

head and back of the neck. On December 31, the bird was viewed at close range by participants in the Christmas bird count of the Audubon Society of the District of Columbia, led by Dr. John W. Aldrich. The consensus of opinion of the many observers was that the bird was an immature Snow Goose. However, on January 31, 1945, Dr. Paul Bartsch, of the National Museum, found the skeleton of the bird, which apparently had died of starvation and had then been devoured by crows or some other scavenger. The wing feathers were still on the skeleton and when the wings were compared with specimens in the National Museum they were found to be typical of the Blue Goose. After careful study of photographs taken of the bird in life, by R. T. Peterson and Dr. John W. Aldrich, it was noted that the bird was similar to the Blue Goose on the wings and like the Snow Goose on the under parts and neck. It is now concluded that it was a hybrid between these two species.—DAN EMERY, 4600 49th Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

Apparent death of a Blue Jay from Toxoplasmosis.—On May 2, 1944, Dr. R. B. Dienst of Augusta brought to the writer a male Florida Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata cristata*) which dropped dead from a tree at his home during the course of the doctor's breakfast. As the bird was fresh and in fair plumage it was skinned and the skin preserved. The carcass was then examined to determine the probable cause of death.

The bird was emaciated and generally in poor condition. Numerous oval, cream-colored lesions, which contrasted sharply with the purplish normal tissue, were scattered throughout the skeletal muscles though more numerous in the breast. A cube of pectoral muscle containing lesions was preserved for sectioning and staining. The internal organs were free from parasites and showed no gross lesions. A smear of heart's blood stained with Wright's stain was negative for parasites. No smears were made of the liver, spleen or lungs.

The section of pectoral muscle shows numerous grayish-yellow foci of necrosis, the largest of which was 2-3 mm. in diameter. The necrosis is coagulative in type and involves the muscle cells primarily. Around the margins of these lesions there is a dense leukocytic infiltrate composed of macrophages, eosinophilic polymorphonuclear leukocytes, lymphocytes and round cells resembling plasma cells. Inwardly, many of the macrophages contain ingested parasites, often in large numbers, which are identified as *Toxoplasma*. Multinucleated giant cells are present but are not actively parasitic. Some of the parasites are extracellular, apparently due to rupture of the containing phagocyte. Rarely an organism is observed within a capillary. The centers of the largest lesions are completely necrotic and all tissues are disintegrating.

Throughout the muscle there are microscopic foci of leukocytic infiltration, usually perivascular in position. Organisms are not found in these areas.

According to Herman [Bird-Banding, 15 (3): 89-112, 1944], infections with *Toxoplasma* have been reported in 14 species of North American birds, including a questionable infection in the Blue Jay. Also, according to the same author, the pathogenicity of *Toxoplasma* for birds is not known. In the writer's opinion, the *Toxoplasma* infection undoubtedly caused the death of the bird discussed above.—J. FRED DENTON, University of Georgia School of Medicine, Augusta, Georgia.

White Pelican in New York State.—On April 21, 1945, a White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) was seen by Mr. Sidney Wilkin of Rochester, New York, on a marsh at Shore Acres, Monroe County, New York. The marsh is about 20 acres in extent, drains into Lake Ontario, and is north of the village of Hilton. The following

day the bird was found dead by Mr. Wilkin at the edge of the marsh. It had been shot and left by someone unknown. The bird was turned over to New York Conservation Department officers and has now been placed in the New York State Museum collection. The bird was a female in excellent breeding-plumage condition and contained eggs. It weighed $11\frac{3}{4}$ pounds, had a wing-spread of 97 inches, and a length of 54 inches. It was examined in the flesh by both authors of this note.—GORDON M. MEADE, M.D., *Strong Memorial Hospital, Rochester, New York*, AND CLAYTON B. SEAGEARS, *Supt. of Conservation Education, Albany, New York*.

The sleeping habit of the Willow Ptarmigan.—A frequent statement regarding the Willow Ptarmigan (*Lagopus lagopus*) is that in winter when it goes to roost it drops from flight into the snow, completely burying itself and leaving no tracks that might lead predators to it. E. W. Nelson made this observation years ago in Alaska, and it is given also by Sandys and Van Dyke in their book, 'Upland Game Birds.' Bent (U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull., 162: 194, 1932) in writing on Allen's Ptarmigan of Newfoundland, quotes J. R. Whitaker as stating that they roost in a shallow scratching in the snow and are frequently buried by drifts and imprisoned to their death. On Southampton Island, Sutton records the Willow Ptarmigan as roosting and feeding in the same area without attempt at concealment. One night seven slept for the night in seven consecutive footprints of his track across the snow.

The observation of Sutton that these birds are not always so cautious as Nelson and others state is corroborated in recent correspondence with Mr. H. W. Betts of Dawson, Yukon Territory. This formerly prominent place is now somewhat of a 'ghost' town, where, to quote from Mr. Betts' communication of February 14, 1945, "the townsite presents many vacant lots which are, almost without exception, overgrown with willows of various heights. Among these willows there is a small covey of five Willow Ptarmigan that I have had under observation on six different occasions. They are delightfully tame and I have approached within about fourteen feet without disturbing them. Sometimes they feed six or eight feet above the snow in the willows, but as you know, their perching is somewhat precarious owing to their wonderfully padded feet, *a la* Arctic Hare. Mostly, however, they browse on the short willows, and when they come to a single, upright shoot, with buds out of reach, they stretch head and neck and jump. I located them last night well towards evening and watched in the hope of prying upon them when they retired for the night, something that I had hitherto been unable to accomplish. Luckily, I was just in time to watch this. They started numerous false beds, scratching them three or four inches down in the snow, which was about fifteen inches deep, and then abandoning them. One that I watched particularly made two false starts and, then, leaving the second hole, tunnelled under the snow for about eighteen inches, and finally made a long, deep hole which had a roof over it, and there stayed the night. This I verified this morning, the temperature being 42° below zero (Fahr.) at 9:00 a. m. The excavating was very rapid, and they make the snow fly behind them in a veritable little cascade. This morning I only succeeded in locating four definite roosts, but am satisfied the fifth was quite near. Tracks were everywhere, and in every instance the birds had deliberately walked to the sleeping place, not one flying into the snow."

In a later communication in response to my inquiry, Mr. Betts writes that the snow at the time was loose and powdery, and that it usually remains in this condition through the winter, due to dry atmosphere and steady cold. On one occasion, like Sutton, he found where two out of five Willow Ptarmigan had slept for the night in two of his footprints left in the soft snow.—ALEXANDER WETMORE, *Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.*