

OVERVIEW

RAPTORS SHOT AT AIRPORT

An immature Bald Eagle was shot and killed at Stewart Field Airport in Newburgh, New York. Criminal investigations of the airport security guard who claimed he thought the bird was a Turkey Vulture were begun by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service but have since been dropped. No criminal charges will be made by the Service.

The injured bird was brought to the Audubon's Valley Raptor Center for surgery but it died anyway.

The Bald Eagle is protected by the Migratory Bird Act, the Endangered Species Act and the Bald Eagle Act of 1940.

The Bedford and Orange County Audubon Societies are pursuing their own investigation and the New York State Falconers Association has filed a lawsuit.

Two Ospreys, two Northern Harriers, and one Great Horned Owl have also been found shot and injured around Stewart Airport.



Great Horned Owl

SERIOUS WETLAND LOSS REPORTED BY U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

A report that estimates total United States wetland loss since colonial times was issued to Congress by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The report states that over the past 200 years, 60 acres of wetlands are lost each hour, totaling approximately 117 million acres. Ten states have lost 70 percent of their wetlands and over 22 states have lost at least 50 percent.

RADIO TOWERS PROPOSED FOR PINE BARRENS

The United States Air Force wants to put 16 or 18 radio communication towers in the pygmy pine plains in New Jersey's Pine Barrens, a plan opposed by the New Jersey Audubon Society.

New Jersey Audubon has asked for a "properly done" environmental impact statement because the chosen site is located on sensitive wetlands.

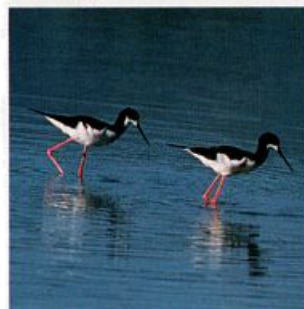
The presence of the communication towers would be disruptive to birdlife in the area, especially during migration periods.

HONOLULU WETLAND THREATENED

Plans to redevelop the Honolulu waterfront include filling the Keehi Lagoon which contains mudflat feeding grounds critical to the recovery of the endangered Hawaiian Stilt, or Aeo.

The lagoon has been extensively developed over the last 50 years with very little left intact. It now contains an airport, a two-mile reef runway, seaplane runways, and boat channels.

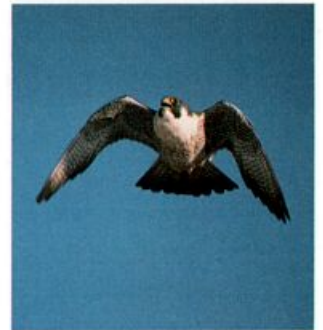
The United States Fish and Wildlife Service contends that the remaining area must be preserved in order to ensure the success of these birds. The stilts have already suffered severe habitat loss in other parts of Hawaii.



Black-necked (Hawaiian) Stilt

20TH ANNIVERSARY FOR PEREGRINE FUND

The Peregrine Fund celebrated its twentieth year of dedication to the prevention of Peregrine Falcon extinc-



Peregrine Falcon

tion. The fund has had notable success in halting the decline of this falcon through releases of captive birds and management of wild nests.

Tom Cade, of Cornell University, created the Peregrine Fund in 1970 with the goal of reestablishing the falcon throughout its natural range in the United States. This was ten years after all Peregrine sites east of the Mississippi River were abandoned and all but ten percent of nesting territories in the West were vacant.

Since 1974, over 3000 Peregrines have been released, resulting in breeding in over 23 states. At the onset of the release program, approximately 60 Peregrine pairs were known in the contiguous United States. In 1990, there were more than 500 pairs.

The Peregrine Fund also operates the World Center for Birds of Prey, a research and propagation facility which assists with the preservation of national and international endangered birds of prey.

BIRDER OF NOTE

Elliot Lee Richardson

Age: 70

Profession: Lawyer, formerly Attorney General of the United States, Secretary of Defense of the United States, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, Secretary of Commerce.

Editor's note: Mr. Richardson has held more Cabinet offices than any other person in United States history.

How long birding? 58 years: ever since I was a pupil of Roger Tory Peterson at the River School when he was working on the first edition of his field guide to the Birds of Eastern North America.

