

After watching for a few moments and being unable to see the cause of the gathering, we approached near enough to frighten the birds away. At first we could see nothing to cause so much excitement; then we discovered, as we had suspected, a copperhead snake, perhaps twelve inches long. The snake, blending so well in color with the dead leaves of the ground as to be hard to see, even when we knew it was there, lay irregularly coiled, its head flattened down on the body and so motionless as to appear dead. The birds meanwhile utterly vanished. BERYL T. MOUNTS, *Macon, Ga.*

Some Notes on Mutilated Birds.—In the first week in August, 1924, I saw a Vesper Sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus gramineus*) that seemed to be rather weak, and therefore I made an effort to capture it. As I got nearer to the bird it flew about fifteen rods in the meadow, and it was easily captured. Upon examining it, I found that the bird was without a bill, but for how long, I could not tell. Its tongue was exposed, and how it managed to get its meals on insects or seeds is something to wonder about. I put it in a cage and tried to feed it, but its increasing weakness made that impossible, and it died a few hours after having been captured. This was in Luce County, Michigan.

A few days before getting the Vesper Sparrow without the bill, I saw a bird in a very unusual action. It appeared as if it was tied to a string and had only a few yards to range, like a cow when tied to a stake in the pasture. I at once ran and captured it, and found that half of its right wing was missing, which caused it to be weak on the wing. Its longest distance of flight was not over two feet. Just how long this bird had been this way, and where it was when it happened, is a mystery. In reply to a letter sent to the Biological Survey, I was informed that if I was not able to care for the bird, it had better be killed. I kept the bird and it lived until about April 6, 1926. I have kept a record of what I took to be of the most interest, and am planning on summing it up for a future number of the WILSON BULLETIN. These notes are mostly on its molt, song, and food—OSCAR M. BRYENS, *Three Rivers, Mich.*

Franklin's Gulls in Northwestern Oklahoma.—During the summer of 1925, Franklin's Gulls (*Larus franklini*) were with us more than usual. About 5,000 appeared in early July and among them were a goodly number in immature plumage. During the middle of August a good shower filled a dry pond near our house, and this was used by about a thousand gulls as their headquarters. They made a very pretty sight as they stood in the shallow water with their heads all in one direction against the wind. There was a constant hubbub of mewing and squalling amongst them. Some birds would be flying up to soar in the air above, while others would be sitting down with the flock. Some of them would go through intricate acrobatic aerial maneuvers, pitching and diving, while two different individuals actually banked their wings until they were in a vertical position and then turned over and floated on their backs upside down, righting themselves with a flip as they came on down to the water. The birds seemed much interested in fixing up their plumage and pulled out so many feathers in the operation that the border of the pond was completely lined with them. They ranged from little downy feathers a half inch long up to quills from the wings; most of them, however, were about two inches in length.

The gulls were very assiduous in their search for grasshoppers, and there was a noticeable diminution in the abundance of these insects as a result of

their labors. Most of their hunting was done in the cooler parts of the day—in the morning and evening. About sundown they would come trooping back, in long straggling lines. During the hotter part of the day the gulls were far aloft, sometimes getting so high up in the sky that they became merely faint specks which one could see only as they turned in the soaring and their white plumage glinted in the sunlight. In other years when they have been in abundance later in the season I have seen the air for miles fairly alive with these soaring specks. The beneficial character of the gulls is well understood hereabouts and everyone is their friend.—WALTER E. LEWIS, *Gate, Okla.*

Bird Groups During Migration.—Do birds preserve the family colony and the neighborhood group when migrating? In the late summer and early fall it is usual to see the birds mobilizing for the journey south. The Yellow-breasted Chat, the Catbird, the Brown Thrasher, the orioles, the flycatchers, and some others are usually found in family groups. The Robin and to some extent the Bluebird, the Meadowlark, and the Sparrows are usually found in neighborhood groups. The Vesper, Field and Chipping Sparrow population of a farm, or of several adjacent farms, form a neighborhood group and use a common feeding ground until they leave for the south. Some days, during the high tide of migration, their territory may be over-run with groups of migrant sparrows, but little coalescence is noted in the groups as they feed and rest in the stubble fields and thicket borders. The Chipping Sparrows sometimes may join with a company of migrant Kinglets. The Meadowlarks mobilize in some grassy meadow or pasture for the late summer molt. They are not much in evidence, and will only take to wing to escape some danger. But, with the completion of the molt, they are again active and roam over considerable territory.

In central Ohio the breeding Song Sparrows do not seem to migrate in any noticeable numbers, and I am persuaded that many of them have never traveled a mile from their home environment. In some favorable association on the farm they nest and rear their young, and we see them in that association every day throughout the year. During the fall, and yet more often in the spring migration, I have observed groups of migrant Song Sparrows feeding near their home. The local birds do not coalesce with these groups, but keep on the outskirts. When the migrants are disturbed they usually fly to an adjacent field or thicket, and just as quickly the local birds fly to their accustomed cover and hiding places.

The Fox, White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows come to us as migrants, in companies of six to one hundred. The Fox Sparrow affords the best opportunity for a study of the migrant group. They are usually present in greater numbers, and their manner of feeding in the open woods makes the observation of them easy. A few warm days and nights in middle March brings waves of them, and if they are checked by a north wind, they stay until the next favorable weather. There may be hundreds of these birds in a wood lot, but the group outlines can be clearly drawn and the organization is held intact. These groups work in lines with the individual birds close enough, so the whole body of leaves is moved. The line is often zig-zag; one group that is more energetic or does not have so many leaves to move, may get ahead of their neighbors. The Robins work the woods the same way but use their bills to move the leaves.—CHARLES R. WALLACE, *Delaware, Ohio.*