

## GENERAL NOTES

**A technique for trapping cowbirds.**—In April, 1955, an experiment with Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*) at my country banding station proved interesting. An old Red-eyed Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) nest, containing three eggs of the English Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), was placed inside one section of a two-compartment banding trap, which measured 24 × 12 × 9 inches. No grain or other bait was placed inside or near the trap. The drop-type entrance doors (6½ × 4½ inches) were at opposite ends of the trap, which was placed on the bank of a drainage ditch.

On April 12, between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., a female Cowbird entered the section of the trap containing the nest. When the door dropped down behind her, her alarm notes immediately attracted her mate into the opposite section of the trap. On the mornings of April 13 and April 14, before 9:00 a.m., two other pairs entered the trap in the same manner, and a fourth pair was banded on April 20. On April 17, one male entered the trap at approximately 8:00 a.m., and another male an hour later. No females were observed nearby in either instance. One of the banded males was reported shot by a student in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, in December, 1955.—BETTE J. JOHNSTON, 191 North Rose Street, Mount Clemens, Michigan, February 8, 1957.

**Sparrow Hawks prey on newly hatched Killdeer.**—While studying heron behavior during the spring of 1955 on Rulers Bar Hassock, an island in Jamaica Bay, western Long Island, New York, I had several opportunities to observe the feeding habits of a pair of Sparrow Hawks (*Falco sparverius*) which nested near one of the heron colonies. A pair of Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) was observed incubating a clutch of four eggs during the last week in April, 1955. On the morning of May 3, 1955, it was noted that all of the eggs had hatched, and during the afternoon of the same day, I made the following observation: as I approached the Killdeer nest, a male Sparrow Hawk flew low over the sandy area where the Killdeer nest was located, swerved when it saw the two adult and four young Killdeer, landed near the young and seized one of them. The Sparrow Hawk pecked once at the young bird in its talons, and then flew to the top of a nearby telephone pole and proceeded to devour the young bird. On the morning of May 4, I saw a female Sparrow Hawk perched on the same pole. Both Killdeer adults were calling vigorously. The Sparrow Hawk swooped to the ground and attempted to seize one of the young birds; this bird ran under the raised end of a log. The Sparrow Hawk flew to the log, jumped to the ground, reached under the raised end of the log with one foot and seized the young Killdeer. The hawk flew to its former perch and ate the young bird. On the afternoon of the same day, the female Sparrow Hawk captured and ate a third young Killdeer from the same nest. The fate of the fourth young Killdeer at this nest was not determined. On May 11, four newly hatched Killdeer were noted at a nest about 200 yards south of the one just described. On the afternoon of May 11, a male Sparrow Hawk captured and ate one of the young from this nest. Of the eight young hatched from the two nests, four were positively taken by the two Sparrow Hawks. A very cursory review of the literature on the feeding habits of Sparrow Hawks revealed no mention of charadriids in their diet.

The two Killdeer nests discussed above were located in unfavorable sites; both nests were placed within 25 yards of a busy thoroughfare, Cross Bay Boulevard, and the adults at both nests were continually disturbed by passing pedestrians and motor vehicles. Both nests were placed on light-colored sand, and when the eggs hatched, the young were very conspicuous. The placement of the nests in unfavorable sites, and the continued

disturbance of the adults contributed to the vulnerability of the young to predation by the Sparrow Hawks. Although my observations were very brief, I could find no evidence for predation by Sparrow Hawks on the young from three other Killdeer nests placed in much more favorable sites a few hundred yards further out in the marsh.—ANDREW J. MEYERRECKS, *Biological Laboratories, Harvard University, Cambridge 38, Massachusetts, October 2, 1956.*

**Blue-winged Teal nest parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbird.**—Near the village of Delta, on the Delta Marsh in south-central Manitoba, Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*) nest commonly at the marsh edge, in pastures, and occasionally in or at the edge of small patches of wooded land. The Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) also occurs there through the spring and summer, frequenting wooded areas and the surrounding pasture and grassland up to several hundred yards from any woods. On June 2, 1956, at the grassy edge of a wooded, sandy ridge I flushed a female Blue-winged Teal at a nest scrape. The nest contained no eggs, lining or down. It was not revisited until June 8 when it was found to have been lined with grass and a small amount of down and contained the remains of three teal eggs, which had been destroyed by a skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*). Two cowbird eggs were also present. On June 11 another cowbird egg was found on the open ground in the adjacent woods about 30 yards from the destroyed teal nest.

Friedmann (1949. *Auk*, 66:154–163, and preceding literature there cited) reported no recorded instance of a Brown-headed Cowbird parasitizing any species of duck. He mentioned only two cases of cowbirds parasitizing precocial or semi-precocial species, the Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) and the California Gull (*Larus californicus*), and one additional instance of Cowbird parasitism of a species laying a large egg, the Ferruginous Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo regalis*).

Presumably, lack of discovery of a proper nest for parasitism may lead a female cowbird to drop her egg in a quite inappropriate place. The additional egg found on the ground lends support to the supposition that the female or females involved here were having difficulty locating suitable hosts at the time of this observation.—WILLIAM J. HAMILTON, III, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley 4, California, December 12, 1956.*

**Nocturnal predation on Summer Tanager nestling by kingsnake.**—On June 6, 1942, I found a nest of the Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*), near Oreton, Raccoon State Forest, southeastern Vinton County, Ohio. The nest held three small young, and was 5 or 6 feet high in a small oak at the base of a fire tower. After dark in the early evening of June 7, I again visited the nest.

Because of the time lapse since the observation, I quote directly from my notes: "This evening I went out to look at the young tanagers in the nest near the fire tower. I flashed the light [flashlight] on the nest and was startled by a small Black Kingsnake, (*Lampropeltis getulus nigra*), coiled in the nest. The snake had just swallowed a young tanager. The tail and a foot of the young bird were protruding from its mouth." The snake was captured, and later released far from the nest. I left the area soon afterward, so I was unable to make further observations on the nest.—JOHN J. STOPPLET, *2612 Maplewood, Toledo, Ohio, January 16, 1957.*