Favorite field guide: All of Peterson guides.

Why do I bird? Because they are so endlessly varied in appearance, habits, and habitats, birds are fun to observe and identify and fascinating to learn about.

Binoculars: Swarovski 10x50.

Life list? Yes, presently with about 700 species on it.

Latest life bird: Plumbeous Kite in Belize.

Favorite North American bird: Black-capped and Carolina chickadees.

My favorite birding habitat is areas of salt marsh and my preferred method is on foot. I have special affection for Monomoy Island, Massachusetts.

My favorite birding companions are Roger Peterson, Wallace Bailey and my wife Anne.

My biggest birding thrill was seeing a Bald Eagle posing in a tree, not fifty yards away, in our backyard in suburban Virginia, for the benefit of the British Ambassador to the United Nations, while we were having breakfast together.

The most interesting place I've ever birded is in the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador.

I'd next like to bird Big Bend National Park, Texas.

Quote: "Birding is watching and seeing, listening and hearing. It sharpens our awareness of the living world around us. Best of all, it yields bright sequences of memory that never leave us and never fade."



UPDATE

GOLDEN-CHEEKED WARBLER DECLARED ENDANGERED

The Golden-cheeked Warbler, Texas's only endemic breeding bird, has been permanently listed as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. The permanent listing immediately followed a 90-day emergency listing, thus providing no lapse in protection.

This declining species has been increasingly threatened by severe habitat loss and fragmentation. Its entire nesting range occurs within Texas where it is dependent upon the presence of Ashe Junipers for essential nesting materials.

A juniper eradication program, in effect until the 1970s, destroyed about 50 percent of the juniper acreage existing in Texas. Since then, widespread clearing of junipers, urban development, and highway construction have continued to threaten the Golden-cheeked Warbler and its habitat.

200 SEABIRDS SHOT IN VALDEZ OIL SPILL STUDY

Two hundred seabirds were collected as part of a study to determine the total number



Double-crested Cormorants

of birds lost in the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska. This \$598,000 study was conducted by a private company hired by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of Justice to obtain evidence

to present in the Government's case against the Exxon Corporation.

Researchers shot the birds, fitted the bodies with radio transmitters, covered some of the bodies with oil and dumped the birds into the sea. They hope to determine the number of birds that sank after the spill proportionate to the number of birds that floated to shore. About 36,000 birds were recovered after the spill. The killed birds included Common Eiders, murrelets, Pelagic Cormorants, Double-crested Cormorants, Harlequin Ducks, Crested Auklets, White-winged Scoters and Surf Scoters.

In a separate study, authorized by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 219 ducks and 84 mammals were collected in order to obtain tissue samples. Roy Nowlin, habitat and wildlife manager for the state oil spill damage assessment program, stated that the samples are needed to determine the extent of oil accumulation in the animals and its effects on reproduction, fat accumulation and whether or not the animals are fit for human consumption.

The ducks killed included 128 Harlequin Ducks, 68 goldeneyes and 23 scoters. Among the mammals taken were 17 Steller's Sea Lions, which have since been listed as a threatened.

PIPING PLOVER AFFECTED BY WETLAND MITIGATION

The threatened Piping Plover has had its ever-shrinking habitat adversely affected because of wetland mitigation activities permitted under the federal wetlands protection program.

The federal wetlands protection program requires that the destruction of wetlands be mitigated by the creation of new ones of equal or greater size. Studies

along the coast of Texas, which loses over 1100 acres of coastal wetlands annually, indicate that the success of these man-made wetlands is often questionable. Johnny French, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service senior staff



Piping Plover

biologist in Corpus Christi stated, "We get about half the mitigation we expect."

The tidally flooded sand flats where Piping Plovers feed have been scraped to become permanently flooded saltwater marshes under some mitigation efforts. The Piping Plover cannot forage for the invertebrates on which it feeds in these flooded areas.

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TIMBER INDUSTRY OPPOSES POLICY FOR RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER

The Florida timber industry is challenging a new policy enacted by the U.S. Forest Service to increase protection of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. The new policy is aimed at preserving and increasing the essential habitat of these endangered birds.

