would return to a bare tree for a short time before settling for the night. Early in the season, birds began assembling about 2:45 p.m. and all had gone to roost by 4:00 p.m., but as the days lengthened, arrival and roosting were correspondingly later.

A few of the birds occupied a small roost in cedar trees in an estate adjoining Percy Warner Park on the same road nearly a mile west, but the main concentration was in the larger area until a disturbance occurred there in mid-January. One afternoon when most of the birds had settled, something (unseen) frightened those in one tree and over twenty Purple Finches flew out and across the road. A few days later, it was noted that the larger number of the birds had moved to another cedar wood on the same road several hundred feet further east. On February 6 at 4:00 p.m., we found the flock using the three locations; the largest concentrations were in the most easterly area.

During winter days, Purple Finches were found feeding in residence areas on seeds fallen to the ground and upon the red fruit of coral berries (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*), locally called buck bushes. In March, elm seeds were the favorite food. In spring they also eat hackberries here, but this year the supply had been exhausted in early winter.

By April the numbers using the roosting places had decreased noticeably. The last, a group of 9 birds, was seen in the roost on May 1. On May 3, when 15 observers in several parties spent the day afield in the Nashville area, no Purple Finches were found.—AMELIA R. LASKEY, *1521 Graybar Lane, Nashville 12, Tenn.*

Variation of Egg Size with Age of Parent.—It is well known that pullets lay smaller eggs than fully mature domestic fowls or "chickens." The Romanoffs (1949:67–69) discuss this briefly in terms of the weight of the egg. Their own results and those of other investigators reviewed by them, agree that the weight of the egg tends to increase during the first two or three years of the bird's life, and then to fall off, reaching in old age lower values even than those of pullets. This naturally raises the question as to whether something similar happens with other species in the wild. The evidence appears to be somewhat scanty, but on the whole to be confirmatory, at least for species that take more than one year to become fully mature, *i.e.*, for large birds.

Dixon (1937-50) in his studies of the Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaëtos*) found a definite decrease in the size of the eggs as the birds increase in age. It does not seem to be precluded that no initial gain in size exists, though it was not observed. Dixon comments that as size decreased, shell thickness increased.

Andersen (1951:168–169) on the other hand found that egg size increased, in the case of the Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*), for the first 2 to 4 years and then decreased (see also Andersen 1957 p. 2). This finding is similar to that of Richdale for Yellow-eyed Penguins (see below).

Andersen (1957:4–5) also reached the conclusion that in the Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) mature birds lay eggs of greater breadth than either young or aged birds.

In the case of the Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*), Gemperle and Preston (1955:196) found that from New Jersey the eggs seemed significantly larger than those in England or New England. In the New Jersey case it was known that they were the first clutches of the season, and may have been laid by older birds. The younger birds might have laid a little later and might have laid smaller eggs, but it was not known to what extent the eggs in England and New England might include eggs of younger birds.

Van Bree (1957:252) suggests that a difference in size in two groups of Black-Headed Gulls (*Larus ridibundus*) may be due to the older birds laying the larger eggs. A careful reading of the text suggests that "older" here means more mature and vigorous.

Richdale (1957:113–115) in his studies of Yellow-eyed Penguins (*Megadyptes antipodes*) found that length of eggs increased for several years, but decreased in old age. He found that the egg width also increased and then declined in a somewhat similar fashion, and a very similar phenomenon was true of egg weights.

Perhaps I might add here that in the course of our measurements of the eggs of several hundred species of North American birds, we seem to be finding that the least variable quantity is the breadth, not the length, still less the end curvatures that effectively define shape. In other words, of the readily measurable dimensions of the egg, the standard deviation when expressed as a percentage of the mean, *i.e.*, the "coefficient of variation," is in almost all species less for breadth than for anything else. Thus a "significant" level is reached with more certainty, or less testing, for breadth than for length or shape.

This probably means that in assessing the effect of age upon egg size, it might be well to pay special attention to the breadth of the egg, as Andersen seems to have done, though not for this reason.

The fact that there does seem to be a difference in size of eggs laid by those birds (usually the larger birds) that lay as "pullets" and of those laid by fully mature birds, complicates considerably the problem of defining what is the "average" size of the eggs of such species. This is true even of a well-defined local population of that species, because it depends on the age composition of that population, and this may vary widely from time to time, according to hatching and rearing success of recent seasons.

LITERATURE CITED

ANDERSEN, F. S. 1951. Contributions to the biology of the Ruff. Dansk Ornith. Foren. Tidrskr., 45: 145–173.

1957. Egg Size and the Age Composition of Bird Populations. Vidensk. Medd. fra Dansk naturh. Foren. 119: 1–24.

DIXON, J. B. 1937. The Golden Eagle in San Diego County, California. Condor, 34: 49–56.

GEMPERLE, M. E. AND F. W. PRESTON. 1955. Variation of Shape in the Eggs of the Common Tern in the Clutch Sequence. Auk, 72: 184–198.

RICHDALE, L. E. 1957. A Population Study of Penguins. Oxford, Clarendon Press.

ROMANOFF, A. L. AND A. J. ROMANOFF. 1949. The Avian Egg. New York, Wiley & Sons; London, Chapman & Hall Ltd.

VAN BREE, P. J. H. 1957. Variation in length and breadth of eggs from a colony of Black-headed Gulls on the island of Texel. Beaufortia (Amsterdam), 5: 245–255.

F. W. PRESTON, *Box 149, Butler, Pennsylvania.*

Use of Concealing Posture by a Screech Owl.—On December 5, 1955, at the Horticultural Experiment Station, Vineland Station, Ontario, a Screech Owl (*Otus asio*) was noticed perched on an exposed limb about ten feet from the ground and twenty-five feet from a house. It was 4:00 p.m. on a dull, cloudy day and dusk was falling. The owl sat in a partly crouched position with fluffed plumage. A House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) flew into a trellis about twenty feet in front of the owl. The latter immediately twisted its body sideways to the sparrow, raised the front margins of the wings slightly and held the rear margins tightly against the back, at the same time compressing the body plumage and so presenting a very narrow silhouette as seen from the sparrow's position. The owl's head continued to face the sparrow. The pose was similar to, if not identical with, the