

To summarize: a group of 24 nest sites visited in 1935 has been revisited at intervals of about five years since then to determine the per cent of these 24 nest sites that is occupied. The percentage of occupied nests for the years on which visits were made is: 1935, 83; 1940, 46; 1946, 54; 1951, 67; 1956, 33; and 1961, 21.—JOSEPH C. HOWELL, *Department of Zoology and Entomology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee.*

A Noteworthy Reverse Migration of Snow Geese in Central Ontario.—Just before sunset on 15 May 1962 my husband and I heard a loud cackling noise overhead. Through binoculars I saw a flock of about 85 Snow Geese, *Chen hyperborea*, flying southward. The next morning three more flocks of 73, 59, and 3 Snow Geese, respectively, performed the same maneuver, all disappearing over the southern horizon. This, therefore, was a sustained reverse migration that extended over parts of two days and may have involved more than the four flocks of 215 Snow Geese altogether that I happened to sight.

During the flight across the lake, while the birds were in full sight for a distance of about a kilometer, consistently similar behavior was observed in all but the last small flock. Suddenly, under increased cackling, the geese flying behind the leaders broke formation and veered eastward as if to change flight direction from south to north. This caused great commotion, which lasted a few seconds before the rebels once again closed ranks and resumed the flight southward. In the first large flock the conflict between the drives of the geese in the middle of the formation to fly northward and of the leaders to fly southward occurred twice while in sight, always with the same result.

The habitual migration route of the Snow Geese appears to lie much farther to the east over Quebec. It is interesting to note that previous to this particular occasion a spell of cold and freezing weather had occurred in the regions north and south of Pimisi Bay, while southern Ontario enjoyed an unseasonable heat wave. On 14 May the front of this warm air mass began moving north across the Pimisi Bay area, bringing with it a large "wave" of northward migrants. Twenty-four hours later the first sign was noted of the reverse migration of the Snow Geese.—LOUISE DE KIRILINE LAWRENCE, *Pimisi Bay, R.R. 1, Rutherglen, Ontario, Canada.*

Some Aberrant Characters of the Yellow-breasted Chat, *Icteria virens*.—Many ornithologists have thought that the Yellow-breasted Chat is not properly classified as a parulid. Recently, Eisenmann (*Auk*, 79: 265-267, 1962) pointed out differences between the Chat and other warblers in such characters as the jaw and hyoid musculature and in the electrophoretic patterns of egg-white proteins.

The Chat also differs in many other ways from other warblers for which there is information available. Its nest structure and eggs show little similarity to warblers (A. A. Allen, pers. comm.). It lacks natal down, a characteristic of very few nine-primaried oscines (Wetherbee, *Bull. A.M.N.H.*, 113: 339-436, 1957), and has a complete postjuvinal molt (Bent, *U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull.*, 203: 1-734, 1953), which also occurs in *Geothlypis trichas* (Stewart, *Auk*, 69: 50-59, 1952), but not in most other warblers. The male Chat in breeding condition has a black mouth lining, the female pink (Blake, *Bird-Banding*, 33: 43, 1962), a kind of sexual dichromatism not found in other warblers.

In addition, the Chat differs in behavior. The song is unlike that of warblers in being lower pitched, having more diverse phrases (often described as mimidlike),

sometimes apparently mimicking other birds, and singing at night (Bent, *loc. cit.*). Its other vocalizations show no similarities to warblers (Chapman, *The Warblers of North America*, 267, 1907). A courtship display is also different, chiefly consisting of fluffing the neck and swaying from side to side (Townsend, *Mem. Nut. Orn. Club*, 5: 1-196, 1920). It also lacks a distraction display (Ficken and Ficken, *Living Bird*, 1: 103-122, 1962). The Chat holds food with its foot (Neal Smith, pers. comm.), a characteristic of some other passerines, but of no known warblers.

However, the Chat does have a flight song, as do some warblers. It scratches the head directly, a characteristic known for only some warblers, mimids, timaliids, and *Chamaea fasciata*, so far as is known among the passerines (Wickler, *Zeitschr. f. Tierpsychol.*, 18: 320-342, 1961).

Thus, the available and seemingly conservative biochemical, morphological, and behavioral evidence suggests that the Chat is not a parulid, but that its true relationships remain obscure.—MILLCENT S. FICKEN and ROBERT W. FICKEN, *Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.*

On Dew Bathing and Drought in Passerines.—Dew bathing is a rarely observed phenomenon, and only few instances regarding this behavior have been recorded. Berger (*Bird Study*, 1961) mentions dew bathing in captive Traill's Flycatchers (*Empidonax traillii*) and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers (*E. flaviventris*), which flew through wet grass, and Van Tyne (in Bent, *U.S. Natl. Bull.*, 203) reports a case in the Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*). He adds that water is often not available in any other form for miles around. The observation here presented was made at Vancouver, British Columbia (in the Puget Sound biotic area), on 26 August 1961, at 07:00, along the edge of a mixed stand of secondary growth. The summer of 1961 was a dry one in British Columbia, with only a little over a centimeter of rain recorded in 50 days preceding the day of observation. It is suggested that the observed behavior was in response to this drought. While walking along a path my attention was drawn to a rustling noise made by some birds that were fluttering among the leaves of a three-meter-high Vine Maple (*Acer circinatum*). From their bedraggled appearance it seemed as if the birds had taken a bath and were now preening themselves. At first I thought that there would be a pool or ditch running along the path I walked on, but soon it became apparent that the birds were washing themselves with the dew, which was still on the leaves of the above-mentioned maple. The birds would flutter among the leaves, bumping into several of them before coming to rest. This was repeated several times by each bird. One Black-capped Chickadee (*Parus atricapillus*) was sitting on a leaf and touching it with its breast, while soaking up the moisture. This bird went through the same motions as when bathing in a pool. The following birds were taking this dew bath: 15 Black-capped Chickadees, 7 Orange-crowned Warblers (*Vermivora celata*), 1 Black-throated-Grey Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*), 1 Pileolated Warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla*), and 1 Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*). I also noted that a pair of Golden-crowned Kinglets (*Regulus satrapa*) and a Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*) had had their baths already. When finished with bathing, the birds would ruffle their feathers, just as after a normal bath.—NICOLAAS A. M. VERBEEK, *Department of Zoology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia.*