

in the case of woodcock returning to their nests after they had been flushed off nearly thirty minutes before. Apparently memories of the disturbing experience still persisted. But I have never seen the same birds bob upon returning to their nests after they had left them of their own accord. They always walked directly to them and settled boldly upon the eggs. Although I have watched, with the aid of a flash light, a number of males on their singing fields, I have never seen them bobbing noticeably at any time."

Later (p. 317) Pettingill writes, "It is my belief that incubation is carried on usually, if not entirely, by the female," a remark that would restrict bobbing to that sex only.

My lone observation is sketchy in comparison to Pettingill's definitive study. Nevertheless the woodcock I saw in November was definitely not a female recently flushed from a nest and had no apparent reason to be "nervous" on that or any other account that I could discern. Thus it might just as well have been a male as a female. In any case, it seemed to be bobbing as a part of its life style, just as many other scolopacids habitually teeter, and indeed as wagtails, waterthrushes, and numerous unrelated taxa approximate similar behavior. Why should any or all of those birds expend energy in that manner?

It occurs to me that there may be two categories among teeterers. Those that bob in the open where they can be conspicuous may do so to be recognized by their own or different species, as other birds achieve the same result by flashing semaphoric color patches.

Creatures like the woodcock, abiding mostly in sheltered situations, may teeter and bob to mimic prevailing shifting shadows. Certainly the woodcock is already renowned for its reliance on crypsis while incubating. Similar evolutionary force may have influenced its ambulatory behavior as well. As the woodcock I watched did not discriminate between movements of nearby catalpa leaves and their quiescence, was it consequently performing some automatic act more appropriate to a shadow-dappled ambience?—C. BROOKE WORTH, *R.D.*, *Delmont, New Jersey 08314*. Accepted 24 Jan. 75.

Spread-wing sunbathing by juvenile White-faced Ibis.—Many species of birds are voluntary sunbathers (Hauser 1957, *Wilson Bull.* 69: 78), and expose their bodies to the sun to dry the plumage or gain heat. Typical behaviors of sunbathing birds include fluffing the feathers (Morris 1956, *Behaviour* 9: 75) and spread-wing postures (Clark 1969, *Auk* 86: 136; Kahl 1971, *Auk* 88: 715; Cade 1973, *Condor* 75: 106).

In a large breeding colony of herons and ibises on Grand Island, Baratavia Bay, Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, I watched spread-wing sunbathing by a juvenile White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) on seven separate occasions. Between periods of preening, the ibis stood upright, extended one wing downward and the other wing above the body. The undersides of both wings were exposed to the sun (Fig. 1). The body was rotated slightly and the belly region was partially exposed. The ibis maintained this posture for as long as 3 min before withdrawing the wings and resuming preening activities.

Only fledged juvenile White-faced Ibises exhibited this behavior, and only during the relatively cool morning hours, 29°C on one occasion. While spread-wing sunbathing, the juvenile ibis perched on top of black mangrove bushes, maximally exposed to the sun. Both adult and juvenile White-faced Ibis fluffed their plumage

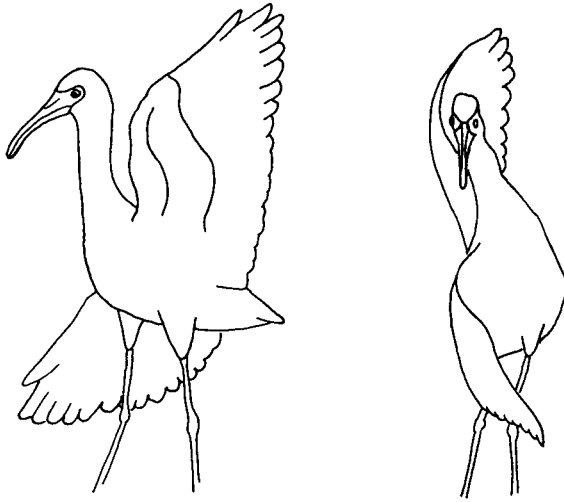


Fig. 1. Side and frontal views of the spread-wing sunbathing posture of juvenile White-faced Ibis.

and sunbathed during the warmer part of the day, but the adults were not seen sunbathing with spread wings in this manner.—JAMES A. RODGERS, JR., *Museum of Zoology, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803. Present address: Department of Biology, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida 33620.* Accepted 24 Jan. 75.

Plain Chachalaca food habits in south Texas.—Little information is available on the food habits of the northern race of the Plain Chachalaca (*Ortalis vetula mcalli*). The stomach of one specimen, examined by Cottam and Knappen (1939), contained fruits of granjeno (*Celtis pallida*) and seedless husks of honey mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*). Vaurie (1968: 145–146) and Delacour and Amadon (1973: 93) also indicated that these birds are primarily herbivorous, but quantitative data were lacking. This paper describes the diet of the Plain Chachalaca as determined by an extensive investigation of the species.

I collected chachalacas by shooting between September 1971 and August 1972 on two study tracts in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. A total of 42 collected specimens had food items in their distensible esophagi. These food items were identified, segregated, and measured volumetrically, while wet, by water displacement (Martin 1963). Foods displacing less than 0.1 cc were recorded as trace. Percent by volume of each food item was determined by dividing its volume by the total volume of all foods (Martin et al. 1946). The frequency of occurrence, calculated as the percent of all gullets containing a specific food item, also was determined.

In addition to detailed studies of gullet contents, study of feeding birds in the field provided additional food habit information. Gross observations of seasonal variability of major food items also were recorded to aid investigation of the relationship between food preference and availability.