the last car was some distance down the road, when he flew leisurely toward the trees.

Later check with the collection in the Dyche Museum at the State University confirmed the identification. It has been regretted that we did not ascertain the nature of the food.—B. ASHTON KEITH, *Institute of Sciences, Kansas City, Kansas*.

**A Robin anting.**—For the past months I have read in the literature of ornithology numerous articles on the 'anting' of birds. The description of this peculiar phenomenon did not impress me, for I was inclined to regard the observations as fantastic. Then the articles in 'The Auk' for January, 1943, by H. R. Ivor, Horace Groskin, Charles K. Nichols, and Josselyn Van Tyne aroused my interest in the subject and I determined to witness a bird in the act.

The National Zoological Park has many birds in captivity. I collected many forms of ants that are common in Washington, D. C., and put the insects in the birds' cages. But nothing happened; the birds ignored the ants. While making

my rounds of duty one Sunday afternoon in the park, I observed a Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) preening itself much more vigorously than is the custom of this species. It then fell over on its side, got up, and preened again. I noticed that, before preening the wing feathers, it picked a small ant from the ground. So fascinated was the bird in the act that park visitors walked within three feet of it while it continued its anting. The ants were *Lasius claviger*.—MALCOLM DAVIS, *National Zoological Park, Washington, D. C.*

**Red-eyed Towhee anting.**—My paper on "Anting by Birds" (Auk, 55: 98–105, 1938), like various other summaries, was followed by a surprising number of new articles and observations. As noted in that paper, the writer up to that time had not personally seen a bird anting. However, he has recently had that good fortune. The species concerned was the Red-eyed Towhee for which Van Tyne (Auk, 60: 61, 1943) reports that he had found no earlier record. At McLean, Virginia, while I was sitting on a porch during the evening (August 4, 1943), my attention was drawn to a bird under a bush. As I was engaged in conversation, it took some time for the impression of what I was seeing to crystallize. Then, with a burst of surprise and pleasure, the realization came that at last, after fifty years of bird observation, I was actually seeing anting. The bird, a male, kept very busy, picking objects from the ground and making passes with the beak both over and under the wings. The latter were held raised and arched and the feathers in general were fluffed so that the Towhee presented a peculiar, disjointed, and un-birdlike appearance. The performance lasted several minutes. Upon examination of the spot, ants were found running in all directions. They were *Lasius niger* var. *americanus*.—W. L. McATEE, *Wildlife Service, Chicago, Illinois.*

**Unusual incubation of the Red-eyed Vireo.**—On June 9, 1943, a typical nest of the Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*) was found six feet from the ground at the end of a branch of a white oak tree in Falls Church, Fairfax County, Virginia. Inasmuch as no unusual circumstances were suspected, daily observations of the nest were not made at first, but from the record quoted below it will be seen that the behavior of the parent vireo varied markedly from normal in that *incubation was begun upon the laying of the first egg*, not upon completion of the clutch. All observations were made by the author at 8 p. m. on the dates shown, except the last two which were reported by an interested neighbor in the author's absence.

June 9	Nest discovered completed, empty
June 10	First egg presumably laid
June 11	Two eggs present; adult on nest
June 12	Third egg presumably laid
June 13	Three eggs; adult apparently incubating
June 23	Two eggs; newly hatched young present
June 24	One egg; two young present
June 25	Three young present, each a different size
July 4	One young reported to have quit nest
July 5	Other two young reported to have quit nest

Assuming that the eggs were laid regularly on June 10, 11, and 12, the incubation period was thirteen days each, and the young remained in the nest eleven to twelve days.—ENSGN GEORGE A. PETRIDES, U.S.N.R., *U.S.N. Preflight School, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.*