

Refuge located west of Brigham City, Utah, I observed a California gull (*Larus californicus* Lawrence) flying low over open water as it dropped a dark, limp object from its mouth. The object proved to be a dead juvenile coot (*Fulica americana americana* Gmelin) about two weeks of age. The gull alighted on the water immediately and placed the carcass at a right angle and to the right of itself. The head of the coot was grasped and squeezed in an apparent effort to crush the skull, as the carcass was lifted off the water. The gull worked the coot through its bill by a series of head and neck movements somewhat like throwing and catching an object at different points progressively down its length. Thus the coot was mouthed from head to foot before it was dropped to the water again. The gull then methodically attacked the carcass with the tip of its bill. Powerful, short jabs were made at various parts of the body to soften it even more. This mouthing and stabbing procedure was repeated several times in the same manner until three other California gulls appeared. These intruders made swooping passes at the dead coot, which caused the feeding gull quickly to grab its meal and attempt an escape. The carcass was gripped by the neck in the tip of the gull's bill, which caused the burden to be unbalanced and too cumbersome to carry. As the coot was dropped from a height of about 10 meters, there immediately occurred a series of midair acrobatics amidst a squawking of fighting gulls. Within less than half a minute the three intruders were beaten off without a single attempt to dive down and take the carcass.

The original owner alighted beside the coot again and, without further hesitation, lined the carcass up in front of itself, head first, and began to swallow it. When the coot's head disappeared down the gull's throat, the mandible of the gull was in a position directly underneath the carcass so that the coot could be lifted off the water and held aloft. The weight of the coot, thus arranged, allowed it to be swallowed easily and quickly as the gull held it over its head. When just the feet protruded from the mouth, the gull took flight. Just after the feet of the coot disappeared down the throat of the airborne gull, two more gulls appeared on the scene. They made a pass, but the meal was safely hidden and stowed away for digestion as the feeding gull continued on its way.—NICHOLAS J. CHURA, *Wildlife Research Unit, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.*

Woodcock Nesting in Brazos County, Texas.—On several occasions in the past 20 years I have seen, or had reported to me, wintering woodcock (*Philohela minor*) in Brazos County, Texas, but not until 1959 was I able to determine with certainty that woodcocks also nest in this area.

On 27 February 1959 students who were mapping vegetation on a section of the Range Management Pasture about two miles west of College Station reported a woodcock nest with four eggs. On 28 February I confirmed the identification, and Professor Jack Inglis took several photographs of the incubating female and of the nest and eggs. The nest consisted of a few dead oak leaves placed in a slight depression on a knoll in a moderate stand of post oak trees. The understory was mainly yaupon. The set of eggs was collected and is now deposited in the Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection. I estimated on the basis of embryo development that the eggs had been incubated about 10 days.

A second nest containing three eggs was found by Knox Walker on 20 March 1959, in a section of the archery range (within half a mile of nest No. 1) that had been burned over about three weeks previously. A third nest with four eggs was

found on 14 February 1959 by Dale Avant in the Middle Pasture of the Range Management Area (same general area as nest No. 1). He revisited the site on 25 February and found the incubating bird on the nest. Students also reported nesting woodcocks in the same general area this past spring (1960), but I was unable to get specific data.

Inquiry among field biologists of the Texas Game and Fish Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in east Texas failed to produce any authenticated nesting records of woodcock in that region, although the birds winter there regularly. The only other positive record I have found of woodcock nesting in Texas is that of Pettingill (*Mem. Boston Soc. Nat. Hist.*, 9, 1936) for Hardin County in 1905. I have been unable to locate the basis for the statement by the A.O.U. Committee (Fifth Edition of the *Check-list*) that woodcocks formerly nested in Houston County. The Committee's statement that these birds presently nest in "extreme eastern Texas (rarely)" seems to be based on the probability (not on actual records) that woodcocks observed in that area in summer nested there. It seems reasonable to conclude that woodcocks nest in eastern Texas only in years, like 1959 and 1960, when winter rains are considerably above normal.—WILLIAM B. DAVIS, *Department of Wildlife Management, Texas A. and M. College, College Station, Texas.*

Recovery of a Crippled Gadwall.—A Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) was shot on the J. M. Skrabanek farm located at Danberry, Brazoria County, Texas, on 9

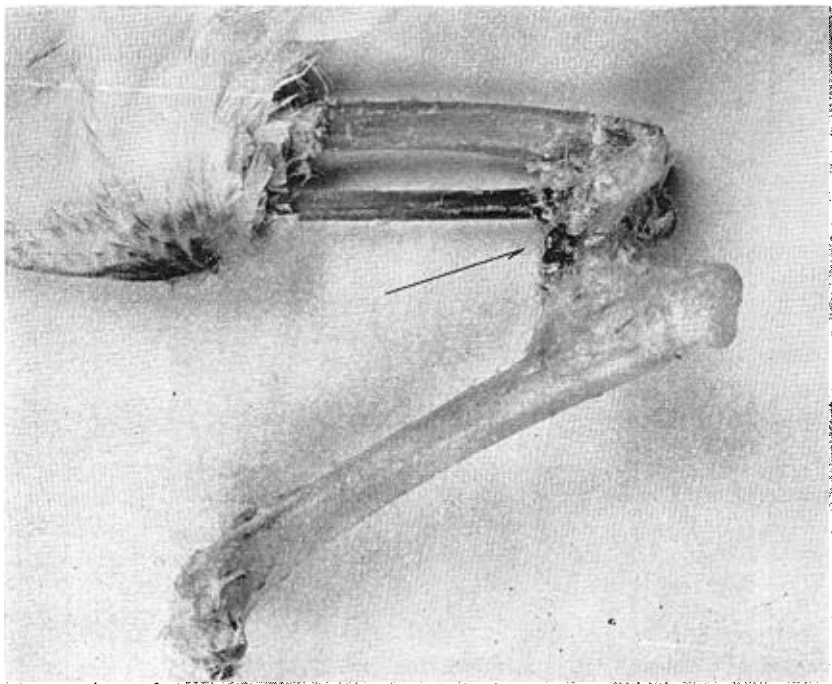


Figure 1. Ventral view. Arrow points to shot that broke the wing.