

**Unusual Death of a Common Egret.**—On 28 August 1957 at 09:00 I photographed, at close range, a Common Egret (*Casmerodius albus*) standing in 50 cm of water in a mangrove swamp bordering the west edge of the Indian River at Vero Beach, Florida. The bird made no attempt to fly. At 14:30 the egret was found in the same position. It stood motionless even when approached to within a meter. The next morning it was dead. Examination of the macerated skeleton revealed a seven-cm forked twig protruding from the foramen magnum and right optic foramen of the skull. The twig had evidently pierced the brain when the bird thrust its bill into the dark swamp water while feeding. Although killing wounded birds by inserting a knife through the palate often requires considerable brain destruction, it seems remarkable that the egret lived at least five and one-half hours although paralyzed by a damaged brain.—ROBERT D. WEIGEL, *Department of Biological Sciences, Illinois State Normal University, Normal, Illinois.*

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo in Stomach of Tiger Shark.**—On 20 May 1961 an immature female tiger shark (*Galeocerdo cuvier*), 2.3 meters in length and weighing 52 kg, was caught in the Gulf of Mexico several miles offshore from Sarasota, Florida, by personnel of the Cape Haze Marine Laboratory. The contents of its stomach included a leg and some feathers of a land bird. The leg was sent to the Bird and Mammal Laboratories, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Washington, D.C., where it was identified by Mrs. R. C. Laybourne as that of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*). In addition to this bird, the stomach contained a blue crab, several sea catfishes (*Galeichthys felis*), and part of a black nose shark (*Carcharhinus acronotus*).

Evidently this migrant fell into the Gulf and was eaten by the tiger shark or possibly by the black nose shark or another fish that was then eaten by one of the sharks.—GEORGE B. SAUNDERS, *Biologist, Bureau of Sport Fisheries & Wildlife, U.S. Department of the Interior, Gainesville, Florida,* and EUGENIE CLARK, *Director, Cape Haze Marine Laboratory, Sarasota, Florida.*

**Predation on Red-bellied Woodpecker Nestlings by a Black Rat Snake.**—On 1 June 1961, while observing the nest of a pair of Red-bellied Woodpeckers (*Centurus carolinus*), south of Carbondale, Illinois, the effects of predation by a Black Rat Snake (*Elaphe obsoleta obsoleta*) were observed and are reported here.

The nest hole was located about nine meters above ground in a living elm tree that is situated in a woodland patch about one and one-half km long and one-half km wide. The nest hole itself had been dug in a dead branch of the elm. Incubation had been proceeding for some time, and it was eventually determined that some of the young birds had already hatched.

The nest hole had been under observation from 12 meters for about 15 minutes when a dark-colored snake was observed leaving it. Upon the approach of the observer to the base of the elm tree, the snake returned into the hole where it remained while arrangements were being made to climb the tree. During this period, the adult birds were seen and frequently were heard calling in the neighborhood. The snake was removed from the hole along with the shell of one egg and portions of another. The snake was identified as a female Black Rat Snake, and it measured 100 cm in length. It was promptly killed and frozen in order to preserve the stomach contents for later examination. Upon examination of its stomach, the remains of three nestlings, one unhatched egg, and the skull of a Pine Vole (*Pitymys pinetorum*) were identified.

Although it is purely circumstantial evidence of predation on a Red-bellied Woodpecker nest by a snake, the behavior of another nesting pair of these birds is worth

reporting. One morning about two weeks prior to 1 June, great activity was observed at the nest hole of these birds. Both birds were flying excitedly around their nest site and were calling repeatedly. Occasionally, one of the birds landed below the nest hole and rocked back and forth looking in, but refusing to enter. The female especially seemed to be "attached" to the nest-hole area, and she remained in the vicinity for a long period of time after the male had left. This female was observed chasing a Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) from the vicinity of the nest hole, before she too abandoned the site. This behavior was deemed strange for this pair of woodpeckers as both adults readily came and went from the nest hole during the previous week, and the times when one or the other bird was not occupying the nest hole were infrequent. However, it was not until 1 June that access to this nest could be attained, and although no direct evidence of predation could be ascertained, part of a shed snake skin was found near the entrance to the nest. Unfortunately, the skin could not be used to identify the species of snake.

Eggs of woodpeckers are left unattended by the adults for only a short time, and it would be very interesting to view a complete attack upon the nest site of these hole-nesting birds by an arboreal snake in order to study the patterns of behavior of both animals. A nest hole offers a certain defensive advantage for an adult bird incubating therein against a comparatively slow-moving predator such as a snake. Yet, in the above-reported case (possibly two cases) the snake was able to accomplish its objective. Selander and Giller (*Wils. Bull.*, 71: 107-124, 1959) report that although the male Red-bellied Woodpecker is rather easily flushed from the nest hole, the female tends to hold her ground against a potential enemy, in this case man. Davie (*Nests and Eggs of North American Birds*, Hann and Adair, 1889, 221) also reported that Red-bellied Woodpeckers sit very tight on their eggs, actually having to be forcibly ejected by egg collectors.—DAVID W. STICKEL, *Department of Zoology, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois.*

**The First Record of the Fan-tailed Warbler in the United States.**—On 28 May 1961 I collected a Fan-tailed Warbler (*Euthlypis lachrymosa*) at Baker Spring, Guadalupe Mountains, in extreme southeastern Arizona. Baker Spring is located about five km (three miles) up (north) Baker Canyon from where it enters Guadalupe Canyon. Baker Canyon flows from north to south about one km (one-half mile) west of and parallel to the New Mexico border. Baker Spring is approximately six km (three and one-half miles) north of the Sonora, Mexico, international border.

The specimen, a female, although not fat, appeared to be in a nonbreeding condition; the ovary was only slightly enlarged, measuring two by three mm. All ova were small. The bird was found in the canyon bottom feeding and "flitting," as is its habit, about the base of a large sycamore. It then flew to a low, dense clump of bushes and continued to feed among the low branches and leaves. The site had a thin mantle of sandy-loam type soil over rocky ground, except in the canyon bottom where there was a deep-sand wash. The only water available is the stock watering trough and storage tank developed from the natural spring.

Heretofore, this species has not been recorded north of Guirocoba and Hacienda de San Rafael, in extreme southeastern Sonora (Van Rossem, *Occ. Papers La. State Univ. Mus. Zool.*, 21: 233, 1945; Moore *et al.*, *Pac. Coast Avif.*, 33: 270, 1957). It is included in the A.O.U. *Check-list* on the basis of a vagrant taken at Santo Domingo, northern Baja California, 31 December 1925 (Grinnell and Lamb, *Condor*, 29:126, 1927; A.O.U. *Check-list*, 5th ed., 515, 1957). In view of the great distances involved, the Arizona specimen must also be considered a straggler.