

GENERAL NOTES

A Michigan record of the Black Rail.—On 12 September, 1951, I collected a Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis pygmaeus*) at Portage Lake, Section 31, Waterloo Township, Jackson County, Michigan. The bird flushed from tall grass and sedge at a distance of about seven feet. The ground surface was dry and about 18 inches above the level of the nearby Portage River. The specimen (Museum of Zoology No. 119,882) was an immature female with the ovary measuring 8×3 mm. and the skull incompletely ossified. The bird, weighing 36.33 grams, was very fat. The colors of the soft parts were: feet, dull purplish-black; bill, black; iris, pale ochre-brown. This is the Black Rail referred to in the *Jack-Pine Warbler* (30, 1952:9); it is the first specimen of the Black Rail taken in Michigan.—ROBERT S. BUTSCH, *University Museums, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, October 20, 1952.*

Great Blue Heron feeding on a muskrat.—On August 11, 1952, I observed a Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) that was standing in a small pothole between the village of Baltic and Portage Lake, in Houghton County, Michigan (section 24, T 54N, R 34W). In its mandibles the heron was holding a full grown muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*) by the head. From the soggy appearance of the fur, I judged the muskrat had been dead for some time. The heron dropped and picked up the muskrat several times before leaving it near the edge of the pond and flying away. During this time I was sitting in my car in plain sight of the heron which was obviously disturbed by my presence. cursory examination of the literature does not reveal any record of a Great Blue Heron feeding or attempting to feed on a muskrat although it has been noted feeding on pocket gophers.—ARTHUR WARD PETERSON, *Game Division, Department of Conservation, Lansing, Michigan, September 17, 1952.*

Unusual behavior of an Osprey.—On October 4, 1952, A. C. Berkowitz and I were attracted by a large whitish bird soaring over a field and occasionally hovering in the manner of the American Rough-legged Hawk, *Buteo lagopus*. We immediately recognized the bird as an Osprey, *Pandion haliaetus*. While we were watching this performance a Marsh Hawk, *Circus cyaneus*, arrived and seemingly tried to drive the Osprey away.

The Osprey flew to a tree in the same field and perched on a bare limb, affording us the opportunity of examining it through a $20 \times$ telescope at a range of 150 yards. After a few minutes in the tree, the bird again took to the air, coursing back and forth, occasionally hovering, and two or three times dropping to the ground or within inches of it. No prey was seized, apparently. The bird finally alighted on the ground and was there when we left.

The field in question is about one-half mile from the Raccoon River and one and one-half miles from the Des Moines Waterworks Impounding Reservoir near Des Moines, Iowa. Ospreys are often observed fishing in the reservoir. Most writers state that the food of Ospreys is exclusively fish, a few mention water snakes and salamanders, and one or two cite instances of poultry being taken, but I am unable to find anything in the literature to indicate that Ospreys have been previously seen hunting in the manner observed by us.—WOODWARD H. BROWN, 4815 Ingersoll Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa, October 9, 1952.