

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Coot Caught by Turtle.—On May 3, 1924, my brother, Carl S. Leopold, and myself were fishing in Crystal Lake on the Illinois shore opposite Burlington, Iowa. We noticed a flock of a dozen American Coots (*Fulica americana*) on a marshy point, one of which continuously flapped its wings. We thought at first the flapping was some sort of courtship antic, but it continued so steadily that we concluded the bird must be caught in a muskrat trap. The flock dispersed as we drew near. It was evident that they had gathered around the flapping bird as a crowd gathers around a street accident. I lifted the bird by one wing and pulled up the head of a huge hardshell turtle, which had gripped about an inch of the middle toe of one foot. We dispatched the turtle with a .22 bullet through its head. It did not relax its grip until shot. We estimated its weight at 15 pounds.

The remarkable thing was that the coot's foot was absolutely uninjured, in spite of its large size and rather fragile construction. I know from experience that this size and species of turtle can bite a large sunfish in two, or almost sever the fabric of a rubber boot. The turtle was evidently holding on gently, awaiting the exhaustion of the bird. It could have drowned the coot by backing out into deeper water, but made no move to do so during the ten minutes when we were watching the flapping process.—ALDO LEOPOLD, *Burlington, Iowa, May 2, 1924.*

More Birds that Grasp Objects with the Feet.—Since the issue of a query in the CONDOR for May, 1924, page 112, as to what birds beside raptores hold objects with the feet, the following instances have come to my notice.

A Green-backed Goldfinch (*Astragalinus psaltria hesperophilus*) while seeding a batchelor button head, bent the slight stem to a horizontal position. When through with it, the bird reached deliberately out with one foot and grasped a nearby spray and pulled it under his feet on the original stem and ate from the new supply of seeds.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Francis Saunders tell me that Arizona Hooded Orioles (*Icterus cucullatus nelsoni*) in their yard are fond of the flowers of the flowering maple (so-called) and probe the pendant bells by reaching down with the foot and pulling the face of the flower up. Another friend says these orioles frequent the flowering maple when in bloom. During mulberry season I observed these orioles several times holding the fruit with a foot while eating berries that had been plucked from the stem.

A butcher-bird (*Lanius ludovicianus gambeli*) observed on May 2 placed a grasshopper in one foot and held it close to the twig upon which it was perching. As described by Mr. J. Eugene Law at the July meeting of the Southern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club when reporting a similar observation, the tarsus was rested across the twig in rather an ungainly position. The bird I watched tried in vain to get some nourishment from the carcass held so insecurely, though many perches and positions were tried. The hopper was held close to the twig. In flight, the bill carried it. Who has seen the California Shrike eat "butchered" food, that is, after being hung up?

An immature male Anna Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*) feeding in the flowers of the bird-of-paradise shrub made a peculiar batting sound that attracted me fifty feet. It proved to be the wings hitting the very long protruding stamens of the flowers. The bird was annoyed but would not desist and finally took to grasping the offending filaments with extended feet. Flower after flower was thus worked; but after the first few experiences the bird settled full weight upon the stamens, carrying them down so far his body swung even past the vertical, the belly facing up under the flower. The wings went "dead" on one occasion, but usually they vibrated slightly while held high above, after the fashion of swallows gathering mud. The beginning of this clutching with the feet I consider an effort to *grasp* the interfering stamens and hold them down—because of the extension of the feet in the unusual forward position displayed at the first. Later, the bird merely settled upon them in a perching attitude. From my study window this clinging to a flower or a flower stalk is seen nearly every day. The vigor and strength shown by these "weak" feet, that grasp one canna stalk in particular in a sidewise position and hold the body out in better poise than most finches in similar attitudes, makes me believe the texts are wrong in describing them as weak.

A Mrs. Rodewald, living in Altadena, California, has been feeding hummingbirds syrup and has gained quite a following. When perched on the little stick held out for them, I noticed the vigorous manner in which the birds sidled down to the end of the