

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Electrocution of Parakeets at Agra, India.—While stationed at the Agra Army Air Force Base, United Provinces, India, from August to December, 1945, I observed an interesting cause of mortality among the common Rose-ringed Parakeets (*Psittacula krameri*). The Army had strung a large number of electric wires at the Air Base on which the parakeets were in the habit of perching, especially around the poles. The parakeets, with their habit of using their bills to assist themselves in climbing about amidst perches, often short-circuited themselves across the wires and thus were electrocuted. The accompanying photograph, taken on October 23, 1945, clearly shows two dead parakeets. One is clinging by a foot to a wire and the other is clinging by its beak. Two living parakeets. This scene was repeated at almost every electric pole on the base with anywhere from one to a half dozen dead parakeets clinging to the wires or lying on the ground beneath.

Many other species of birds such as Green Bee-eaters (*Merops orientalis*), Ring Doves (*Streptopelia decaocto*), and Magpie Robins (*Copsychus saularis*) also habitually perched on these wires but were not killed because of their habits, which caused them to touch no more than one wire at a time.

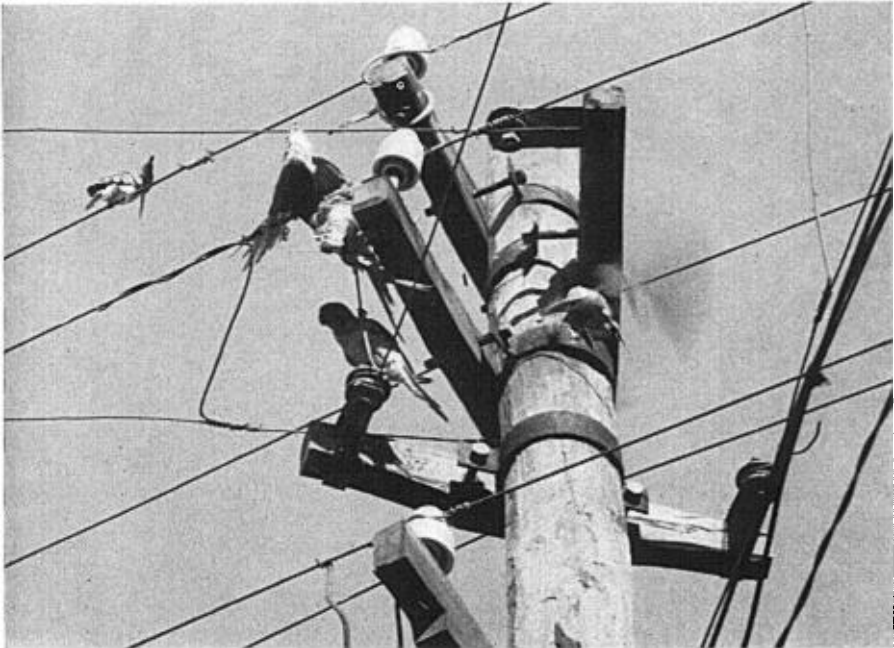


Fig. 1. Electrocuted Rose-ringed Parakeets.

After the breeding season, which is concentrated in March, these parakeets form immense flocks of many thousands of birds. These flocks descend upon standing fruit and grain and in some areas cause a tremendous loss of such crops. I have seen them almost covering millet, wheat, rice, and other grain fields. The same is true for fruit orchards. They also cause great damage to stored grain. I have seen stacks of grain bags piled on railroad sidings covered with these parakeets which were busily, and noisily, tearing open the bags with their strong bills to get at the grain within. They not only eat a great deal of such grain but by tearing the sacks open they cause much loss in transit. Since the food problem is such an acute one in India, it would be desirable if these depredations could be eliminated or at least reduced.

The foregoing observation on the electrocution of these birds may have some practical application for local control, despite the general feeling among the Indians against killing of any sort. Many

large fruit bats, *Pteropus*, were also killed by these electric wires. These bats also do considerable damage to fruit.

Since these parakeets, when they have formed flocks after the breeding season, have huge communal roosts, generally in a grove of large trees, they might be most easily controlled there. There was one such huge roost in a grove of large trees on the bank of the Jumuna River near the Taj Mahal at Agra. Parakeets roosted there by thousands. They generally arrived in parties of from a dozen to several hundred birds late in the evening during the last hour or so before sunset. At times the air would be filled with them and the din caused by their screaming and the thunder of their wings was indescribable.—WILLIAM C. DILGER, *Department of Conservation, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, July 14, 1953.*

Another New Rail from the Pleistocene of Florida.—In a recent paper (Wilson Bull., 64, 1952:80) I described *Laterallus guti*, a new species of rail from Pleistocene deposits at Reddick, Florida. This species differed from its living representative (*Laterallus jamaicensis*) in larger size and more robust form.

At another Pleistocene locality, at Haile, Florida, Mr. Walter Auffenberg collected a complete humerus of a second undescribed rail, but one which is referable to the genus *Porzana*. This species differs from the living Sora Rail (*Porzana carolina*) and is described as

***Porzana auffenbergi*, new species**

Type.—No. 742, collection of Pierce Brodkorb, complete left humerus; from Sangamon Stage of Pleistocene, in Stratum 2 (shell layer) near Haile, Alachua County, Florida, in Section 24, T. 9 S, R. 18 E; collected by Walter Auffenberg, April 17, 1953.

Characters.—Humerus agrees with *Porzana carolina* in proportions (see table 1), in well developed deltoid crest, distally produced entepicondyle, strong condyles, and stoutness. Differs from *P. carolina* in larger size, even better developed deltoid crest, and slightly more produced entepicondyle

Table 1

Measurements in Millimeters and Ratios of Humerus of Rails

Species	No. of species	Length	Proximal width	Width of shaft at center	Distal width	Proximal width to length	Shaft width to length	Distal width to length
<i>Porzana auffenbergi</i> (Middle Pleistocene)	4	39.0	7.8	2.6	5.6	20.0	6.7	14.7
<i>Porzana carolina</i> (Recent)	1	32.6–34.2	6.5–7.3	2.2–2.3	4.7–4.8	19.9–21.3	6.4–7.1	13.7–14.7
<i>Porzana carolina</i> (Pleistocene)	1, 2	33.7	7.2	2.3–2.4	4.8–5.0	21.3	6.8	14.8
<i>Rallus limicola</i> (Recent)	4	36.1–39.0	6.5–7.1	2.0–2.2	4.6–5.1	17.9–19.2	5.5–5.6	12.5–13.1
<i>Rallus limicola</i> (Pleistocene)	4	2.0–2.2	4.5–4.7
<i>Rallus prenticei</i> (Upper Pliocene)	1, 2	36.1	7.1	2.1–2.6	5.1–5.3	16.9	5.8	14.13

The humerus is about the same length as in the living Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*) but it is considerably stouter and accordingly the width-length ratios are higher. Furthermore it differs from *R. limicola* in the better developed deltoid crest, the more distally produced entepicondyle, and the stronger condyles.

Porzana auffenbergi differs from *Rallus prenticei* Wetmore (Univ. Kansas Sci. Bull., 30, 1944:99), of the Upper Pliocene of Kansas, in the greater length of the humerus, the stouter shaft, the heavier distal end, with the epicondylar prominences and trochleae better developed, and the more produced entepicondyle. It agrees with *R. prenticei* in the long deltoid crest.

Elsewhere (Wilson Bull., 65, 1953:49-50) I have described the stratigraphy of the deposit at