as if they had been used in the spring of 1948. All the nests, or parts of nests, were at the ends of downward-hanging branches directly over water. Dr. W. Frank Blair, of the University of Texas, and two of his students, Wilmot A. Thornton and William L. Gustafson, found some of these nests or nest-remains independently of Hurd and me. Thornton, on examining the females which I had collected, assured me that he had seen just such a bird a day or so previously.

Dr. Blair tells me that "the entire area in which we camped . . . has been cleared, and they are clearing 200 acres to the south of the road . . ." (personal letter, April 22, 1949), so I suppose the becard habitat near McAllen is doomed. According to my experience, *Platypsaris aglaiae* prefers to place its nest over water, or very nearly over water, and in a large tree. If a strip of woods along the lake-shore could be preserved, these beautiful birds might continue to breed there.—GEORGE MIKSCH SUTTON, *Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.*

A white catbird nesting in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts.—During the first week in June, 1947, I received a report from my daughter, Mrs. Phyllis Lumb, 86 Grafton Street, Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, that a white catbird, *Dumetella carolinensis*, had been seen several times in her back yard and that it seemed to be building a nest in a shrub.

On June 10, I found the white bird, which was evidently a female constantly followed by its normally colored mate, collecting twigs from a small grove of low-growing locust and carrying them in the opposite direction from the first nesting site. The following week I found the white bird on her nest which was in a small lilac bush at the edge of the mass of low-growing locusts at a height of about five feet and within six feet of a sun porch. She was nearly white but had a small dot of black on top of her head and several very small dark spots on her breast. Some of the inner tail feathers were dark. The bird presented a startling and unique appearance. My daughter says the pair raised a normally-colored brood of young.—OLIVE P. WETHERBEE, *11 Dallas Street, Worcester, Massachusetts.*

Some central New York records of the black-backed robin.—Three specimens in the Louis Agassiz Fuertes Memorial Collection of Birds at Cornell University serve to add somewhat to our knowledge of the migration of the black-backed robin, *Turdus m. nigrideus* Aldrich and Nutt.

Evidence that this subspecies winters, at least in small numbers, in central New York is afforded by a male taken January 20, 1933, at Trumbull's Corners, about 17 miles southwest of Ithaca, Tompkins County. This specimen (C. U. no. 8883) weighed 100 grams and had a wing length of 134 millimeters.

It might be assumed that robins which are on their way to Newfoundland or the adjacent mainland to breed would be among the earlier migrants through central New York. However, the migration of this subspecies through this area may be quite protracted. Our two specimens, males from Ithaca, were taken on March 31, 1931, and May 13, 1941. The former specimen (C. U. no. 8843) had a wing length of 132 millimeters. The latter specimen (C. U. no. 10876) was found dead near the Cornell campus. It weighed 78.2 grams, and its wing measured 133.5 millimeters. These specimens were identified by Dr. John W. Aldrich.

It might be added, parenthetically, that males of this subspecies, at least in spring, are quite readily identified in the field at the close range robins often permit. I have seen two this spring; one in Central Park, New York City, on March 31, 1948, and one in Ithaca, New York, on April 16. In both cases, large numbers of male *T.*

m. migratorius in the vicinity afforded a ready basis for comparison.—KENNETH C. PARKES, *Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.*

Effect of snow cover on feeding habits of starling in central New York.—The winter roosts of starlings, *Sturnus vulgaris*, provide a source of profitable study for the biologist. Beneath these roosts droppings accumulate rapidly, furnishing abundant material for food habits research. The food of the starling has been studied in some detail by Kalmbach and Gabrielson (U. S. Dept. Agri. Bull. 868, 1921) and Lindsey (Wilson Bull., 51 (3): 176–182, 1939) with details on the seasonal nature of the dietary. The winter feeding behavior of this species has not been recorded and contrasted during periods of bare and snow-covered ground. Those who are familiar with the starling recall that it spends a good deal of time searching for food on the ground in the winter months. With a substantial blanket of snow, such a source is not available and the birds must presumably select other food items.

Starlings have occupied a cupola of one of the Veterinary College buildings on the Cornell University Campus for many winters. The accumulated droppings are several inches thick in places. In order to establish the time of deposition, large pieces of wrapping paper were spread below the roosts before the birds arrived in the evening and were removed with the accumulated droppings the following morning, after the majority of the roosting birds had departed. The few birds that have been taken in the early morning from this roost have invariably had empty intestinal tracts.

On February 20, 1947, the ground in the region of Ithaca, New York, was free of snow, the temperature ranging from 1° to 26° F. The following morning, 200 fresh droppings, deposited during the night, were removed from the papers below the roost. On February 22 and 23, 1947, the weather was stormy, with temperatures ranging from 1° to 16° F. Three to five inches of snow covered the ground, leaving no bare patches within the feeding range of the birds. Two hundred fresh droppings were collected from papers below the roost early in the morning of February 24, 1947. One hundred droppings from each lot were selected at random and examined under a binocular microscope. It was necessary to soak the individual droppings in water a few moments before making the examination. Identification of most food items is not difficult at this season, the choice of food being relatively limited.

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF FOOD HABITS OF STARLINGS AT ITHACA, NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 20–23, 1947. FIGURES INDICATE PERCENT FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE BASED ON 100 DROPPINGS FOR EACH COLUMN.

Food	*Bare ground*	*Snow-covered ground*
Fruits and berries	45	49
Sumach	42	27
Garbage	7	19
Grains	19	4
Green vegetation	20	6
Insects	18	1
Millipedes	4	—
Snails	3	—

Relatively exposed fruits and berries, such as those of sumach, viburnums, grapes, Virginia creeper, poison ivy, *Crataegus*, and frozen apples, are available, irrespective of snow depth. Garbage is likewise available during periods of deep snow, for in