Group No.	*No. in the Group*	*Time to fly 2400 ft.*	*Ground Speed*
1	—	25.2 secs.	64.8 M.P.H.
2	—	26.0	62.9
3	—	22.5	72.5
4	—	29.0	56.2
5	—	25.2	64.8
6	—	26.8	60.9
7	—	29.6	55.2
8	2	29.6	55.2
9	11	26.5	61.5
10	20	24.0	68.0
11	7	26.0	62.9
12	3	30.4	53.9
Average		26.7	61.5 M.P.H.
Average wind speed (a tail wind)			11.0 M.P.H.
Average air speed			50.5 M.P.H.

J. Murray Speirs, *92 McIntyre St. West, North Bay, Ontario.*

Prating for Passenger Pigeons.—Thoreau's journal records many observations on the Passenger Pigeon and the means used in Concord for catching it, and these observations, all of which are gathered in his 'Notes on New England Birds' (1910), later reissued as 'Thoreau's Bird-Lore,' include several references to the call-notes of the species, especially the *prate,* or *prating.* An imitation of this note was used for luring the birds to the net, and the journal entry for March 29, 1853, tells us that one Dugan had seen two pigeons that day and had 'prated' for them. As the dictionaries appear to have overlooked this use of the word 'prate' and as I do not find it in any of the ornithological literature I have at hand, it may be worth while to put on record what the late Fletcher Osgood, of Chelsea, Massachusetts, an expert in phonetics who was also something of an ornithologist, told me about it some twenty years ago. "Many and many a time," he wrote, "have I heard my father *prate* for pigeons. Father was born and brought up in Westford, Mass., [a town near Concord] and knew all about pigeon netting and shooting . . . Wild pigeon prating consisted of voice delivered through *tightly* approximated lips, with a buzz or vibration of those lips, in two somewhat prolonged, high-pitched monotones (a very brief interval of silence between the monotones, of course) followed by a somewhat more prolonged monotone on a decidedly higher pitch, this immediately followed by two scale-descending monotones, the descent approximately an octave or more, each descending monotone *briefly* uttered, no prolongation. No doubt this formula was individually varied; at times, I think, rising inflections, still high-pitched but of short range, were substituted for the first two monotones. The formula as given seems at least to be an approximation to orthodox usage in old Westford."

This 'prating,' whether called by that name or not, was probably much the same method of luring the pigeons as that used by Herman Behr ('Cassinia,' 1911, pp. 24–27, quoted by Bent in his 'Life Histories') and described by H. T. Blodgett (Mershon's 'Passenger Pigeon'). The art is doubtless as completely extinct now as the Passenger Pigeon itself.—Francis H. Allen, *West Roxbury, Massachusetts.*

An unusual feeding habit of the Black Vulture.—During the past winter, grazing conditions were unusually good in southwestern Louisiana and, as most of the

old stock had been sold from the cattle ranges of Avery Island and adjacent prairies, there were very few animals that died during the winter. Therefore, the food of the Black Vulture, *Coragyps atratus* (Meyer) was scarce.

I maintain, at Avery Island, two deer parks of about thirty acres each, and a thirty-five acre breeding ground for nutria (*Myocastor bonariensis*). I fed both the deer and nutria chopped sweet potatoes during the past winter. The feed was usually put into the feeding troughs in the early morning. The man in charge of the feeding reported that a number of Black Vultures came to each of the feeding places every morning and ate up quite a quantity of the chopped-up sweet potatoes. This feeding habit of the vultures was so unusual that it was difficult for me to believe, so I spent several mornings watching the troughs. I found that the vultures gathered at the feeding places before the food was put out and, as soon as it was spread in the troughs for both the nutria and the deer, the vultures would alight on the troughs and rapidly eat a large portion of it. I did not pay much attention to this depredation by the vultures until the man in charge of the feeding advised me that the vultures were coming in such numbers each morning that the deer and nutria were getting only a small portion of the food put out for them. I then had the feeding time changed from morning to after sundown, and this change in time, to a large extent, overcame the trouble. E. A. McILHENNY, *Avery Island, Louisiana.*

A change of breeding season by Australian gulls.—In the year 1922, the National Zoological Park added to its collection of birds several specimens of the Australian Silver Gull (*Larus novae-hollandiae*). These birds nested in November for two seasons, then adapted their breeding time to our spring and early summer. This northern-hemisphere nesting behavior of the birds continued regularly until this year, 1943. The descendants of the original stock have now reverted to the first nesting season in the park, which corresponds to the dates in their normal range in the southern hemisphere. During a snowstorm in December, the eggs in two nests hatched and it became necessary to remove the birds and hand-feed them in the heated bird house.

Just what caused these birds to change their breeding season again after a continuous period of about twenty-two years of spring reproduction to the original winter courtship and nest-building, is a question that I am unable to answer.—MALCOLM DAVIS, *National Zoological Park, Washington, D. C.*

Catesby's tropic-bird.—Of the tropic-birds included in the A. O. U. Check-List (1931), one, the Red-tailed (*Phaëthon rubricauda rothschildi*), is recorded as accidental near Guadalupe Island, Lower California. Two chiefly white-tailed species are recorded from Atlantic Coast waters, one the Red-billed (*Phaëthon aethereus*), as a breeder in the Lesser Antilles, casual in Jamaica and Bermuda, and accidental off Newfoundland, and the other, the Yellow-billed (*Phaëthon lepturus catesbyi*), as a breeder in Bermuda and West Indies and accidental in Florida, South Carolina, New York, and off Nova Scotia. There has been more or less confusion of the last two forms, for one reason because the color of the bill is not distinctive [Plath, Ibis, (10) 2: 554, 1914; Wetmore, Proc. N. Y. Acad. Sci., 9 (3): 278, 1927], although it has long been indicated as diagnostic in the vernacular names.

In this discussion the forms will be referred to in accordance with their most obvious visual characters, as the barred-backed (Red-billed) and white-backed (Yellow-billed) species. Linnaeus (Syst. Nat., ed. 10, 1: 134, 1758) applied the name *aethereus* to the former but his citations included apparently all of the tropic