

cover, the cattle invariably noticed me first, sometimes bolting and putting the egrets to flight, whereas I could approach unseen very close to the egrets when the cattle did not alarm them. Thus it seems that under some circumstances it may be the egrets which benefit from the reaction of the cattle.

Speculating on the origin of this symbiotic association, it is interesting to note that the ranges of Snowy Egrets and the larger indigenous grazing animals were mostly mutually exclusive. (The egrets do not associate with smaller ungulates. I never saw them with a herd of goats kept in a pasture adjacent to one where I made many of these observations, nor with sheep on Payne's Prairie.) Snowy Egrets have obviously acquired this habit since the introduction of domestic cattle into Florida. Why Snowy Egrets developed this habit, while none of our other herons did, is an unanswered question. Although seven other species of herons are abundant in this region, and some, especially Greater Egrets (*Casmerodius albus*), regularly feed in pastures, I have never, with one exception, seen any of them associating with cattle. The one exception was an immature Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*) which was with a small group of Snowy Egrets.

Here Snowy Egrets fill an ecological niche which is occupied in the Old World by Cattle Egrets. Since the colonization of Florida by the latter species in 1948, the interactions between the two should be well worth investigating.—DALE W. RICE, *Department of Biology, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.*

Habitat of the Screaming Seedeater (*Sporophila caerulescens*) in Brazil.—In 'The Auk' for October 1952 (69: 433) Dr. A. O. Gross writes of the establishment of Hick's Seedeater, or the Variable Seedeater, (*Sporophila aurita aurita*) as a breeding bird on Barro Colorado Island, Panama Canal Zone. He expresses some surprise that the species, a typical bird of open grassy country, should have found and settled in such a relatively small grassy area as exists on the island.

In Brazil, in the region of Rio de Janeiro, and elsewhere, a related form, *Sporophila caerulescens*, occurs very commonly. It too is essentially a bird of open country, being particularly abundant along grassy roadsides. But I also find it in relatively small and isolated areas. One such area occurs on the summit of a low hill in the Parque da Cidade, Rio de Janeiro, where there is a cleared grassy space of perhaps two acres, completely surrounded by heavily wooded hillside. Here I nearly always find the Screaming Seedeater singly or in small flocks of mixed adults and juveniles; and it may very well breed there, though to date I have found no nest.

I also found a seemingly resident male in the almost grassless garden of a house completely surrounded by "mata" near the top of Corcovado Mountain in the city of Rio de Janeiro, at an elevation of about 600 metres. This bird was heard singing all day during my week-end visit to the house and seemed to have his singing-tree established. No female was seen. This was January 24 to 26, 1953.

So it would appear that at least this species of Seedeater and *Sporophila aurita* travel far and over inhospitable country to find and establish their "niches."

This fact is particularly puzzling here in view of the great stretches of deforested and now grassy country which occur in the two states with which I am familiar, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, and which would seem to preclude the necessity of the species seeking small isolated areas for breeding.

Incidentally, *Sporophila caerulescens* has a pleasing song which is also reminiscent to me of that of the Indigo Bunting, as was that of the Variable Seedeater to Dr. Gross. And I have never heard it "scream," and trust that some recent publication has given it a more appropriate common name. MARGARET H. MITCHELL, COBAST, *Caixa Postal 4965, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.*