

near Ruthven, Iowa, July 16, 1939, I found a dead Coot of between six and seven weeks of age suspended by the neck on a piece of reed grass (*Phragmites communis*). The lower one-third of the Coot's body was in the water. Just above and back of the bird was a large platform nest about 24 to 30 inches above the water, built by piling stalks on the base of a smashed clump of reed grass. The bird, using this as a roosting platform, had undoubtedly in jumping off the nest become snared in the loop of reed grass.

Another unusual cause of death among Coots was observed several times during the course of waterfowl investigations in Iowa marshes. On two occasions during the summer of 1939, and once during 1940, I came across Coots hanging from a barbed wire fence which crossed the marshland in Clay County known as Barringer's Slough. Upon closer examination I found that two of these birds had apparently hit the barbs on the wire, which were pointing upward at about 45 degree angles. The barbs tore into the skin of the lower neck, and the birds had swung once completely around the wire, and were thus fastened very securely to it. The other bird had not gone completely around the wire but had caught on a horizontal barb and had fallen over the wire to the side opposite the barb. How long the birds struggled before death overtook them is not known.

On another occasion, several Coots from a flock of about 25 or 30 flying low over the marsh were seen to strike the fence, but none was caught on the barbs. How many birds struck the fence for each one caught is problematical. It is conceivable that injury and death to birds from striking these wires might in a season reach numbers sufficiently large to make justification of the barbed wire across this waterfowl habitat highly questionable.—JESSOP B. LOW, *Illinois State Natural History Survey, Natural Resources Building, Urbana, Illinois*.

**Greater Yellow-legs as a Fish-eater.**—Most shore birds generally feed upon insects and other invertebrate life. The Greater Yellow-legs (*Totanus melanoleucus*) is quite adaptable, however, and occasionally an individual is found feeding upon a type of food that may be considered far removed from its normal diet.

On September 3, 1942, at Lac aux Morts (Lake Alice), Ramsey County, North Dakota, I observed a Greater Yellow-legs standing in about 2 inches of water and feeding upon fish. During the short period of 15 minutes that this bird was under observation, it consumed eight small minnows. The bird caught the fish at right angles to its bill, then skillfully turned the fish so that the head was swallowed first.—CLARENCE COTTAM, *Fish and Wildlife Service, Chicago, Illinois*.

**Purple Sandpipers at Richmond Beach, Ohio.**—About 30 miles east of Cleveland the Grand River empties into Lake Erie at Fairport Harbor. The town of Fairport is on the east, the village of Richmond on the west. A large turning-basin for ore boats has been dredged out at the mouth of the river, and in order to protect this basin from the prevailing currents, which would soon fill it up with sand, a huge stone pier has been built out into Lake Erie for several hundred feet. Since the lake's outlet is to the east of the pier a long sand beach, known as Richmond Beach, has gradually formed to the west. The pier itself is made of large blocks of stone laid without mortar joints, and has many large cracks and crevices. The sides slope downwards to about water level, where the base extends outward on each side for about four feet forming flat stone strips which are covered with algae. On these four-foot strips and on Richmond Beach itself, other observers and I have made a number of records of the Purple Sandpiper (*Arquatella maritima*) since 1937—which are, I believe, the only modern records for this bird in Ohio. They are as follows: one sandpiper seen on December 27, 1937, and one on January 2, 1938 (James Akers); four seen on November 13, 1938 (Mr. and Mrs. M. B. Skaggs, Isabelle Hellwig, and Ralph O'Reilly); two, November 19, 1938 (Mr. and

Mrs. M. B. Skaggs, Vera Carrothers, and Margarette Morse); three, November 20, 1938 (James Akers); one, December 27, 1941 (Arthur Fuller); three, December 31, 1941, and one, November 27, 1942 (Raymond Hill).

I have carefully checked these records with the observers. Skaggs informs me that he and his companions observed the sandpipers with glasses, in good light, at a distance of about 25 feet, and noted the characteristic dark coloration of head and breast, yellow at base of bill, and yellowish-orange legs. The description tallies with Akers' and Fuller's observations and with my own.

On December 31, 1941, I had one of the three sandpipers seen that day under close observation for over an hour, and took 35 feet of 16 mm. colored film, using a three-inch telephoto lens, set at distances of from 12 to 25 feet. I have shown this film to J. Van Tyne and some of his associates at the University of Michigan, who agreed in identifying the movie "specimen" as a Purple Sandpiper.—RAYMOND W. HILL, 3316 Kenmore Road, Shaker Heights, Cleveland, Ohio.

**Glaucous and Great Black-backed Gulls at the Western End of Lake Erie.**—While the rest of the lake is still jammed with ice, the thaws and westerly winds of early March commonly bring open water along the shallow western end of Lake Erie. As the shore-fast stacks and sheets of ice slowly disintegrate, flocks of gulls gather to feed on the winter-killed fish in the cracks of the ice and in the muddy pools at the shore.

During the two or three weeks that these conditions usually last, I have seldom failed in the last three years to find at least one Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*) and (though less frequently) one or two Glaucous Gulls (*Larus hyperboreus*), among the hundreds of Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) and Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*).

These two northern gulls have been considered rare in this region, and though other observers and I made regular sight records, their occurrence in Michigan was not proved by specimens before 1943. Our seeing these birds so regularly during the last three winters, I believe, is only partly explained by the fact that we knew when and where to search. The evidence points to an increase in numbers of both species, especially of the Black-backed. In previous years the Glaucous might have been overlooked frequently, but it seems unlikely that so conspicuous a bird as the Black-backed could have been missed often.

Although similar conditions seem to attract both gulls in their greatest numbers, there are interesting differences in their behavior here. The Black-backed is more regular than the Glaucous; it is the most wary of the gulls seen here; it has never appeared before a freeze-up in Lake Erie, and it is seldom seen after the ice has vanished from the lake; it is rarely seen away from the open lake; birds which look fully mature outnumber immatures 7 to 1. In contrast, the Glaucous may appear at any time from the onset of winter to the end of April; it may be approached at least as easily as a Herring Gull; it has been seen on several occasions along the marshes, estuaries, and rivers near the lake, and on one occasion an individual was seen feeding on skinned muskrat carcasses in a field; individuals vary widely in amounts of buff in the plumage, and every one observed closely enough to discern this character had the dark-tipped mandible instead of the orange-red mark of the fully adult bird.

The Glaucous Gull, which had been observed eight times in seven years, beginning in 1934 (L. W. Campbell, *Birds of Lucas County*), was seen four times in 1941, four in 1942, and four in 1943. Before 1941, no more than one bird was seen on one day, but two were observed on April 13, 1941, and two on March 21, 1942. Although one was seen as early as November 29 (1936), and one as late as June 6 (1937—specimen taken at Little Cedar Point, Ohio, by Campbell), most have appeared between mid-January and mid-April. In all these observations we have eliminated the possibility of confusion with albino Herring Gulls by direct