The Red-cockaded Woodpecker nests in old forests that the timber companies would like to harvest. The new policy provides for a three-quarters of a mile buffer zone around each national forest area that contain fewer than 250 wood-

pecker colonies. Before 1989, loggers could clear-cut within 200 feet of the colonies.

The Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund may sue the Forest Service in an effort to expand the policy to include additional areas, such as the Apalachicola National Forest. Six hundred known clans of woodpeckers (each clan consists of 2 to 9 birds), considered the largest population in the world, currently live in the 559,000 acres of the Apalachicola National Forest. The new policy does not include this area.



Red-cockaded Woodpecker

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PROTECTION NEEDED FOR CALIFORNIA GNATCATCHER

The California Gnatcatcher may receive much needed protection if it is listed as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. The Natural Resources Defense Council and Manomet Bird Observatory filed a petition with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to have the California Gnatcatcher declared an endangered species.

The species is in deep trouble. Habitat destruction and fragmentation are largely responsible for the serious population decline of this bird, which was declared a separate species in 1989. Its population has dropped



California Gnatcatcher

to between 1000 and 2000 pairs and an estimated 70 to 90 percent of its essential coastal scrub habitat has been destroyed by development. Scheduled development activity on its scant remaining habitat can be prevented by an endangered listing.

Plant ecologists consider the coastal sage scrub habitat of the California Gnatcatcher the most endangered vegetative type in Southern California and perhaps one of the most endangered habitat types in the country.

AUDUBON REPORT

HONOLULU MARSH

Kawai Nui Marsh, Hawaii's largest remaining freshwater wetland, should receive better protection now that it is owned and managed by the state of Hawaii, rather than by Honolulu.

Society President Peter Berle and Audubon's Hawaii State Office Director Dana Kokubun encouraged the ownership transfer to the state which the Hawaii legislature approved and made law in 1990.

This valuable wetland suffered long neglect under the stewardship of the city. Hawaii intends to provide better protection. Endangered native waterbirds should benefit from this transfer of ownership.

A PLAN TO STOP THE WILD BIRD TRADE

Audubon staff, in a joint effort with the pet industry, bird breeders, zoos, and conservation groups plan to introduce legislation in Congress to ban the trade in wild-caught birds for pets. The joint effort is known as the Cooperative Working Group on Bird Trade.

The pet trade poses a dramatic threat to many bird species. Eight million of the more than 40 million caged birds in the United States, including most parrot species, were trapped in the wild as adults or nestlings.



Scarlet Macaw

The United States is the largest market for tropical birds. At least half a million birds are imported each year: thousands die before they ever reach stores. A bird has about a 50-50 chance of surviving capture, transport, and sale.

SEAL ISLAND

The Society's Project Puffin, under the direction of Steve Kress, has successfully lured Atlantic Puffins to Maine's Seal Island where they had not been seen for over 100 years.

Researchers used decoys and recordings of puffin



Seal Island

cries to coax the birds to the cliffs of the island. (See *AB* Winter 1990, p.1061.) In Summer 1990, 12 puffins returned to Seal Island.

Kress has also had success with Arctic Terns whose numbers on Maine coastal islands have decreased by more than 50% in the last 50 years. Again using decoys and tape recorded calls, Kress lured 17 breeding pairs of Arctic Terns to Seal Island. This past summer, 17 new chicks were counted.

TENMILE VALLEY

The National Audubon Society recently purchased 116 acres of mixed coniferous forest in Tenmile Valley, Oregon, considered the largest surviving stand of coastal temperate rainforest in the contiguous United States.

Oregon's largest known concentration of Marbled Murrelets nest in this old-growth forest, which is also habitat for Northern Spotted Owls.

Tenmile Valley is the first forest sanctuary acquired by National Audubon in the Pacific Northwest.

CORKSCREW WATERSHED

Acreage critical to birds and wildlife located at the headwaters of the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary in southwest Florida has been purchased by the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) Trust. This purchase insures the continued survival of the sanctuary according to Ed Carlson, Corkscrew Sanctuary's manager.

The sanctuary is a 10,500-acre preserve owned by the National Audubon Society. It contains the nation's largest nesting colony of the endangered Wood Stork as well as a major virgin cypress stand. The acquisition of these headwaters is part of a larger CREW Trust plan to buy all 45,000 acres surrounding and forming the watershed of the Corkscrew Sanctuary. It is estimated that this project will cost \$30 to \$40 million.

