

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

Field Observation of Torpidity in the Violet-green Swallow.—Despite numerous early anecdotal accounts of torpidity in swallows (see McAtee, *Amer. Midl. Nat.*, 38, 1947:191–206), the occurrence of this phenomenon in these birds has yet to be documented by physiological measurements. Several authors have commented upon this lack of information (Pearson, *Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool.*, 124, 1960:101; King and Farner, in *Biology and Comparative Physiology of Birds*, Marshall (ed.), Vol. II, 1961:279). Torpidity, or temporary hypothermia, has been studied in swifts (Koskimies, *Experientia*, 4, 1948:274–276; Bartholomew, Howell and Cade, *Condor*, 59, 1957:145–155), caprimulgids (Marshall, *Condor*, 57, 1955:129–134; Bartholomew, Howell and Cade, *op. cit.*; Howell and Bartholomew, *Condor*, 61, 1959:180–185; Bartholomew, Hudson and Howell, *Condor*, 64, 1962:117–125; Lasiewski and Dawson, *Condor*, 66, 1964:477–490), and in hummingbirds (Ruschi, *Bol. Mus. Biol. Santa Tereza*, 1: No. 7, 1949; Pearson, *Condor*, 52, 1950:145–152; Pearson, *Condor*, 55, 1953:17–20; Bartholomew, Howell and Cade, *op. cit.*; Lasiewski, *Physiol. Zool.*, 36, 1963:122–140; Lasiewski, *Physiol. Zool.*, 37, 1964:212–223), but the occurrence of torpor in swallows remains in doubt.

On the morning of 11 April 1965, one of us (HJT) observed an apparent case of torpor in the Violet-green Swallow, *Tachycineta thalassina*, at Saratoga Springs, California, which is located at the southern end of Death Valley National Monument, at an elevation of 250 feet. The springs are the source of a permanent body of water and surrounding marshy area, and this oasis supports a considerable concentration of insects during the warmer months. The wet areas are surrounded by semistabilized sand dunes, dotted with shrubby *Suaeda*.

A large number of swallows were seen feeding over the open water on the evening of 10 April. That night was cold, although not freezing, with gusty winds of up to 15 miles per hour. The next morning, approximately 30 minutes after the sun shone on the dunes, three apparently "dead" Violet-Green Swallows were found lying on the ground, on an east-facing slope of the dunes. All three birds were oriented in the same manner; their heads facing up the slope, wings slightly spread, feathers fluffed, and the long axis of their bodies perpendicular to the rays of the sun. Closer observation revealed that the birds were not dead, although they did not respond visibly to HJT, who walked within one foot of them.

Clifford Thompson, age 11, attempted to pick up one of the swallows. When his hand was within a few inches of the bird, it responded by opening its eyes, and tilting its head slightly, but did not attempt to fly away. The bird was easily picked up and did not struggle while it was being held, examined and photographed. When an attempt was made to pick up a second swallow a few minutes later, the bird flew off awkwardly before it could be caught. At this time no swallows were flying over the water.

Fifteen minutes after the capture of the first bird (approx. 45 minutes after the sun's rays first struck the dunes), the first swallow was released where it was first observed, and it flew off normally. The third swallow had flown away by this time, and at least 100 swallows were flying and feeding over the water.

Unfortunately, no thermometers were available, and it was not possible to obtain either environmental temperatures or body temperatures of the swallows. However, our photographic records clearly show the first swallow with fluffed feathers and closed eyes being held in the hands. This behavior is indicative of torpor in other birds. Furthermore, the sluggish behavior of the birds, their inability to escape when first approached, and their unusual position on the ground strongly suggest that the birds were hypothermic. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first report of torpidity in this species.

