

GENERAL NOTES

Autumnal breeding of the Paraguay Snipe in Uruguay.—I accompanied an expedition of the American Museum of Natural History which collected mammals and their ectoparasites in the Republic of Uruguay from 2 December 1962 until 31 May 1963. Between 29 April and 13 May we camped beside a marshy stream in open, rolling grassland on the estancia El Sauce, 22 km southeast of Lascano, Department of Rocha. Although the temperate climate of Uruguay is characterized by cool, rainy autumns, the weather during our stay in Rocha seemed to be wetter than normal. Rain fell part of each day. The average daily low temperature was 7°C and the average daily high was 19.5°C. Near our camp several Paraguay Snipes (*Capella paraguaiæ* = *C. gallinago paraguaiæ* of J. Cuello and E. Gerzenstein, *Com. Zool. Mus. Hist. Nat. Montevideo*, 6 [93]: 75–76, 1962) were involved, each night and on overcast days, in typical aerial courtship flights. The winnowing sound produced during the maneuvers was audible for some distance.

Although this behavior was protracted, breeding was not suspected because of the season. Then, shortly before noon on 13 May, I frightened an incubating snipe, presumably a female, from a nest containing three eggs (Figure 1). The nest was a few cm above the ground in one of several tussocks of tall grass, in an otherwise heavily grazed area, about 10 m from the bank of the stream. Upon leaving the nest, the bird ran along the ground for a distance of 7 m with both wings dragging, as though they were broken, before taking flight. In a brief search of the general area I found no other nests.

This form is a permanent resident in Uruguay (Cuello and Gerzenstein, *op. cit.*) and according to T. Alvarez (*Anal. Mus. Hist. Nat. Montevideo*, ser. 2, 4[1]: 10–11, 1933) normally breeds in late spring (November). Therefore, the nest herein reported constitutes, to my knowledge, the first record of autumnal breeding in the genus *Capella* in Uruguay and in fact, in all of South America. Neither I nor Dr. Leslie Tuck (pers. comm.) who is currently preparing a monograph on *Capella gallinago*, has found reports of autumnal breeding in other parts of the world. Atypical re-



Figure 1. Nest of a Paraguay Snipe, 22 km south of Lascano, Department of Rocha, Uruguay, 13 May 1963.

production in autumn in temperate latitudes has recently been noted in several passerine species by A. J. Marshall (*Proc. Zool. Soc. London*, 121: 727-740, 1952), G. H. Orians (*Auk*, 77: 379-398, 1960) and R. K. Selander and D. J. Nicholson (*Condor*, 64: 81-91, 1962). From the comments of these authors it may be inferred that factors favorable to autumnal breeding include a tendency toward colonial (group) nesting, in which the behavior of individual pairs leading to reproduction is reinforced by the presence of other similarly behaving birds, an ample food supply, protracted autumnal rainfall, and relatively moderate temperatures. All of these conditions variously obtained at the above locality in Rocha in the first half of May in 1963.

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I am grateful to Dr. Leslie M. Tuck for information on the breeding of snipe elsewhere.—JON C. BARLOW, *Department of Ornithology, Royal Ontario Museum, The University of Toronto, Toronto 5, Ontario.*

Cowbird removes warbler nestling from nest.—H. Friedmann (*U. S. Natl. Mus., Bull.* 233, p. 25, 1963), relying mostly on H. Mayfield's data (*The Kirtland's Warbler*, Cranbrook Inst. Sci., Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, 1960; see pp. 144-181; *Auk*, 78: 162-163, 1961), pointed out that the female Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) maintains an interest in the host's nest after having laid an egg in it. Mayfield found that the cowbird makes frequent inspections of the host's nest after laying an egg, and not uncommonly removes one or more of the host's eggs on these subsequent visits. The cowbird's interest usually lags, however, as the period of incubation by the host lengthens and hatching approaches. Friedmann (*op. cit.*: 27-28) recorded only two reliable instances of female cowbirds showing interest in young birds; one was feeding a nestling cowbird and the other was feeding a cowbird fledgling. A. D. DuBois (*Auk*, 73: 286, 1956) observed a female cowbird strike into a nest of Song Sparrows (*Melospiza melodia*), injuring one nestling and carrying off another. Since such behavior is unusual, the following incident is of interest.

At 1015 hours on 28 June 1966 I stepped onto the front porch of the main office of the Audubon Camp of Maine on Hog Island, Lincoln County, Maine. The sound of the screen door slamming behind me startled a group of five cowbirds from a feeder 30 feet away. One female flew to a red spruce (*Picea rubens*) and landed just above a bough containing the nest of a Black-throated Green Warbler (*Dendroica virens*). The nest held three warblers and one cowbird, each about three days old. Within approximately three seconds the cowbird looked down at the nest, flew to its rim, reached into the nest, and flew away carrying a nestling by grasping it with its bill across the eyes. The cowbird dropped the warbler in an open area. The cowbird perched near me as I examined the warbler, gave a phrased vocalization, and flew away. The warbler died within a few minutes. I did not see either of the adult warblers during the incident. The other two nestling warblers and the cowbird nestling fledged about nine days later.

Such behavior, if more common than thought but merely unobserved, may partially explain the regularity with which nest watchers record the unexplained absence of nestlings.—JAMES TATE, JR., *Department of Zoology and Physiology, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska.*