

inspection of the 20 similar houses, when one of the young birds just banded flew out of the box on its maiden flight and headed directly out over the lake. I watched it travel approximately 75 yards and then drop to the water exhausted. Hastily peeling off my clothes, I swam after it. I found the bird apparently quite unperturbed and making rather rapid headway *in the direction of the nearest shore* with flipper-like movements of its wings. It swam with its tail sticking straight up in the air, Ruddy Duck fashion, and made rather concerted struggles to prevent me from capturing it. I carried it back and returned it to the nest where it stayed. The other four young birds were still there.

Two days later, a similar exhibition took place at another nest. This time the bird, in flight and out of the nesting box for the first time, crash-landed about 30 yards from shore. I watched it swim all the way in this time—again by the most direct route. Though somewhat bedraggled, it was quite able, on reaching shore, to stand on its feet and make headway up the beach away from me. This bird also was returned to the nest and remained there until the following morning.—ROBERT O. BEATRY *Izaak Walton League of America, Inc., Chicago, Illinois.*

Nest-building by the Virginia Rail.—Although there is excellent printed material on the nesting of the Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*), eye-witness accounts of the actual nest-building appear to be few. The following notes, made from observations in a small cattail marsh not more than two miles southeast of the business district of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, may therefore be of interest.

Here Pied-billed Grebes, Florida Gallinules, Soras and Virginia Rails had been seen and heard frequently during the spring and summer of 1946. On July 8 I had been hearing both species of rails give the usual calls, with the addition of some loud *pip-pips* uttered by a Virginia Rail as it fed near by. At 7:30 P. M., while I was sitting at the edge of the marsh where a four-foot bank gave excellent view over the lower land, a Virginia Rail came close by with a piece of cattail (*Typhus latifolia*) in its blood-red bill. It went at once to a small 'island' in the shallow water, a spot not more than six by twelve inches in extent which was covered with grass, a species of bedstraw (*Galium* sp. ?) and a clump of Marsh Fern (*Thelypteris Thelypteris*). The rail dropped the material, worked it in with her bill—I am assuming the bird to have been a female—and then sat down, turning around and molding the nest site.

As I sat a fascinated spectator about twelve feet away, and only partly concealed by bushes, the bird worked busily for an hour. Hurrying away from the nesting site, she tugged vainly at a piece of dead cattail, not seeming able to cut it off with her bill. She tried two others before succeeding in getting a 'mouthful' which was again worked into the nest without loss of time. After a number of such trips, gathering bits of cattail from three to fifteen inches in length, about half of which were dry and the others wet and mucky, the bird spent ten minutes at the nest. She scratched around the bottom with bill and feet, next turned completely around several times, and finally, still sitting, reached up with that useful, long bill and cut off pieces of grass and bedstraw. She dropped these into the nest, and then adjusted the scanty foliage, picking here and there to make it conceal her to better advantage.

The bird worked steadily, moving to and from the nest rapidly, without a pause in her nest-building labors. If my eye momentarily wandered, suddenly the bird was not there, and it took careful watching to detect her approach to the nest. Once her mate (I supposed) called *wak-wak-wak* close by, whereupon I saw and heard her give a peculiar high *wa-a-ak* four times, much higher and more squeaky than the usual calls. As darkness fell, I left, sorry that further observation and photography were impossible, since this was my last day in Berkshire County for some months.—DOROTHY E. SNYDER, *The Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Massachusetts.*