

from its breeding grounds, spending some time, and then returning. The best term for such an unorthodox migrant would seem to be "autumn visitant."

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Air speed of Belted Kingfisher.—In the spring of 1946 while travelling in central Colorado, a companion and I recorded the speed of a Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*) as it flew for a distance along U. S. Route 50 in the Arkansas River Canyon between Canon City and Salida. For several miles the canyon walls are very precipitous, rising a thousand feet or more from the stream bed. Passing through this, the deepest part of the canyon, where the road is separated by only a few feet from the river, we noticed a Belted Kingfisher flying upstream in a course parallel to our car. We were travelling at 30 miles per hour when the bird, flying with apparent ease, came in range of our vision from behind. To keep pace with the bird we increased our speed to 35 and then to 40 miles per hour. At this speed we stayed abreast of the bird for 1.8 miles before it again drew ahead of the car. We increased our speed to 45 miles per hour and were thus able to follow it 0.4 mile farther, when we were forced to reduce speed because of a rock slide partially blocking the highway, and the Kingfisher was lost to view. I estimated that the Kingfisher had been flying with a wind velocity of one to three miles per hour to assist him.

In all, we had successfully followed this bird for a total distance of 2.2 miles from the point of first observation. At no time had the distance between us and the bird been greater than 10 or 12 yards. In order to maintain this distance it had been necessary for us to increase our speed from 30 to 40 and finally to 45 miles per hour. D. D. McLean (1930. *Gull*, 12, No. 3: [p. 2]) recorded "steady level flight" of 36 miles per hour for the Belted Kingfisher (in California). All during our observation the Kingfisher flew with apparent ease and remained between 10 and 15 feet above the water's surface, following each curve and bend of the river consistently. It showed no alarm or anxiety because of the nearness of the automobile. Observation and alertness, however, were evident in the continual turning of its head from side to side during the flight.—LEE J. BURLAND, *138½ River Street, Oneonta, New York.*

Purple Martins feeding on emerging may-flies.—On the evening of August 2, 1946, I observed at Shafer Lake, White County, Indiana, what I at first supposed was a large feeding school of white bass (*Lepibema chrysoψs*) about a third of a mile from my boat. (These bass travel about open water in schools and in the summer months feed at the surface, making splashes that can be seen from a considerable distance.) On closer approach, however, I found that the splashes I had observed were being made by Purple Martins (*Progne subis*) and a smaller species of swallow (either Bank or Rough-winged) which were feeding on may-flies (Ephemeroptera) that were coming to the surface to molt. This emergence was taking place along the east shore of the lake for about 1,000 yards and out into the lake for perhaps 400 yards. Often the birds picked the insects from the water, making hardly a splash. Almost as often, however, they made a large splash, sometimes almost disappearing beneath the water. The flies actually on

the surface were so abundant that it does not seem likely that the birds were attempting to capture those still under water, but I can offer no other explanation for the splashing. This feeding activity continued for the remaining half-hour of daylight.—CARL D. RIGGS, *University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.*

House Wren feeding a Cowbird.—Three times during one period of observation on July 20, 1946, I saw a House Wren (*Troglodytes aëdon*) feed a large (40.5 grams) Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) near our house on the Edwin S. George Reserve, Pinckney, southeastern Michigan. Friedmann (1929, "The Cowbirds," p. 255) states that the House Wren is a "rarely imposed upon species. It is merely mentioned as a molothrine victim by Bendire and also by Davie, while Kells, (Auk 1885, p. 106), in Ontario, writes that during 1884 he found young Cowbirds in the nests of several species among which he lists the present one."

The only Wren family near our house had four young Wrens two or three days old in a nest box eight paces from where the Wren was feeding the Cowbird. It seems possible that the male Wren was caring for a Cowbird from an earlier Wren brood while the female was looking after the newly hatched young; on the other hand, he may have adopted a young Cowbird that had been reared by other foster parents.—FRANCES HAMERSTROM, *Edwin S. George Reserve, Pinckney, Michigan.*

Birds eating blossoms.—Search of a considerable number of publications discloses only a few records of the eating of blossoms by birds other than the gallinaceous browsers. In Baltimore in 1945 and 1946 I occasionally found English Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) feeding on the petals and stamens of apple, pear, and cherry blossoms, and once saw a Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) feed similarly between phrases of song in an apple tree. Mention of this to fellow-members of the Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Bird Club produced in the club's *Bulletin* (No. 9, 1946:10-11) notes by Louise F. A. Tanger on a Cardinal (*Richmondia cardinalis*) eating forsythia blossoms and by Mary Grebinger on Cedar Waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) in an apple tree "tearing the petals off, holding them in their beaks for a moment, and then letting them fall." I have found records of English Sparrows eating pea and bean flowers (*U.S. Dept. Agric. Tech. Bull.* 711, 1940:30), Galapagos Finches (*Geospiza* spp.) eating various flowers (*Condor* 47, 1945:179, 188), and (in England) the Marsh-Tit (*Parus palustris dresseri*) and Wood-Pigeon (*Columba p. palumbus*) feeding on plum blossoms (*Brit. Birds*, 36, 1942:141).—HERVEY BRACKBILL, *4608 Springdale Avenue, Baltimore 7, Maryland.*

Period of dependency in the American Robin.—Observations on five American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) color-banded as nestlings in Baltimore, Maryland, make it possible to elaborate on the following statement by Howell (1942. *Amer. Midl. Nat.*, 28:583): "It appears that the young are dependent on the parents, and the male in particular, for less than four weeks. While young that are four weeks old do beg from their parents, they receive little assistance." Of the five birds I watched, two were from first broods, and three from a second brood. Attempts at self-feeding began at about the age of 20 days; most of the fledglings remained partly dependent through the age of 28 to 31 days; and they remained in the home territories through the age of 30 to 38 days. The observations on each bird are as follows:

O-RA: Hatched night of April 21-22, 1945; left nest May 6, aged 14 days; next seen May 12, aged 20 days, picking at ground ineffectively; first seen to obtain food (inanimate) May 16, aged 24 days; last seen fed by parent May 23,