The Trust is comprised of the county governments, the water management district, private corporations and individuals.



Wood Stork

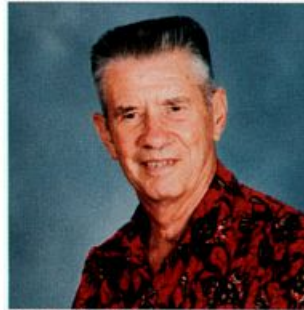
DIRECTIONS

CHANDLER S. ROBBINS WINS YEAGER AWARD

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has honored long-term United States Fish and Wildlife Service biologist, Chandler S. Robbins, by selecting him as the recipient for the 1991 Chuck Yeager Award. This award recognizes professionals whose fieldwork has made a substantial contribution to conservation efforts on behalf

of fish and wildlife populations. The careers of the recipients of this award set the standards for the profession.

Robbins, who is known for the development of a nationwide bird population monitoring system, the breeding bird census, as well as many exemplary studies and numerous writings on birds and their habitats, will receive a \$15,000 grant which can be applied to a



Chandler S. Robbins

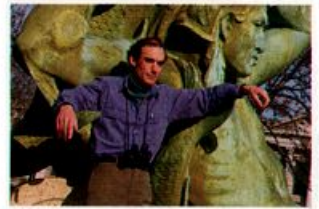
conservation project of his choosing. His outstanding career spans more than four decades.

His current projects include population studies and an upcoming workshop aimed at efforts to curb the population decline of birds that migrate to the forests of Neotropical areas.

MOVED

Alan Poole, the new managing director of the Birds of North America Project at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, has undertaken the enormous task of overseeing the update of Arthur Cleveland Bent's *Encyclopedia of North American Birds*.

This "Bent's of the twenty-first century", as Poole describes the project, will be a comprehensive encyclopedic reference work that describes in detail all breeding species of North American birds. The discussion on each bird will range from factual details such as plumage, egg size, and life history, to management and conservation concerns.



Alan Poole

Poole estimates that the project will take seven to ten years to complete; but the accounts will be available as they are finished, both in a bound looseleaf form and on computer. He expects to have 60 sections completed by the end of 1991 and 100 to 150 completed each year thereafter.

MOVED

Cynthia Lenhart is the new Executive Director of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association. Before accepting this position she was the director of Wildlife Policy for the National Audubon Society for over six years.



Cynthia Lenhart

As Executive Director, Lenhart expects to continue her involvement in international issues, including the conclusion of an atlas project of worldwide raptor migration sites, as well as work on domestic conservation policies.

She acknowledges that being a director is quite different from being a staff person. When life becomes too stressful, she puts on her hiking boots and "goes up on the mountain to see a Golden Eagle."

HONORED

Gilbert M. Grosvenor, president and chairman of the board of the National Geographic Society, has been awarded the Conservation Medal of the Zoological Society of San Diego. The medal acknowledges Grosvenor's many years as a conservationist and, particularly, for his work in conservation education through the publications of the National Geographic Society.

Starting as picture editor for National Geographic Magazine in 1954, Grosvenor served as the magazine's editor from 1970 to 1980, when he became the Society's president. He has been on the National Geographic Society's board of trustees for 24 years, serving as its chairman since 1987.

The scope of the Society has expanded under his leadership to include a children's magazine, a scientific journal, a weekly cable television series, educational aids and programs for schools, and the Summer Geography Institute for teachers.

HONORED

The 1990 Hawk Mountain-Zeiss Raptor Research Award was jointly presented to Eduardo E. Inigo Elias, a master of science candidate at the University of Florida, and Karen L. Wiebe, a doctoral candidate at the University of Saskatchewan. The award is granted on the basis of a student research project's potential to improve the understanding of raptor biology and its ultimate relevance to the conservation of global raptor populations.

Elias is studying the effects of forest fragmentation on tropical birds of prey in Chiapas, Mexico. He is currently using satellite imagery to look at the raptors' distribution and use of resources. His data will be useful to Mexican conservationists

seeking to protect the resources needed by these species.

