

**The food of the Raven in Virginia.**—For some years a pair of ravens has nested near Lexington, Virginia, alternating between two high cliffs on the same mountain. This year, while there were still eggs in the 1944 nest, I gathered a handful of bone fragments from a small area immediately beneath each nesting site. Mr. A. L. Nelson of the Economic Investigations Laboratory of the Fish and Wildlife Service was kind enough to examine the material. In the debris collected at the 1942 nesting site he reports the following items: "10 flying squirrels; 1 Norway rat; 1 gray squirrel, adult; 1 squirrel, probably a young gray squirrel; 1 mourning dove; 1 unidentified bird, about the size of a jay; 1 colubrine snake; 1 *Polygyra* snail; short-horned grasshoppers." In the 1943 material he found the following: "6 flying squirrels; 1 grouse; 1 unidentified bird, about the size of a jay; 1 snail, probably *Polygyra*." Since broken snail shells occur everywhere on the mountain sides I am inclined to think that the *Polygyra* fragments should be disregarded. The rest of the material seems likely to have come from food brought to the young ravens. It would be interesting to know how many of these animals were killed by the ravens and how many were found dead.—J. J. MURRAY, *Lexington, Virginia*.

**Middle 19th-Century introduction of British birds to Long Island, N. Y.**—Information on this somewhat obscure subject has been found in a book not likely to be listed in ornithological bibliographies. It is 'Green-Wood Cemetery: a History of the Institution from 1838 to 1864,' by Nehemiah Cleaveland, New York, 1866. The data are on pages 73 and 134.

Toward the end of 1852, the trustees of the cemetery purchased 168 British birds, through the agency of Mr. Thomas S. Woodcock, of Manchester, and freed them in Green-Wood. There were 48 skylarks, 24 wood larks, 48 goldfinches, 24 robins, 12 thrushes, and 12 blackbirds. The birds were purchased at an average price of eight-pence, and the entire importation cost slightly over \$100.00.

According to the author, the experiment was a failure because the freed birds all disappeared. It is worthy of note, however, that skylarks maintained for many years a representation on farmlands in the outskirts of Brooklyn, and that European goldfinches still persist in the more distant vicinity of Seaford and Massapequa.—R. C. MURPHY, *American Museum of Natural History, New York*.

**Cotton Mather's manuscript references to the Passenger Pigeon.**—In the October issue of the *Auk* (61: 587-592, 1944) presumably all that Cotton Mather published concerning the Passenger Pigeon was reprinted and discussed. Nothing was said of the additional information contained in three of his letters, sent to Dr. John Woodward for presentation to the Royal Society. They are among those admirably studied by Professor George L. Kittredge (Cotton Mather's Scientific Communications to the Royal Society. *Proc. Amer. Antiq. Soc.*, N. S. 26: 18-57, 1916). Complete copies of the second of these letters, written probably in June, 1714, and the third, dated July 4, 1716, have since been made readily available by Dr. Arlie W. Schorger (Unpublished manuscripts by Cotton Mather on the Passenger Pigeon. *Auk*, 55: 471-477, 1938). Between the two (in 1715) "in lieu of his usual series of letters," Mather sent to England the manuscript of "The Christian Philosopher," printed in 1720, but postdated 1721 (Kittredge). That book includes everything of importance in regard to pigeons that is contained in the two letters except—as rightly stressed by Dr. Schorger—the source of his information. It was from the Indians that Captain Billings learned that what the pigeons disgorged for their young was "nothing they had eaten, but something that came naturally into their crops, as milk." In fact, all the best that Mather published about pigeons was transcribed

from a letter given him by his friend, Captain Billings, which he is careful to quote and acknowledge in the second of the letters (Schorger, p. 474).

The first of Mather's letters to contain a record of the pigeons remains unpublished. The original, addressed to Dr. Woodward, Nov. 19, 1712, is in the Letter-Book of the Royal Society; but the Massachusetts Historical Society has a complete copy—the "Gay MS., fols. 39-47." It was used by Professor Kittredge, but apparently was overlooked by Dr. Schorger, so that, to complete the publication in the Auk of all that Mather wrote about the Passenger Pigeon, the following excerpt from the first letter is needed. After some comments on our Humming-Birds, weighing "but eight or Ten grains," and still referring to them, the letter continues:—

"They are never seen in the Winter, but are some of the *Season-birds*, whereof I now propose to invite you unto an entertainment. And so are o<sup>r</sup> wild Pigeons whereof Thousands of Millions visit us at their appointed *Season*. The flights have been so great, that for four, or five miles together, they have meerly darkened the Horizon. They have been Commonly sold in y<sup>e</sup> markt-place, ready pluck'd, & drawn, for two-pence or three-pence a dozen; enough to make a meal for half a dozen temperate people. We take y<sup>m</sup> either w<sup>th</sup> *Gun* or with *Nett*, it is hardly credible, how many at a time. Their Numbers are of late years much diminished; especially on this occasion. When y<sup>e</sup> time of their Departure has been at hand, about *Michaelmas*, they have in horrible storms miss'd their way; & thousands of Millions have perished in the sea, where o<sup>r</sup> Ships have afterward sailed thro' them lying on y<sup>e</sup> Surface of y<sup>e</sup> Water, for some Leagues together. 'Tis odd, that tho' we have such Vast Numbers of them, yett in *Virginia*, a Colony a Little to the Southward of us, I am told they are somewhat of a Rarity; which will a little fortify a Conjecture about the *Season-birds*, which I am now going to tender you."

The long letter then speculates on possible "*Christalline*, or *Semi-pellucid Bodies*, between the *Earth* and the *Moon*," to which migratory birds may resort; or else, as stated in the second letter, the pigeons "must have a Retreat in South-west parts of *America*, whereof we are not yett advised." The Royal Society was doubtless "entertained." Dr. Woodward asked for, and received, more information about the pigeons since, as Professor Kittredge observes, "no historical student would think of denying that Cotton Mather was one of the best informed Americans of his time in scientific matters."—FREDERIC T. LEWIS, *Harvard Medical School, Boston*.

**Ornithological corrections.**—The series of corrections in the July, 1944, Auk by Mr. W. L. McAtee sets a fine precedent, but it hardly seems necessary to wait scores of years. From time to time we all run across errors in our own published writings. I shall here correct those in my own which seem to change meanings. In only one of these papers did I see proof.

1934. Auk, 51: 304, line 18. The numeral 2 should be the letter *a*.

1935. Trans. 21st American Game Conf.: 34. The printer put in "casual" where I wrote "causal". There is a lot of difference between the two.

1939. Research Studies State Col. Wash., 7: 163-198. Page 170, number 15a should be *tree swallow*; page 172, number 4d should be *black-throated blue warbler*. In a revision of a rough draft some years earlier, a comparison between the Green-winged and Blue-winged Teals was dropped. In some way, the scientific name of the former became attached to the latter. Obviously it should be *Querquedula discors* on page 174.

1942. Passenger Pigeon, 4: 78-79. I do not know how the American Oyster-catcher got into Table 3. It is not in my data.—LEONARD WING, *State College of Washington, Pullman, Washington*.