

During an outbreak of botulism in July of 1939, many sick ducks were picked up along the lake shore and in the refuge marshes. Among the birds picked up for treatment of botulism at the refuge duck hospital were two Black Ducks (*Anas rubripes* Brewster). The opportunity to examine the specimens in detail left no doubt as to their identity. On September 12 of that year, another Black Duck was brought into the refuge hospital for treatment. The first two Black Ducks recovered and were released; the third duck died.

Black Ducks have been observed quite frequently on the Des Lacs National Wildlife Refuge, Burke and Ward Counties, North Dakota, which is located about 250 miles airline east of the Bowdoin Refuge. Most of the Des Lacs records are of individual birds; however, as many as 19 were seen on June 22, 1939. As yet there has been no evidence of Black Ducks nesting on Des Lacs or the Bowdoin Refuge. The Des Lacs observations indicate that the Black Ducks occur there primarily as irregular fall migrants.—R. E. GRIFFITH, *Division of Wildlife Refuges, Department of the Interior, Chicago 54, Illinois.*

The Northern Lappet-faced Vulture in Palestine—A new record for Asia.—I have deposited in the aviaries of the Zoological Society of London at Regents Park a living specimen of the Northern Lappet-faced or Sociable Vulture (*Torgos tracheliotus nubicus* (synonym, *Otogyps auricularis*)) which has not previously been recorded in Asia to our knowledge. Dr. Vevers, the superintendent, informs me that in the Society's vertebrate list the distribution is given as Egypt to Kordofan, Abyssinia and Somaliland, in Africa. It was caught in February, 1946, in a jackal-trap at Kurnub, between Beersheba and Ein Husb in S. W. Palestine desert country. When first taken to my friend Dr. W. K. Bigger's garden in Jerusalem we thought it was a young Black Vulture (*Aegyptus monachus*), a very similar bird which breeds in the area (cf. Hardy, *Handlist of the Birds of Palestine, Cairo, 1946*). I removed it to my office in Allenby Barracks in Jerusalem and kept it for a fortnight in a very large room where P. A. D. Hollom and other ornithologists of the Jerusalem Naturalists' Club saw it. Dr. H. Mendelssohn first suggested the bird was *Torgos*, and comparison with immature Black Vultures in his aviaries at the Biological Institute in Tel Aviv showed it to be a lighter bird, and when later I had it crated and flown to the London Zoo where more reference literature was available, its identity was confirmed.

The following is a summary of descriptions I made for the Bulletin of the Jerusalem Naturalists' Club: wing, 790/830 mm.; tarsus, 130/150; bill from cere, 72. General plumage brown; head and neck nearly naked with bluish-gray to dull reddish-violet skin; bill blackish-horn with a dark ridge on the culmen; cere slaty gray; iris dark brown; nostrils oval, perpendicular; only a little down on head and neck; long black bristle hairs on chin and eyelid; soft brown feathers on throat; feathers of under parts a thick white down; on sides of neck soft gray feathers; on lower neck a frill of lanceolate brown feathers with paler margins, which extended down the center of the breast. Legs and feet blue-gray; claws black. The large, cinereous-brown feathers of its back and shoulders were prominently outlined. A very short, pale brown ruff of feathers was raised forwards or erected on the nape of the neck. Primaries and rectrices were a darker brown. Under the wing and on the flanks it showed much white in flight.

A mounted specimen at present possessed by Machial Bahow, of the Arab National Bus Co., and in his house at Upper Baq'a, Jerusalem, was shot by Dr. G. Ridenko (a 'hunter' of Jaffa) near Neby Musa monastery in the desert near the N. W. shore of the Dead Sea. I have discussed this specimen with both these men, and with my

friend Dr. W. Moses of the Palestine Ornithologists' Union whose taxidermist mounted it, and it was shot early in the war. However, it appears that in the winter of 1934-1935 an Arab hunter shot what was seen to be probably this species in the same area, but would not surrender the specimen. In 1945, Dr. Mendelssohn told me, he found a nest in the Dead Sea area in January, with a bird sitting.

It is most likely that *Torgos* has inhabited the Dead Sea/Arabah depression as a rare resident for some considerable time, but has been confused with the somewhat similar but darker *Aegyptius monachus*, although we now know the whitish underwing and flanks as field characteristics. This determination of yet another tropical African species in the Syro-African/Rift Valley links up with several more tropical species, not only of birds, but of reptiles, insects, and plants established in the Jordan-Dead Sea rift. In an ecological study of the fauna and flora of this area, made in several expeditions of the Middle East Biological Scheme during the past two years, which I am publishing shortly in America in joint authorship with Claude T. Barnes, the American zoologist of Salt Lake City, who first suggested the idea, there is described the breeding of another apparently previously unrecorded African bird in the S. W. Dead Sea cliffs at Jebel Asdum—the Sooty Falcon (*Falco concolor*), with specimens from so far north as Bethlehem and Mt. Scopus/Jerusalem. When I first began field studies here for the Middle East Biological Scheme I suspected that the several African birds breeding in the Dead Sea depression—the Palestine Sunbird (*Cinnyris osea*, Bonaparte), the Small Fan-tailed Raven (*Corvus rhipidurus*, Hartert), etc.—had originated as an immigration into Asia from Africa via the Red Sea-Aqaba-Wadi Arabah-Dead Sea route into the subtropical Rift Valley, but subsequent studies in coöperation with Palestine botanists and zoologists at several 'pockets' or enclaves of typically tropical fauna and flora that occur in the area altered my theory to a view that they are survivals of a tropical fauna and flora formerly covering a larger area.—(Capt.) ERIC HARDY, 47 Woodsorrel Road, Liverpool 15, England.

Barn Owl breeding near Chicago, Illinois.—On several occasions in June and July, 1946, I (and others) watched Barn Owls (*Tyto alba pratincola*) and their young at their nest about thirty feet from the ground in the hollow top of a broken oak in the yard of the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harry J. Dunbaugh, Winnetka, Illinois. This is in a residential part of the village, a few hundred years from Lake Michigan. Ford, Sanborn, and Coursen, 'Birds of the Chicago Area,' 1934, report the Barn Owl as "A rare resident. There are three published breeding records." Since 1934 there has been one additional record, made in 1936 and published by E. K. Hammond (Auk, 60: 599, 1943).—WALTER T. FISHER, Chicago, Illinois.

Barn Swallow nesting in Florida.—A nest containing two eggs and two newly hatched young of the Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica* subsp.) was found on June 23, 1946, about twelve miles southwest of Pensacola, Florida, at a point almost on the Gulf beach. On June 30, the two eggs were found to have hatched and the four young swallows were being fed regularly by both parents. As far as can be determined, this is the only nesting of this species ever recorded from Florida.

The nest was plastered against the side of a roof beam of a tiny, reinforced concrete building in the Army reservation on the west side of the entrance of Pensacola Bay. It was about nine feet above the floor, and its upper edge was only two inches below the ceiling. An open doorway allowed easy access to the parent birds. The nest had evidently been built in two distinct stages, for the lower half was of black mud and the upper half of red clay from a near-by road. Since it is a well-known habit of this species to add to an old nest in successive seasons, the first stage of the present nest may well have dated from the 1945 nesting season.