The extent and significance of torpor in the biology of swallows is difficult to assess, although published records (summarized in McAtee, *op. cit.*) suggest that it may serve as an emergency method of dealing with inclement weather and the consequent unavailability of flying insects. Adult and nestling Cliff Swallows (*Petrochelidon albifrons*), maintained under near starvation conditions in the laboratory, did not enter torpor (Lasiewski and Mayhew, unpublished data). Since torpor is easily induced by withholding food in other birds that utilize this method of energy conservation (some caprimulgids, swifts and hummingbirds), the inability of Cliff Swallows to enter into

and arouse from torpor in the laboratory seems to indicate that torpor is not a regular occurrence in this species. This observation of natural torpor in the Violet-green Swallow, on the other hand, suggests that temporary hypothermia may be a more regular phenomenon in this species and that this may be a fruitful area for further study.—ROBERT C. LASIEWSKI, *Department of Zoology*, and HENRY J. THOMPSON, *Department of Botany, University of California, Los Angeles, California*, 16 June 1965.

Nesting of Grasshopper Sparrow in Wyoming.—On 29 June 1964 we frightened a female Grasshopper Sparrow, *Ammodramus savannarum*, from its well-hidden nest in dry, grassy habitat on a large flat-topped mesa one-half mile south of Mountain View, 7000-foot elevation, Uinta County, Wyoming. This sparrow was identified on the basis of narrow, short tail, weak flight, unstreaked breast, secretive behavior, and the appearance of her nest. It was woven of grasses, sunk flush with the level of the ground, and hidden from above by small tumbleweeds and grasses. In the nest were three young, with eyes unopened, and a fourth (Univ. of Illinois 5058) lay dead about one foot away from the nest. On the following day we returned to the nest, which was empty. It is preserved in the Museum of Natural History.

Grave and Walker (Univ. Wyoming Bull., 12:91, 1913) list the Grasshopper Sparrow as rare in Wyoming, known from "hay meadows near Afton," which is about 105 miles north of Mountain View. To the best of our knowledge our record of reproduction is the only one that has been reported for this species in the state.—CHARLES A. LONG and DANIEL H. MATULIONIS, *Department of Zoology, University of Illinois, Urbana*, 6 August 1964.

Adult Little Blue Heron on San Pablo Bay, California.—On 25 September 1965 a Little Blue Heron, *Florida caerulea*, in adult plumage was observed for about 30 minutes on the mudflats of San Pablo Bay, near the mouth of Tolay Creek, Sonoma County, California. The bird was observed by several members of the Redwood Region Ornithological Society aided by binoculars and a 20-power telescope. The Little Blue Heron was in company with several Snowy Egrets, *Leucophoyx thula*, and, when the tide rose, left the mudflats and flew north into a marshy area in company with a Snowy Egret.—JOHN R. ARNOLD, ROBERT FAILING, JACK GUGGOLZ, and BENJAMIN D. PARMETER, *Redwood Region Ornithological Society, Sonoma State College, Rohnert Park, California*, 9 November 1965.

Little Blue Heron at Santa Barbara, California.—On 20 May 1965 a Little Blue Heron, *Florida caerulea*, was found at Goleta Slough, Santa Barbara, California, by R. K. Burns. It had been under observation for two days by Dr. Burns, and was at times in company with several Snowy Egrets, *Leucophoyx thula*.

I was able to photograph the heron on colored motion picture film at a range of 250 feet, using a 385 mm telephoto lens. The heron seemed to be in very good adult plumage, with the long feathers of the rump extending well beyond the tail.—WALDO G. ABBOTT, *Curator of Ornithology and Mammalogy, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Santa Barbara, California*, 7 June 1965.

Some Notes on Birds of Elko County, Nevada.—During field work by personnel of the Owyhee District of the Nevada Fish and Game Department, information on two species was obtained for Elko County, Nevada.

Acanthis flammea. Common Redpoll. Linsdale. (Pacific Coast Avifauna, no. 23, 1936:120) and (Condor, 53, 1951:244) lists this species as a winter visitant to the northern part of the state,