

Evidence that the oats continued to prove attractive to grouse in the vicinity was obtained on 28 June when a female Sharp-tailed Grouse with oat kernels in its crop was found dead on the highway and close to the center strip in the same place that the male had occupied.

The reactions of Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) to automobiles with running motors has attracted some attention (Bump et al, *The Ruffed Grouse*. New York State Cons. Dept., 1947, pp. 262-264) the sound of the motor being assumed to have some relation to the sound of grouse drumming, but I know of no similar reports for Sharp-tailed Grouse.

Our period of observation ended abruptly at 17:15 when a car stopped about 300 yards away on an adjacent roadway about 50 yards south of the highway and a man got out to walk a dog. The grouse at once flew off strongly to the southwest for almost a mile before we lost sight of it. On the following day and on several days thereafter a number of observers visited the area, but the grouse was not seen again on the center strip. At least three grouse were seen, however, on the access road to the south. When first sighted in the morning of 28 April these were displaying as if on a dancing ground. It is presumed that the bird that had chased the automobiles was one of these or at least a member of a group that was meeting close to the highway.—ROBERT W. NERO, *Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, 190 Rupert Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 16 June 1969.*

**Ring-billed Gull and Laughing Gull catch fish by “ploughing” and “skimming.”**—On 27 April 1969 I was watching two Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) catching fish (probably *Fundulus* sp.) along the edge of rising tide waters in a small estuary (Gulf Pond) in Milford, Connecticut. Both birds were feeding by the method called “ploughing” by Zusi (Wilson Bull., 80:491-492, 1968) in his report of observations of Greater Yellowlegs (*Totanus melanoleucus*). In ploughing the bird runs through shallow water with the lower mandible cutting the surface of the water, seizing any prey contacted. On 9 September and 21 September 1969 in the same locality I saw ploughing by small (6-9) groups of Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*), accompanied on the 21st by similar numbers of Ring-bills. Again these birds were catching small fish near the water's edge. On several occasions a bout of ploughing appeared to have been stimulated by a Greater Yellowlegs ploughing the margin, with gulls then flying in from mudflats 20-40 meters away.

One of the Ring-bills on 27 April was also seen capturing a fish by “skimming.” This individual had been flying back and forth along the water's edge at a height of about 10 feet. It turned and dived suddenly, almost to the surface of the water. For a period of 2-4 seconds it skimmed over the surface, with the lower mandible cutting the water (exactly like a Black Skimmer (*Rhynchops nigra*)). While still in flight, the gull caught a small fish; it landed immediately and swallowed the fish. I saw this gull apparently skimming several times, but only once could I be sure that the prey was captured while the bird was in flight. On 9 and 21 September an approach to skimming was seen in Laughing Gulls, resembling the skimming described above, except that the birds made hopping or paddling motions with their feet touching the water; during each flight the lower mandible remained constantly immersed.

On a number of occasions I have seen Ring-bills ploughing, but I know of no previous observation of feeding by skimming in either species.

I am grateful to Dr. N. Philip Ashmole for advice on preparation of this note.—KARL ERIC TOLONEN, *Peabody Museum of Natural History, Division of Vertebrate Zoology, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut 06520, 25 September 1969.*

**A putative skeletal specimen of the Flammulated Owl with Alabama locality data.**—Several years ago Gid E. Nelson, Jr., gave me over 100 bird skeletons, among which was the complete skeleton and rhamphotheca of a fully grown, small owl. The specimen bears the locality of Shelby County, Alabama. The original label lists Montevallo, where Nelson then resided, however, no town is indicated in his catalog. The date listed is November 1953. The sex was not determined.

Although previously identified as *Otus asio*, study of its remains indicates the specimen is from a smaller species of *Otus*, which on geographic grounds must be the Flammulated Owl (*O. flammeolus*). The smooth texture of the surface of the bones indicates the bird is fully grown and thus its size can be compared with other adult specimens. Ten species of *Otus* occur in the Western Hemisphere north of South America (Eisenmann, 1955; Peters, 1940). Measurements of the culmen for the 9 species excluding *O. flammeolus* range from 10.5 to 17.5 mm (Ridgway, 1914; Wetmore, 1968). The range for the latter species is 8.5 to 10 mm. The rhamphotheca of the Alabama *Otus* is free from the underlying bone and worn slightly from the maceration cleaning process, but its culmen certainly measured less than 10 mm.

The diminutive Flammulated Owl is known to have especially small feet (Miller, 1933). To support further the identity of the specimen as *O. flammeolus* I compared its tarsometatarsal length of 22.6 mm with that of 5 species of *Otus*, including the only 3 recorded from the United States (A.O.U., 1957). A total of 100 *Otus asio* ranged from 28.3 to 37.7 mm with a mean of 32.85. This sample consists of 9 North American races including the small western *O. a. gilmani*. *O. a. floridanus* is represented by 30 individuals, 19 of which are smaller than all specimens of other races. The tarsometatarsus ranged from 28.3 to 32.8 mm with a mean of 30.69 in these *O. a. floridanus*. For the remaining 70 specimens the range is 31.1 to 37.7 with a mean of 33.77. No sexual dimorphism in tarsometatarsal length was evident. Two *O. trichopsis* measure 31.0 and 32.0 mm. Four *O. flammeolus* range from 21.9 to 24.3 (mean 23.00) which nicely encompasses the measurement of the unknown. One specimen of the Old World *O. spilocephalus* measures 28.9 mm, too large to include the unknown. However, one *O. scops*, which some workers consider conspecific with *O. flammeolus* (Eisenmann, 1955), measures 23.7 mm. Assuming the owl is a species known to inhabit North or Central America, measurements indicate it is *O. flammeolus*.

Circumstantial evidence supports the contention that the specimen, indeed, did come from Shelby County, Alabama. All but one of the 100 specimens given me were collected in the same county, Nelson never collected within the known range of *O. flammeolus* nor did he have any students that did, and no discrepancies between any of his specimens and their appended data have been noted. Alabama College, where Nelson then was employed, is a small school and most of the students came from nearby. He can think of no persons locally who kept live birds. Nelson did not shoot the owl and suspects it was found dead, although he cannot recall the specific incident (all pers. comm.).