

## LITERATURE CITED

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**Apparent Homosexual Behavior between Brown-headed Cowbird and House Sparrow.**—While watching a large mixed flock of Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*) and House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) on October 26, 1958, in the cattle pens near the Oklahoma State University campus, I noticed a very peculiar action in a male cowbird. This bird was on a woven-wire fence about ten feet from where I was sitting. The cowbird had its head bowed with lower mandible touching the breast feathers and wings slightly raised at the shoulder. A male sparrow, which was perched beside the cowbird, mounted the cowbird, grabbed the head feathers in its beak and tried to copulate. The cowbird maintained the same position and the sparrow mounted it twice more, then flew a few feet away and perched on the fence again. The cowbird then flew over and perched beside the same sparrow, again assuming the described posture. The cowbird waited for a short time, and when the sparrow did not mount, it nudged the sparrow with its beak. The sparrow moved about a foot away. The cowbird followed, again assuming the same position. The sparrow mounted and attempted to copulate, then perched beside the cowbird. The cowbird retained the crouched position. When the sparrow did not mount again, the cowbird nudged the sparrow, which mounted again and then flew a few feet away. When the cowbird noticed the sparrow was gone, it followed. This behavior continued for 5-8 minutes until something frightened the flock, causing it to rise into the air and drop to the ground a few feet away. I could not find the pair in the flock again.

It has been observed that fledglings begging for food (crouched position, with raised head and open bill) sometimes release sexual behavior, causing attempts at copulation by males with the fledgling (Rittinghaus, *Vogelwelt*, **77** (4): 116-118, 1956). The cowbird described above appeared to be in adult male plumage and at no time was it seen to raise its head and open its bill in a begging manner; therefore, I do not believe that begging could have been the releaser of this unusual behavior.—DAUDE N. GRIFFIN, *Department of Zoology, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma.*

**Ed. Note:** The bowing posture described above strongly suggests the ordinary incomplete courtship display of the male cowbird. Bowing often occurs in autumn (Friedmann, "The Cowbirds," p. 165, 169-170, 1929), and may even be used as a threat display towards other species, according to Laskey (*Wilson Bull.*, **62**: 159, 1950). The resemblance to the posture of a receptive female may have released

copulatory behavior in the House Sparrow—as can at times even a lifeless mounted specimen. If the cowbird was an inexperienced immature in first winter dress (not distinguishable in the field from an adult), its acceptance of contact from a different species is not too surprising in a parasitic bird, which might well have been reared by House Sparrows, or some superficially similar passerines.

#### Observations on Effects of Cold Weather on Nesting Common Egrets.

—Common Egrets (*Casmerodius albus egretta*) wintered in the Bird City sanctuary at Avery Island, Louisiana, during the winter of 1957-58 and appeared to be nesting in late January and early February. On February 12, 1958, it snowed at Avery Island for the first time in a number of years and southern Louisiana recorded the heaviest snowfall since 1899. The temperature dropped to 22°F the nights of February 12th and 13th (see Table 1) and the snow persisted throughout the 13th and into the 14th.

TABLE 1  
MAXIMUM AND MINIMUM TEMPERATURES—AVERY ISLAND, LA.  
FEBRUARY, 1958

Date	Maximum (F.)	Minimum (F.)
February 1-2	60	32
February 3	54	35
February 4	60	40
February 5	67	60
February 6	68	45
February 7	68	30
February 8-9	59	35
February 10	40	30
February 11	40	30
February 12	35	22
February 13	45	22
February 14	55	40
February 15-16	55	32
February 17	45	32
February 18	44	34
February 19	47	40
February 20	60	40
February 21	65	43
February 22-23	59	54
February 24	65	50
February 25	60	49
February 26	70	55
February 27	70	50
February 28	73	45

On February 15, the writer visited the Common Egret nesting area to determine the status of the nesting. The egrets seem to prefer the cypress trees near the center of the pond and two man-made nesting platforms (Platforms 1 and 2) in the immediate vicinity of the cypress trees. As nesting sites in the cypress trees and on Platforms 1 and 2 are occupied, later arrivals spread out on three platforms out in open water (Platforms 3, 4 and 5). On February 15, egrets were incubating on nests in the cypress trees and on Platforms 1 and 2. There were 9 nests with eggs on Platform 5 and 5 partially completed nests on Platform 3; however, no birds were in attendance on these platforms. Nest and egg counts were made