Wiebe researches the American Kestrel and how food supply influences its reproductive decisions and success. Her study seeks to determine how the abundance of food and parental behavior influences the number of chicks that are successfully reared from the nest.

WORLD BRIEFS

SEYCHELLES

The Seychelles Magpie-Robin may have its chances for survival increased thanks to a recent recovery plan to be undertaken on Fregate Island, the only place in the world where this bird lives.

Development on Fregate Island, which is a mile long



Magpie-Robin

and a mile wide, has so altered the natural habitat of the Magpie-Robin that the island cannot support many of these small thrushes.

The recovery plan includes habitat restoration, the creation of nesting sites, assistance with food availability and predation control. The ultimate goal is to reintroduce the Magpie-Robin to an additional island once a population of 200 birds is achieved.

The recovery plan, initiated by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the International Council for Bird Preservation, has received the support of the Seychelles government and the owner of Fregate Island.

BRAZIL

Most new birds discovered in South America in recent decades have come from the Andes, but the Amazon rainforest was the source of the Rondonia Bushbird (*Clytoctantes atrogularis*), described in the December 1990 *Wilson Bulletin*. Scott Lanyon, Doug Stotz, and David Willard named this new antbird on the basis of sightings and one specimen from the Brazilian state of Rondonia. Formal descriptions of new birds have rarely resorted to using sight records, but in this case it was necessary: after 1400 hours of very intense fieldwork, the authors had encountered the bird exactly three times. Evidently already rare, the Rondonia Bushbird is threatened by rapid deforestation and by hydroelectric dam construction.

INDIA

Keoladeo National Park at Bharatpur in Rajasthan, India, is considered by some to be one of the best wetland habitats for birds in the world. Over 400 bird species come to Bharatpur, including the rare Siberian Crane (*Grus leucogeranus*). Conditions in the park are deteriorating and many of the birds that exist there have been adversely affected.

Among the problems faced by Bharatpur are lack

of adequate water caused by too little rainfall, pressures from surrounding ever-growing human population and pesticide use in the nearby fields. Sarus Cranes are among the birds that have succumbed to pesticide poisoning: four died in 1988, eight in 1989 and two in 1990. The park is heavily visited — at times receiving up to 7000 visitors a day. Many of the visitors are pilgrims, rather than birders, whose destination is the Keoladeo temple located within the sanctuary.

Of particular concern is the decline of the Siberian Crane, which uses Bharatpur as one of its two wintering sites. Only 17 cranes arrived in Bharatpur in the winter of 1989-1990, down from 41 individuals in 1984-1985, which was down from around 200 in 1964. Crane hunting in Afghanistan and Pakistan is thought to be the major reason for the decline in numbers; however, conditions in Bharatpur may force the birds to seek alternative wintering grounds. At the December 1989 Asian Crane Conference, Indian scientists identified the rehabilitation of Bharatpur as an item of high priority.



Siberian Crane

PHOTOGRAPHS LEFT TO RIGHT: DOUG WECHSLER/VIREO; STEVEN HOLT/VIREO

VIETNAM

A flock of rare Eastern Sarus Cranes, numbering about 1000 birds, may soon lose the water impoundment where they have been living and successfully breeding for the last four years.

The artificial water impoundment, located in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam, is part of a nature reserve. Local residents are seeking to turn the impoundment into rice fields.

George Archibald, director of the International Crane Foundation in Wisconsin, acknowledges the desperate circumstances of the inhabitants, but also recognizes that this area is critical to the cranes: "If the impoundment is lost, the cranes could be lost too."

INDONESIA

Bali's only endemic bird, the Bali Myna (or Rothchild's Myna), is in serious danger of extinction as a result of poaching for the caged bird trade. In 1989, an estimated 24-31 individuals remained in the wild.

There has been some notable breeding success using captive birds from American zoos and those in Indonesian parks. Thirteen offspring from these successful matings have been released into the wild population and are thriving.

This captive breeding program was initiated in an effort to conserve this striking bird by the International Council for Bird Preservation along with the Indonesian government.

SPAIN

The breeding ground of the threatened White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*), is facing possible destruction due to the planned development of a 32,000-bed holiday resort next to the Coto Donana wetland where the White-headed Duck breeds.

