

The writer is indebted to Mr. L. H. Zehmer, Vice-President of the Bank of Virginia at Norfolk, Virginia for details of the following account.

A bird of this species was raised in a martin house at the home of James R. Shepherd, 637 Connecticut Avenue, Norfolk. When nearly fledged, it fell from the nest, thus presenting a perfect opportunity for examination. The plumage was snow white without a blemish of any kind, and the eyes were pink. As its nest compartment was known, the bird was returned to it where the parents were observed to resume their care. It eventually flew from the house together with the other youngsters. For a period of two weeks, the albino, the other young birds, and their parents regularly returned to the house, and it was observed that the albino always roosted in the compartment in which it had been reared. Aside from its complete lack of pigmentation, it appeared to be a normal, healthy bird. Nevertheless, as it was coming in one evening, it collided with a branch of a tree and fell, landing on the branches of a very small pine. As the bird appeared to be merely stunned, it was picked up with the idea of keeping it overnight and releasing it in the morning, but it died during the night. Mr. Zehmer reports that the bird was fully grown, the folded wings extending well beyond the tail. He adds that a thorough examination seemed to indicate that it had died of starvation or some "stomach disorder." It seems likely that defective vision, resulting from the albinism, may have prevented the bird from capturing a supply of insects adequate to its needs. FREDERICK C. LINCOLN, *Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D. C.*

**Absence of Natal Down in the White-eyed Vireo.**—In the course of taking a breeding-bird census in a floodplain forest in the Savannah River Plant area, Aiken County, South Carolina, I found two nests of the White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*), each with three eggs, on May 28 and June 19, 1957. At both nests the nestlings were observed carefully (being taken in hand), shortly after hatching and again after the pinfeathers had begun to appear. I was unable to detect any trace of natal down on these young White-eyes. According to Wetherbee's extensive study (Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., 113, article 5: 339-436, 1957), tufts of natal down in members of the Vireonidae "are relatively sparse and fragile. In the subgenus *Vireo*, *V. bellii* is apparently without down, yet *huttoni* has down. . . ." (p. 418). The fact that *V. griseus* has naked hatchlings suggests that absence of natal down in the subgenus *Vireo* might be the rule rather than the exception. For two species in this subgenus, *V. atricapilla* and *V. vicinior*, information on this matter is still lacking (*ibid.*: 380). As Wetherbee has indicated, other North American vireos belonging to the subgenera *Lanivireo* and *Vireosylva* are characterized by natal plumage, although in *V. flavoviridis*, at least, the down is so short and sparse that it could easily be overlooked (Skutch, in Bent, U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull. 197: 327, 1950). It should be stressed that my examples of *Vireo griseus* came from a southern region and that it remains to be seen whether this species lacks natal down in more northerly parts of its range.—ROBERT A. NORRIS, (*University of Georgia Ecological Studies, AEC Savannah River Plant Area, Aiken, South Carolina.*

**Hooded Oriole Nesting under Eaves of House.**—On June 7, 1956, I observed a female Hooded Oriole (*Icterus cucullatus*), bringing nesting material to the eaves of a screened porch of a house on the John Sala ranch, about 12 miles north of Tombstone, Cochise County, Arizona. The elevation at the ranch house is 5190 feet. At some previous time a rose bush had grown close to the house, and a long stalk of the plant had become attached to the underpart of the eaves. Later this stalk had been cut off, leaving a short length attached to the eaves. There was also a

piece of canvas tacked to the upper part of the screen and hanging down loose against it. Only a few inches separated the stalk and the canvas.

The female oriole began the nest by attaching yucca fibers to the stalk and working the other ends of the material through a small hole of about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch existing in the canvas. As I was afraid the canvas would separate from the screen, I tacked the top down more securely. This did not disturb the female, as she continued to work on the nest soon after I had left.

On June 9, only a few more strands of fiber had been added; but by June 11, the nest was the shape of a shallow basket. By June 16, the nest was nearly completed, except for the lining. On June 17, the female was seen working on the lining of the nest. The lining consisted of horse hair and other unidentified hair. On June 23, the nest contained 3 eggs, and on the morning of June 25, there were 4 eggs. The male was seen at the nest but not observed bringing nesting material. Apparently the female built the entire nest. The nest was about 8 feet from the ground.

It seems strange that the pair used this location, as there was a big cottonwood and other trees close to the house that they might have used as a nest site. On June 22, two pairs of Hooded Orioles and their semi-pensile, basket-shaped nests were observed in cottonwoods at the Sala ranch house in Granite Springs Canyon. Unfortunately I left the area soon after the eggs were laid, so I could not follow the completion of this nesting. The Hooded Oriole is the western oriole most likely to be found near houses. In southern California it has been reported nesting in ornamental palms and banana plants (Huey, Condor 46: 298, 1944; Ewan, Condor, 46: 205, 1944), but I have found no account of a nest attached to a building.—JOHN J. STOPHLET, 2612 Maplewood Ave., Toledo 10, Ohio.

**Common Grackle Kills and Eats House Sparrow.**—In early August of 1955 I was walking around the Duck Pond at the Bronx Zoological Park in New York, when I stopped to watch a small group of perhaps fifteen House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) dust-bathing and sunning themselves on the shore near the water edge. Soon a Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*) began walking toward them after alighting some twenty feet away. He was picking and searching for food as he approached. The sparrows seemed not alarmed at the nearness of the larger bird.

The grackle had now come to a position near the shore where rocks and small holes made many small puddles, in one of which a sparrow was bathing. The next instant the air was full of cries and fury. Because of the rapid movements and the unexpected attack, I cannot say how the grackle seized the sparrow. The excessive flapping of wings and the agitated movements left too many details to the imagination that the eye could not see. The grackle was now astride the sparrow holding it tightly in its feet and under the water, while repeatedly pecking at the head. The sparrow fought with all its strength to raise its head above the water and to gain shallower ground. This it did because of its constant movement and the unsure balance of the grackle. The grackle then released its hold, hopped off and with its bill dragged the sparrow back into deeper water, again mounted its back and held tightly so that the entire body was submerged and continued pecking the head. Again the sparrow through frantic movements had gained shallower ground with head above water. Again the grackle dragged it back to deep water, remounted and continued pecking. Movements of the sparrow now became less agitated and its cries weaker until within a space of seven or eight minutes it was drowned.

At the moment of attack all of the other sparrows, at the first cries of their own kind, flew to surrounding trees and shrubbery. During the entire incident only