

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Behavior of Northern Phalaropes.—The first of the Northern Phalaropes (*Lobipes lobatus*) began to appear on the lakes of Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, about the middle of August, 1937, increasing in numbers as the days went by so that by the first week in September there were several hundred birds scattered over certain of the lakes. Some of the lakes the phalaropes avoided almost entirely.

I do not know for how many years the phalaropes have used the lakes of Golden Gate Park as loafing and feeding stations during their fall migrations, but I do know that they appear much more at home in the park than they did in 1936. In that year they were not especially shy, but on the other hand they were not friendly to the human visitors who came to feed the ducks. This year, when people came to cast bread on the water, the phalaropes crowded in to get their share of the food. At South Lake the phalaropes were especially tame. When bread was thrown on the water, the birds hurried from all sections of the lake. The birds that were farther away came on the wing and those that were nearer paddled their jerky way. Soon many were mingling with the ducks and were jabbing eagerly for the smaller crumbs.

By spinning rapidly on the surface of the water the clever phalarope creates a whirling current that brings the water-logged bits of bread to the surface. I actually saw this magic take place while the bird was only three feet away. The spinning habit of the phalarope is well known, but I doubt if it is generally known that the phalarope is also an excellent flycatcher. As I watched the phalaropes, it seemed to me that no bird floats more lightly on the surface of the water and that no bird takes more easily to the air. Time and again I saw birds rise almost straight up from the surface of the water to pluck flying insects from the air. Often a bird would rise fifty feet above the lake to capture a passing insect.

Another day I saw Northern Phalaropes display their flying ability under different circumstances. It was on September 22, 1937, while I spent a sunny hour sitting on the shore of South Lake in Golden Gate Park. A Virginia Rail came out from cover to paddle leisurely along the shore of the little island. I was studying this rail through the binoculars when suddenly the leisurely bird put on a burst of speed and dashed to cover. Looking up I discovered the cause of the excitement; a Sharp-shinned Hawk, on wings of the wind, was trying to snatch one of the six phalaropes from the surface of the water. The phalarope dodged and took to wing, and was going in the opposite direction when the hawk swooped by. The hawk surely could have made a kill had it been willing to take a ducking in order to gain a phalarope for its lunch. Possibly the hawk was not very hungry, or perhaps it was in its mind that here were several phalaropes remaining on the lake, any one of which might furnish a meal. Time after time the hawk circled and came swooping down over a phalarope.

The phalaropes were wise and were reluctant to leave the water. Not once was a phalarope foolish enough to leave the water before the oncoming hawk. Always they would dodge when the killer made the swoop, and always they left the water going in the opposite direction when speedy wings were carrying the killer away. Not being able to frighten a phalarope into leaving the water ahead of its stoop, the hawk was doomed to forego its luncheon. However, when the last remaining phalarope took to wing, the hawk made a desperate attempt to pluck it from the air. The hawk made a quick turn and followed the phalarope. Seemingly he could travel at about twice the speed of the phalarope, but he could not turn or dodge so quickly. After dodging the hawk six or seven times, the phalarope managed to get above the hawk and there it was safe, for the hawk did not attempt to strike from below, nor could the hawk outwing the phalarope in upward flight.—CHARLES W. MICHAEL, Pasadena, California, November 15, 1937.

Fire Ants Attacking California Quail Chicks.—Ants of the genus *Solenopsis* may destroy from 4 to 12 per cent of Bob-white Quail nests in Georgia, attacking and eating the helpless chicks as they emerge from the shell (Stoddard, The Bobwhite Quail, 1932, p. 193). In Arizona, ants (genus not determined) are reported to attack and kill not only hatching chicks but also incubating females of both Gambel and Scaled quails (Gorsuch, Univ. Ariz. Bull., vol. 5, 1934, pp. 76-77). Apparently ant depredations on California Quail have heretofore escaped notice.

At Davis, California, fire ants (*Solenopsis xyloni* and *S. molesta*) have been found swarming over the shells of recently hatched eggs of the California Quail (*Lophortyx californica californica*) on a number of occasions. In the course of detailed observation of thirty-two quail nests at this locality in 1936 and 1937, only one case of actual destruction of hatching chicks was noted. The nest (U. F., 1937, 11) in this instance was in an unusually exposed site in a small nut orchard only 50 feet from a paved sidewalk. Four days before the set of eleven eggs had been completed a grass fire had removed practically all protective cover and had actually scorched the shells of five of the eggs. Incubation, however, was carried on until July 25 when the eggs were due to hatch. At 5:50 that

53