

feathers retained. Using the characters of the presence of spotted, streaked, or otherwise marked or loose-webbed upper coverts and body feathers and degree of wear of flight feathers, I was able to age correctly all adult (10 male, 19 female) *H. ustulata*, but only 18 of 20 first-year males and 15 of 22 first-year females. Similarly I aged correctly all adult (29 male, 24 female) *H. minima*, but only 13 of 17 first-year males and 25 of 26 first-year females. I repeated these attempts with the same results. Others in the Museum of Zoology had the same experience with this sample. Because of this considerable variation in retention of juvenal plumage, it would be desirable for banders to check age by skull ossification on live birds as described by Miller (1946. *Bird-banding*, 17:33-35) as well as by plumage.

I would like to thank N. L. Ford, F. B. Gill, H. B. Tordoff, and L. L. Wolf for advice in this study. The article was written while I was attending the University of California with support from the National Science Foundation.—ROBERT B. PAYNE, *University of Michigan Museum of Zoology, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2 October 1960.*

**Foot-stirring in the Green Heron.**—Dr. A. J. Meyerrieks' article on Foot-stirring behavior in Herons (1959. *Wilson Bull.*, 71:153-158) describes this method of feeding in three North American herons (Snowy Egret, Reddish Egret, Louisiana Heron). A comparative behavior chart ("A summary of existing knowledge of the displays and related activities of ten North American Herons") in his more recent publication, "Comparative Breeding Behavior of Four Species of North American Herons" (*Publ. of Nuttall Ornith. Club*, No. 2), lists only these same three species as known to engage in this type of feeding behavior. On page 8 in this publication, he relates that the feeding behavior of the Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) is primarily of two types: Stand and Wait, and Wade or Walk slowly. In the light of these two articles the following observation may be of interest.

In the summer of 1954, while taking 16 mm films of Killdeer and Spotted Sandpipers in the shallow water of Fall Creek behind my home in Etna, New York, I noticed a Green Heron perched on a stone just above the surface of the water. With the 150 mm lens I was able to get a fairly large image, and started the camera as the heron stepped off the rock into the water. I recorded it on film as he stirred the water several times with his right foot, and shortly thereafter seized and ate what appeared to be a crustacean. Dr. Meyerrieks reports to me (pers. comm.) that an extensive search of the literature has failed to turn up a published reference to foot-stirring in the Green Heron, nor has he observed it himself in many hundreds of hours of watching this species. The little section of film footage I made is included in a lecture film of mine which has been shown to many audiences. Evidently this type of feeding behavior, while far rarer than other types, does occur at times in the Green Heron.—SALLY F. HOYT, *Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 29 July 1960.*

**Nest-building movements performed by juvenal Song Sparrow.**—There have been several accounts recently in the literature of nest-building movements performed by juvenal birds. Dilger described such an activity in a juvenal Swainson's Thrush (*Hylocichla ustulata*) (1956. *Wilson Bull.*, 68:157-158). I have recently observed a similar performance in a fringillid.

On 10 September 1960, I watched a juvenal Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) feeding on the ground under my window. In a flower bed which was soft from rains, and where the soil was mixed with husks of sunflower seeds so that it was light and porous, my dog had left several rather deep footprints. The immature sparrow settled itself in

one of these footprints and performed somewhat awkward but very recognizable nest-building movements, kicking back with the feet and pressing the breast against the side of the depression in a "smoothing" motion. The bird also picked up a small piece of dried grass and tucked it beneath the body.

This observation lends support to Dilger's statement that "the innate releasing mechanisms responsible for reacting to nest-building stimuli must be present at an early age."—SALLY F. HOYT, *Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 19 October 1960.*

**Notes on nesting of the Caracara.**—Bent (1938. *U.S. Nat. Mus. Bull.*, 170 (2):127-135) listed the range of the Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*) in central Texas as Sheffield, San Angelo, Mason, Waco, and probably Houston. While working in Brazoria County, Texas, I had occasion to observe the nesting success of this interesting bird each year from 1955 through 1959. The location of the nesting site was 1 mile south of Danberry, Brazoria County, Texas. Danberry is 43 miles south of Houston. The general agriculture of the area is rice farming and cattle grazing.

The birds were seen each year close to the same nesting site in late January. They are known to nest earlier in Florida and south Texas. However, waterfowl hunting is common in this area and shooting may keep these shy birds away until the waterfowl season closes.

The nest was located about 15 feet high in a clump of live oak trees (*Quercus virginiana*), a common nesting plant for the caracara. The clump of trees was in an open pasture surrounded by rice fields. Its location enabled the birds to view the surrounding country with ease. The birds were observed at a distance, for they flush while the intruder is some distance away. Only the sentinel bird would be seen during the period they were incubating. The family group was seen in June but the nest itself was not examined during the nesting season because the landowner had asked that it not be disturbed.

Because the family group remained together in the general vicinity of the nest for some time after the young left it, the nesting success was easy to determine. Two young were raised each year in 1955, 1956, 1957, and 1959. Only one young bird was raised in 1958. The family could be seen until late June or July. It would then leave the area and would not be seen again until the nesting pair returned in January of the following year. The young evidently left the area for good, for none of them was seen again.—OLAN W. DILLON, JR., *Soil Conservation Service, Ithaca, New York, 1 November 1960.*

**Distraction display of the Common Gallinule.**—Common Gallinules (*Gallinula chloropus*) at Lake Alice, University of Florida Campus, Gainesville, Florida, most commonly build platform nests on small floating islands, but sometimes build floating nests in water pennywort (*Hydrocotyle umbellata*). Alexander Sprunt, Jr. (Bent, 1926. *U.S. Nat. Mus. Bull.*, 135: 349 pp.) describes the reaction of incubating birds to his presence at the nest: ". . . the adults within a few feet of me while photographing the nest and examining the eggs. . . ." He comments on the "utter unconcern on the part of the bird. Walking about . . . picking up food . . . within 6 and 8 feet . . . they stroll about as if there was no enemy . . . within miles." Although this behavior is well recorded, I have not seen it at Lake Alice.

Two types of behavior are exhibited by Common Gallinules when they are flushed from their nests at Lake Alice. Most of the birds walk or spatter rapidly away from the immediate nest site and do not return until the intruder leaves. Some individuals