

Aerial feeding by the English Sparrow.—On September 27, 1953, at 4:45 p.m., I was on the roof of Bradley Hall on the campus of Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois, inspecting the English Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) roost in the ivy covering the south and west walls. At this time at least six sparrows were observed feeding on flying insects, considerable numbers of which were in evidence several feet directly above the roof. One female sparrow perched quietly on top of the west wall, peered upward at the insects for ten seconds, then suddenly sallied upward at a 75 degree angle to a height of at least ten feet, seized an insect in its bill, and returned to the roof. This individual repeated the feeding maneuver to heights of three and four feet. The entire performance was very reminiscent of the feeding habits of flycatchers. One sparrow, flying leisurely over the roof, suddenly sallied upward six feet from its line of flight, apparently secured an insect, and then continued in its original direction.—OLIVER S. OWEN, *Department of Biology, Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois, November 1, 1953.*

Aerial feeding by White-crowned Sparrows.—On Oct. 24, 1953, at the Impounding Reservoir near Des Moines, Iowa, I was watching a group of immature White-crowned Sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) in several young elm trees which were overgrown by a wild grape vine. Because of the mild weather, the grapes had not become withered and dried and the birds were eating these. Suddenly I noticed that several of the sparrows in the top of the tangle of vine were occasionally springing 15 or 18 inches in the air, returning to their former positions. Upon looking more closely with my binoculars I saw a swarm of gnats or other small insects hovering over the vine; the birds were catching, or attempting to catch, these. This was a feeding procedure which I had not seen before and which I do not find described in the literature.—WOODWARD H. BROWN, *4815 Ingersoll Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa, October 28, 1953.*

A hybrid between the Chipping and Clay-colored sparrows.—Hybrids between species of emberizine finches are rare; aside from crosses within the genus *Junco*, Cockrum (1952. *Wilson Bull.*, 64:150) lists but three such hybrids from North America. Of the three, one involves the genus *Spizella*, a record by Suchetet (1897. "Des hybrides à l'état Sauvage." I. Paris, J. B. Baillièrre et Fils) of a hybrid between the Clay-colored and Brewer sparrows (*Spizella pallida* and *S. breweri*). I have been unable to find this book, and it is possible that the "hybrid" was a specimen of *Spizella breweri taverneri*, which was described subsequent to Suchetet's work.

The scarcity of hybrids between species of the genus *Spizella* is perhaps surprising because two or more species of the genus nest in similar or adjacent habitats over wide areas. Chipping and Field sparrows (*Spizella passerina* and *S. pusilla*) are found nesting in the same field-borders and hedgerows throughout much of the northeastern United States; and in parts of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, the Clay-colored Sparrow may be found in the same areas as the Chipping and Field sparrows.

Lovells, Crawford County, Michigan, is in the region where the three spizellas are all found as breeding birds. Here, Almerin D. Tinker collected two sparrows on May 29, 1932. One, a Clay-colored (number 510 in Tinker's field catalogue), was skinned by Norman A. Wood, and the other, number 511, by Tinker, himself. The latter skin appears to be a hybrid between the Chipping and Clay-colored sparrows. (It is interesting to speculate on what might have happened if Wood had prepared the hybrid and Tinker, the other bird; under those circumstances, I doubt that the hybrid would have remained undetected for 21 years. It is also interesting to note that when the hybrid was catalogued as number 115,640 in the collection of the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology, it was listed as a Chipping Sparrow.)

The most striking thing about the specimen is the color of the crown. The anterior part is dark with a light median stripe. The central (and largest) part is rufous with dark shaft streaks, which are broad on the feathers near the side of the crown and narrow on the feathers of the central part and thus form indistinct dark lateral and light median crown stripes. The effect of the light median crown stripe is heightened by some pale markings on the central feathers of the crown. The posterior part of the crown is lighter than the central part, is between rufous and grayish buff, and is streaked with dusky like that of a first-year Chipping Sparrow; unlike that part of the Clay-colored, there is no pale central stripe.

The bird also shows its hybrid origin in the color of its bill: the maxilla is dark except laterally at the base, and the mandible is light except at the tip. (At this season, the bills of Chipping Sparrows are all black, and those of the Clay-colored Sparrows are light except at the tip.)

In the length of the wing and in tail/wing ratio, the hybrid is also intermediate between the two supposed parent species.

	<i>Wing length</i>	<i>Tail length</i>	<i>Tail/wing</i>
Chipping Sparrow ¹	70.3 mm.	59.1 mm.	0.845
Hybrid	66.8	61.9	0.925
Clay-colored Sparrow ¹	61.4	60.2	0.982

¹Mean of eleven males from the Lower Peninsula of Michigan.

(There is little difference between the lengths of the tails of birds of the two parent species; that of the hybrid is near the maximum size for both of these species.)

In other characters, the hybrid nature of Tinker's specimen is less striking. The ground color of the back is intermediate between the average color of that part in the parental species but can be matched by individuals of both. The dark streaks on the back are like those of most Chipping Sparrows but can be matched by those of some Clay-colored. The sides of the face and the ear coverts are light grayish buff, like the same areas of a Clay-colored but paler. The superciliary stripe is whiter than that of the Clay-colored and more like that of a Chipping Sparrow. The dark transocular stripe resembles that of a Clay-colored in being brownish black and in not extending anterior to the eye. There is a light "moustache" stripe like that of a Clay-colored but grayer than in most individuals of that species.

Tinker's catalogue gives little information about the specimen except that it was a male with "testes only slightly developed." This comment cannot be taken as an indication of possible sterility because the same comment was made about the Clay-colored Sparrow taken on the same day.—ROBERT W. STORER, *University of Michigan Museum of Zoology, Ann Arbor, Michigan, February 26, 1954.*

A fossil thrasher from the Pleistocene of Mexico.—Through the kindness of Dr. Claude W. Hibbard, I have been able to examine the tarsometatarsus of a thrasher from the Valley of Tequixquiac, Mexico. The exact site from which it was taken was Locality 8 (Hibbard, *Univ. Nac. Autonoma Mex., Inst. Geol. Boletin*, in press) just below Puente de Gallo, along the north bank of the Barranca de Acatlan, in deposits of Becerra Superior (Late Pleistocene). The specimen, number 49-26A in the collection of the Instituto Geologia Mexicana is tentatively referred to *Toxostoma ocellatum* (Sclater).

In its configuration, the bone closely resembles the corresponding element of *Toxostoma curvirostre*, but it is larger (36.7 mm. in total length) than three tarsometatarsi of that species in the skeleton collection of the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology (34.1, 34.2, and 35.5 mm.). Engels (1940. *Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool.*, 42:373) gives 32.7 ± 0.15 mm. for the mean and standard error for the length of the tarsometatarsus of