

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.*