Coto Donana is a protected area and is considered one of the world's most important wetlands. It is a national park, a Ramsar site, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and an EEC Special Protection Area.

Environmentalists from all over Europe are opposing the plans.

MADAGASCAR

A recent rainforest survey of the Ambatovaky Special Reserve in Northeastern Madagascar included sightings of six threatened bird species: Brown and White-breasted Mesites (*Mesitornis unicolor* and *M. variegata*), Short-legged and Scaled Ground-rollers (*Brachypteracias leptosomus* and *B. squamigera*), Grey-crowned Greenbul (*Phyllastrephus cinereiceps*) and Red-tailed Newtonia (*Newtonia fanovanae*).

American Birds extends an invitation to all of its readers to contribute items to our new Overview department. Tell us about something of particular interest to birders: new products, relevant legislation, exhibits, grants, awards, honors, career transitions, or interesting quotes about birds and ecology taken from articles and speeches. Use this issue as a model for items we'd be likely to publish. Send items to: Overview, *American Birds*, 950 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022

BEHAVIOR WATCH

THREE ADULT SWAINSON'S HAWKS SHARE NESTING DUTIES

South of Calgary, Alberta, Kevin J. Cash (*Condor*, Vol. 91, No. 3) found a Swainson's Hawk nest tended not by two but by three adults. All three adults, one dark-morph and two light-morph birds, were present when the nest was being built and



Swainson's Hawk

stayed until the young fledged. The dark-morph bird, which was the smallest and defended the nest most aggressively, was probably a male. What may have been the same trio—one dark and two light—raised a brood in a nearby crow's nest the following year. The fact that all three were adults suggests that this was an instance of polygamy and not of a helper at the nest, which has been observed in a few other raptors and generally involves a young bird assisting a pair of adults.

BALD EAGLE LIVES FOR TWO YEARS WITH ONLY ONE FOOT

A young Bald Eagle hacked in August at the Quabbin Reservoir in Massachusetts got its left foot damaged in a trap in November at Jackman, Maine. After its foot was amputated the bird was returned to Quabbin and released in January. Two years later it was still alive, feeding at a bait station at Quabbin. Bradford G. Blodgett,

QUOTES

LOVING NATURE TO DEATH

"...Ecotourism...threatens to destroy the resources on which it depends. Tour boats dump garbage in the waters of Antarctica, shuttbugs harass wildlife in national parks, hordes of us trample fragile areas. This frenzied activity threatens the viability of natural systems. At times we seem to be loving nature to death."

—Peter A.A. Berle
President,
National Audubon Society

Writer Ken Emerson describing cowbird behavior in an article entitled "Seen Any Warblers Lately?" in *The New York Times Magazine*.

"It's a grotesque yet mesmerizing sight, a miniaturized 'Rosemary's Baby' for real. On a bare branch about 20 feet up an oak tree, a big dingy cowbird fledgling is calling insistently for food. Its cries are answered by a warbler half its size, an

adult Ovenbird that alights on the branch with a caterpillar in its beak. Approaching timorously, the Ovenbird tosses the tidbit down the fledgling's gullet and flies off in a flash, as if in fear that it, too, will be devoured."

"Crows are bored. They suffer from being too intelligent for their station in life."

Natural history writer David Quammen, quoted in "Brains of the Bird World," *Montana Outdoors*.

THE ACT VS THE JOBS

"It (the Endangered Species Act) must not be sacrificed to the 'human equation.' If the Spotted Owl goes, so goes the act. And over the long haul, to state the matter bluntly, the survival of the act is more important than the survival of the jobs."

—syndicated columnist
James J. Kilpatrick

William J. Davis, and Mark Pokras (*J. Field Ornithol.*, Vol. 61, No. 1) report that while feeding, the eagle braced itself against a deer carcass with its left leg, balanced with its right foot, and tore at the carcass with its bill. Its claws were longer than those of other eagles, indicating that normal wear was probably not occurring. This is apparently the first documented case of any eagle surviving in the wild with only one foot.

