

Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*) have several times killed and eaten the brains and flesh of English Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) that came too near the grackles at the birdbaths and feeders in my backyard bird sanctuary on Long Island. Other observers have reported this same phenomenon (i.e. Poor, Proc. Linn. Soc. N. Y., 54-57: 54-55, 1946, and Mayfield, Wilson Bull., 66: 271, 1954).

R. M. Lockley in his book, "I Know an Island," p. 182, 1939, told an unusual food-habits story of a Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*), a European bird that resembles our North American Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*). A bird-bander trapped, "ringed," and then released the Water Rail in a garden aviary on Shetland Island, north of Scotland, in Great Britain. The Water Rail, which was thought to be wholly insectivorous, devoured a quail in the enclosure the first night, and on the next day ate a Snow Bunting and a Green Finch "picking out the meat and leaving the skins and bones clean."

The Water Rail and our Common Grackle are examples of insect-eating birds that may at times be predatory on other birds. The Chuck-will's-widow (*Caprimulgus carolinensis*) is another highly insectivorous species that food-habits research has shown to be a seasonal if not regular eater of small birds. However, the behavior of the Meadowlark, in eating the flesh of one of its own kind, was scavenger-feeding, not predatory.

These records suggest that birds which we little suspect of meat-eating tendencies may be easily induced to eat meat, if it is available to them. I have fed and cared for (both adult and young) swallows, nuthatches, robins, catbirds, bluebirds, warblers, and other ill or injured songbirds until they were able to shift for themselves. All of them ate raw ground hamburger and canned dogfood. Red meat is rich in protein, and, at least temporarily, is a strengthening and satisfying substitute for the natural foods of insectivorous species. Zoo keepers use ground meat, preferably raw beef, in the diets of practically all insectivorous birds. I see no reason why almost any wild songbird might not be inclined to eat meat if it had the opportunity. —JOHN K. TERRES, *National Audubon Society, 1130 Fifth Avenue, New York 28, New York.*

Mourning Dove and Dickcissel on the Atlantic Ocean.—I crossed the Atlantic Ocean on the "African Dawn," which sailed from New York for the Azores on November 1, 1954. Shortly after sailing, a low pressure area moved up the coast, reaching New York about November 3 and continuing on towards Nova Scotia. During the day and night of November 3, winds reached gale force. At 3:00 P.M. on November 4, a Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*) alighted on the ship. At that time, our position was 39° 45' N., 57° 47' W. During the remainder of the afternoon, it made short flights over the water but always returned, and stayed most of the time on deck. It spent the night on board and took off from the ship at 8:00 the following morning.

An hour later (November 5, at 9:00 A.M.) a Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) flew on board. It appeared much more exhausted than the Mourning Dove had been and spent most of the morning hiding about the rigging, although it made occasional short flights. At 12:30 P.M., while flying close to the ship, it fell into the waves. The noon position of the vessel was 39° 33' N., 49° 58' W. This point is approximately 1,116 nautical miles from New York.

It seems probable that both of these birds were caught by the storm during migration. The Mourning Dove has been recorded on several occasions from the Bermudas.—DONALD W. LAMM, *American Consulate General, Accra, Gold Coast.*