

**Breeding of the American Merganser in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.**—Recent summer observations of the American Merganser (*Mergus merganser*) in the vicinity of Bridgewater, Rockingham County, Virginia, have been noted with sufficient frequency to warrant comment.

On May 30, 1953, I saw a female American Merganser with a brood of six half-grown young on Dry River, a rocky, moderately swift stream with occasional deep pools. The location was about a mile and three-quarters above the town of Bridgewater, near the village of Montezuma. The female and the entire brood swam rapidly down stream at my approach. Later on the same day a female, probably the same one, and an adult male were seen in flight over the river, one of the birds giving the rough, croaking quack typical of the species. The next day, May 31, adults and young were also observed in the same place by Mr. Max M. Carpenter.

I saw mergansers twice more in the summer of 1953. An adult female or young bird, was noted on Dry River about a half-mile above the first location on June 20. On July 18, a similar individual was seen on North River, half a mile above Bridgewater and about a mile and a half, air line, from the point of the first observation.

In conversation with Mr. A. S. Huffman of Bridgewater, a sportsman of long experience and with a good knowledge of waterfowl, I learned that in late June of 1947 he saw a female American Merganser with a brood of young on North River about two and one-half miles upstream from Bridgewater. I considered this to be a reliable record.

On July 6, 1954, I encountered a female American Merganser with a single downy duckling, certainly not over a few days out of the egg, on Dry River at Montezuma. The birds swam within fifteen feet of me.

Apparently there are no other published records of broods of the American Merganser in Virginia. Bent gives the nesting range of the species as "South formerly, and perhaps casually now, to the mountain regions of western Massachusetts, central Pennsylvania and in Ohio." (Bent, A. C., "Life Histories of North American Wild Fowl," Bull. U. S. N. M. No. 126: p. 12, 1923.) However, a nest and five young are reported from Chowan County, North Carolina. (Pearson, Brimley, and Brimley, "Birds of North Carolina," Raleigh, 1942, p. 84.)

The location at which the Virginia observations were made is in the center of the Shenandoah Valley. A bench mark of the U. S. Geodetic Survey, with an elevation given as 1220 feet above sea level, is located where Virginia Rt. 257 crosses Dry River at Montezuma.—HARRY G. M. JOPSON, *Department of Biology, Bridgewater College, Bridgewater, Virginia.*

**Red-headed Woodpeckers (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) Feeding on Carolina Locusts.**—During the last two weeks of August, 1954, I had an opportunity of observing the habits of Red-headed Woodpeckers in the vicinity of a beach on Lake Erie in the southwest corner of Dunn Township, Haldimand County, Ontario. A male bird was noticed first on a sunny afternoon. It was perched on a pole about twenty feet tall and would fly rapidly from this perch to snatch up insects passing over the beach and then swing back to its perch and devour its prey after snapping off the wings. The most conspicuous insects taken were adults of the Carolina locust (*Dissosteira carolina*). It was their habit on warm days to frequent the sandy beach and to make flights of a few yards from one spot to another in this area. The locusts would also hover in the air with rapidly beating wings or dance up and down in flight above a particular spot. This activity is considered to be involved in the courtship of the locusts (W. S. Blatchley, 1920, Orthoptera of north-eastern America. Nature Publ. Co., Indianapolis). During this hovering flight the locusts were easily snapped up by the foraging woodpecker.

On top of a bluff which formed one border of the beach there was a disused gravelly road. It was a favorite resting place for the locusts. At each side of the road was a row of telephone and hydroelectric poles, and on warm days two or three Red-headed Woodpeckers could be seen perched on the posts. They would swoop down to snatch up the flying locusts and then return to their former perches or continue across the road to a post on the other side. In some cases a bird would follow a locust down to the ground and then carry it to a pole before devouring it.

The Red-headed Woodpecker's habit of foraging for flying insects is referred to by A. C. Bent (1939, Life histories of North American woodpeckers. U. S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 174), who records that young grasshoppers are eaten and that the woodpeckers make flights from perches to capture insects.—W. W. JUDD, *Department of Zoology, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada.*

**Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) Feeding on Ocean Beach.**—A Robin, apparently an adult female, was observed feeding on the sand beach near the edge of the ocean near the Quogue Beach Club, Quogue, Long Island, New York, on July 26, 27, and 28, 1954. The bird was chiefly following the line of marine algae washed up on the sand by the waves, which contained an unusually large amount of such material on those days, and was evidently feeding on small organisms in the weeds. The Robin fed close to small flocks of Sanderling (*Crocelhia alba*) along the water's edge and came as near as three yards to the wash of the waves.

In some forty years of observing birds on the beaches of eastern Long Island, I had never before seen a Robin feeding on the beach in this way. This bird was seen to fly to a line of pines back of the dunes, near the lawn of a house. I suggest that the severe drought of that July dried up the Robin's usual sources of food and drove it to feed on the beach. Following a hard rain-storm on the night of July 28, the bird was no longer observed on the beach.

On July 20, 1955, a Robin was again observed feeding in the same manner at the Quogue Beach Club, and it is interesting to note that the weather had been very dry during the preceding few days.—WALDEN PELL, II, *St. Andrew's School, Middletown, Delaware.*

**A Cowbird Incident.**—On May 21, 1954, while setting out tomato plants in my garden, I noticed a male Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) on the ground at the edge of the garden plot. Soon he was joined by a female; and the two were joined by another female as they moved along toward the north. The three went into the long grass bordering the garden and seemed to be searching for something. As I knew of a Song Sparrow's nest, well concealed in the grass only a few yards farther north, I watched closely.

Suddenly one of the female Cowbirds made a run and a lunge for the hidden nest, seemed to strike its contents, and, as I started forward, flew off carrying a very young nestling in her bill. All three flew off together.

The three callow young Song Sparrows that remained (eyes not yet open) were packed together in a small pocket of the grass about eight inches from the empty nest. One of them was bloody about the head but apparently not disabled. I replaced them in their nest, and for a few days they were cared for by their parents; but on May 25 the nest was empty.

It would seem probable that the original brood of four tiny nestlings, perhaps tangled together in the small nest, had been displaced en masse by the Cowbird in the moment before one of them was securely grasped by her bill.—A. D. DU BOIS, *Christmas Lake Road, Excelsior, Minnesota.*