

tation of the femur is generally assumed because the muscle inserts on the lateral surface of the femur.

Cracraft (1970, Bird-Banding 41: 254) questions a model of climbing in ducklings because it assumes significant protraction by this muscle (Rylander and Bolen 1970, Auk 87: 72). Examination of the musculature in a 1-day-old *Dendrocygna autumnalis* shows that the insertion spans much of the anterolateral surface of the head of the femur, thereby attaching in part both proximal and distal to the pivotal axis (Fig. 1). Because the head of the femur is relatively broad in young birds, the muscle can protract the femur when this bone is in a retracted position.

Femoral protraction by this muscle was demonstrated experimentally by removing the sartorius, anterior ilirotrochantericus, and iliotibialis muscles in a nembutol-anesthetized 1-day-old hatchery chick that was suspended vertically so that the hind limb hung limp. When the muscle was stimulated with 1-5 volts, the femur rotated slightly but also protracted through an arc of about 10 degrees, thus supporting its possible role as a protractor in climbing ducklings. As the stimulus was carefully applied to the posterior ilirotrochantericus, it is believed that contraction of the more deeply located iliacus and ilirotrochantericus medius muscles was negligible.—M. K. RYLANDER, *Department of Biological Sciences, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas 79409*. Accepted 4 Mar. 74.

Eggs of other species in Great Horned Owl nests.—While banding nestling Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*) in 1968, the senior author was surprised to find an intact egg of an American Coot (*Fulica americana*) in an owl nest. We have since watched carefully for such items in 568 Great Horned Owl nests containing young in Saskatchewan and have found eggs of other species on nine occasions (Table 1). During this time 39 additional owl nests were not checked adequately,

TABLE 1
EGGS OF OTHER SPECIES IN GREAT HORNED OWL NESTS

Bander and location ¹	Date	Nest contents
Houston (491 nests): 520-1032, Nut Mountain	20 May 1968	Intact egg of American Coot (<i>Fulica americana</i>)
521-1034, Rose Valley	17 May 1969	Intact coot egg and coot feathers
525-1053, Hagen	13 May 1972	Four red-backed mice (<i>Clethrionomys</i>) and intact egg of Gray Partridge (<i>Perdix perdix</i>)
525-1053, Hagen	13 May 1972	Intact coot egg, intact egg of duck (<i>Anas</i> sp.)
510-1034, Kelliher	20 May 1972	Cracked, uneaten egg of Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)
512-1053, W of Simpson	21 May 1972	Egg within oviduct of uneaten distal half of adult female Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>)
515-1045, N of Esk	14 June 1972	No food in nest; uneaten coot egg on ground below nest
Whitfield (77 nests): 520-1070, E of Asquith	8 May 1971	Intact Pintail egg and uneaten portion of Pintail
524-1053, E of Domremy	23 May 1971	Two coot carcasses and intact duck egg

¹ 520-1032 is a 10-min block, from 52° 00' N and 103° 20' W.

either because a dead trunk or branch of the nest tree or repeated attacks by parent owls made close inspection dangerous, or because of inadequate illumination. Eggs of other species were not noticed or recorded in any of the 328 Great Horned Owl nests in which the senior author banded young before 1968.

The presence of these eggs gave rise to some speculation. As the eggs were all cold and most were discolored and presumably there for some time, and as none were partially eaten, we surmise that neither adult nor young owls take advantage of this potential food source. It seems most unlikely, therefore, that the egg alone was brought to the nest. A prey individual might on occasion be alive when brought to the nest and expel an egg from its oviduct in its death throes. Another possibility is that a female bird had a fully formed egg in its oviduct when it was killed and brought to the nest; the young owls then devoured all the flesh around it, leaving the egg intact in the nest. The distal, but as yet uneaten, portion of a Pintail carcass (*Anas acuta*) containing such an egg offers good evidence to support this latter possibility. In the latter half of May in Saskatchewan, peak food consumption by nestling owls coincides with a time of active egg-laying by coots and many ducks.

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Heron expansion in the Atacama Desert.—The Atacama Desert of Peru and Chile extends for 2300 miles from 5° S to 24° S and that portion in rainless northern Chile is the driest coastal desert in the world (Meigs 1966). More than 40 rivers traverse the desert in Peru and these, with their associated irrigated farmlands, provide the only lowland habitat for herons and egrets. The Andes become increasingly arid to the south, and only seven rivers reach the sea in the southern half of the desert. A number of birds reach their southern distributional limits in southwestern Peru or northern Chile while others are absent from the most arid areas but reappear in central Chile (Johnson 1972).

The White-necked Heron (*Ardea cocoi*) and the Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*) occur south to central Peru in the coastal lowlands (Koepcke 1970). The Great Egret (*Casmerodius albus*), Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*), Striated Heron (*Butorides striatus*), and Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) are all common in southwestern Peru (Hughes 1970). The Great Egret and Snowy Egret are also common in central Chile but most likely reached there from Argentina. Both species have been reported at a number of localities in northern Chile but neither appears to have become established. A single Striated Heron collected at the mouth of the Lluta River near the Peru-Chile border on 24 August 1971 was only the second observation of the species in Chile (Drouilly 1971). The Black-crowned Night-Heron is the only heron whose breeding range is uninterrupted for the entire length of the Andes. The Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*) is less common in southwestern Peru and may be a relatively recent resident.

The dispersal of the Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) in the western hemisphere has captured the attention of many students and been broadly documented. Cattle Egrets were first reported in Peru at Iquitos (4° S) by Stott (1957) and their subsequent spread throughout much of the country was summarized by Frazier