**FAN-TAILED RAVEN
TRIES TO BREAK "EGG"
WITH STONE**

Unable to break what seemed to be an egg by pecking it or by dropping it from the air, an East African Fan-tailed Raven finally picked up a stone and hit the object four or five times. When even this didn't work, the raven picked it up and flew away. The bird's failure is not surprising, because what it had found was not an egg but a ping-pong ball! This remarkable incident was seen recently at Lake



Fan-tailed Raven

Baringo in Kenya by Staffan Andersson (*Condor*, Vol. 91, No. 4). Being fooled by a ping-pong ball is a mistake any bird might make, but while making it, the Fan-tailed Raven joined the handful of birds that have been observed using "tools" — stones to break eggs or twigs to pry food from crevices.

HOTHOUSE FLYCATCHERS

In Arizona, Ash-throated Flycatchers have taken to nesting in metal fence posts along highways, often where no natural cavities exist. But many nests fail, and wondering why, John B. Dunning, Jr., and Richard K. Bowers, Jr. (*J. Field Ornithol.*, Vol. 61, No. 1) placed thermometers in several nests. The temperature was often far above that of the air outside, exceeding 41°C (106°F) and at times reaching 49°C (120°F). Such stifling temperatures are believed to kill eggs, young, and even adults.

Of 15 fence-post nests, nine failed and only six, or 40%, were successful. In nearby wooden nest boxes, nests were cooler than the air outside and 79% succeeded. These manmade nest sites have enabled the flycatchers to breed in new areas, but given the high mortality rate, it will be interesting to see if the birds continue to use these sun-baked sites.

FOOT-QUIVERING FOR FOOD

"Foot-quivering," in which a thrush rapidly moves its feet on the ground without traveling forward, has been seen in several thrushes, but has always been considered as hostile behavior directed at other thrushes. While watching migrant Veeries and Gray-cheeked and Swainson's thrushes in Cameron Parish, Louisiana, Wang Yong and Frank R. Moor (*Wilson Bull.*, Vol. 102, No. 3) saw birds of all three species engage in a bout of "foot-quivering" and then peck at the ground. They also saw prey flushed and captured after a bout of "foot-quivering." The behavior can be a sign of hostility, but at least among thrushes actively feeding during migration, it appears to be an important foraging method.



Red-bellied Woodpecker

**A WOODPECKER TURNS
THE TABLES**

House Wrens are well known for destroying the eggs or nestlings of other birds, a habit that is especially common where House Wrens nest abundantly. In northern Illinois, Andrew J. Neill and R. Given Harper (*Condor*, Vol. 92, No. 3) watched a Red-bellied Woodpecker steal a six-day-old nestling from a House Wren's nest. Two more young wrens disappeared from this nest during the following week, probably stolen by the same woodpecker. Checking the literature, Neill and Harper found a few other reports of nest-robbing by Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and they suggest that these birds may be responsible for the disappearance of more nestlings than is generally thought.

**THE FAMILY THAT
STAYS TOGETHER**

Canada Geese migrate in family groups, and the families stay together through the winter and into early spring. Because little was known about how family members interact outside the breeding season, Jane Austin (*Wilson Bull.*, Vol. 102, No. 3) studied marked

birds in family groups on the wintering grounds near Swan Lake, Missouri. By monitoring the amount of time family members spent at various activities, Austin found that adult males, and to a lesser extent adult females, spend more time on alert and less time feeding than juveniles do. The advantage to the adult males may be that their offspring survive the winter at a higher rate, since the young have more time to feed, and may also contribute to a higher survival rate for their mates.

THE ODD EGG OUT

In most nests of the Northwestern Crow, one of the three to five eggs is paler than the others. Suspecting that this pale egg might stand out from the others and thus be more likely to be taken by a predator, Nicolaas A. M. Verbeek (*Condor*, Vol. 92, No. 3) studied 82 nests on an island in British Columbia. In clutches that had a pale egg, this pale one was the last-laid egg in 74%, and the first-laid in 18%. In 17 nests that lost an egg to a snake, gull, or another Northwestern Crow, 12 lost their pale egg, and seven of these pale eggs were the last ones laid. Whatever the reason for its paler color, the last-laid egg was also significantly smaller and had a reduced chance of hatching. The last-laid egg is the most expendable, and sure enough, its pale color places it at greater risk of being taken by a predator.