

horses, cows, sheep, and hogs had free run over that yard, the birds hatched all their eggs and presumably the young escaped from the animals of the barnyard.—AMOS W. BUTLER, *Indianapolis, Ind.*

**Wayne's Clapper Rail Carries Its Young.**—In view of the recent discussion in the WILSON BULLETIN concerning the habit of birds to carry the young, the writer presents the following case. Many observers have reported an adult carrying young between the legs. It has been reported of the American Woodcock, European Woodcock, Spotted Sandpiper, and Eastern Willet. Gayle Pickwell has written of a Killdeer's nest that was on a shed fifty feet above the ground, and



FIG. 16. Photograph of the Killdeer's nest referred to in Dr. Butler's note.

that the young were found on the ground near the shed while still but feeble walkers. In what manner the old ones had transferred the young was not observed. All these accounts may be found in Bent's Life Histories, in the two volumes devoted to the shore birds. The account of the Eastern Willet is quoted from Wayne's Birds of South Carolina, where he told of finding a nest which contained one newly hatched bird and three eggs ready to hatch. He stayed nearby until all were hatched, and the parent bird carried the young off to some distance, *one by one* until all were removed. Certainly this seems like purposeful action.

Outside the shore bird group Bent quotes an account by Verdi Burtch of a Virginia Rail carrying a young bird back to the nest in her bill. E. Burnham Chamberlain, Curator of the Science Department of the Charleston Museum, has given permission to write down a hitherto unpublished account of Wayne's Clapper

Rail carrying young. It seems that he, with several others, was at Procher's Bluff, South Carolina, during a time of high tide. As they were watching young rails drifting by on the usual drift trash, he noticed an adult rail swimming with something in its bill. Through the binoculars he could see that the bird was carrying a young chick in such a manner that its head was under water. As he watched she stopped, shifted the burden so the young would not drown, swam to the raft of drift, dumped the chick onto it, and clambered up herself.

When one considers the reputation of the observers, the fact that the behavior has been seen in several species, and the number of times it has been reported, it is hard to escape the conclusion that this is a well developed and *purposeful* method of removing the very young bird from a zone of danger. Yet, with the knowledge that the intelligence in the shore bird group is not on a very high plane, I wish someone might furnish a better explanation of the phenomenon and its origin. That it exists we can not well doubt, nor can we well believe it accidental when repeated time after time.—IVAN R. TOMKINS, *U. S. Dredge Welatka, Savannah, Ga.*

**Melanism in the American Rough-legged Hawk.**—The winter of 1936-37 in southeastern South Dakota was one of unusually deep snow. Highways were blocked for days and the prairies were covered early with a blanket of snow that ever increased in depth as the season advanced. The American Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus s. johannis*) was abundant, probably forced south in more than usual numbers by the deep snow and severe blizzards which likely made it difficult to procure sufficient food in its northern range.

As the roads were cleared of snow after each new storm, large flocks of Horned Larks (*Otocoris alpestris* subsp.), Lapland Longspurs (*Calcarius lapponicus*), and Ring-necked Pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus torquatus*) were attracted to the graveled highways. Many of these birds were killed each day by the passing cars and furnished a continual banquet for the Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), in which they were quite frequently joined by the Rough-legged Hawks.

I spent five days a week all winter long traveling this territory and I doubt if a single day passed that I did not see at least one Rough-legged Hawk. Usually I saw many each day and I was especially interested in their great variety of plumage, which ranges from the pure black that give the "Rough-leg" the name of "Black Hawk" throughout the middlewest, to birds of such light plumage that they might easily be mistaken for the Ferruginous Rough-leg (*Buteo regalis*) by the incautious observer. Melanism in the American Rough-legged Hawk is so common as to excite little interest under ordinary circumstances and I had given this phase no more than ordinary attention until an incident occurred which brought it to my notice more forcefully.

On January 29, 1937, in McCook County, south of Montrose, South Dakota, while driving along the highway I noticed two large hawks some distance ahead of me. One of them was perched on a telephone pole and the other had lit in the snow near by. I was able to drive within twenty yards of them and take out my glasses before they took wing. They were identical, no single feature of either size or plumage differed in any respect. Both hawks were black except the under surface of the distal third of each wing. They took wing and flew across the road in front of me, turned and came back low and almost directly overhead. Their markings were unusual even for the Rough-leg and the fact that they were