

So engrossed were we with the numbers of Sparrow Hawks that the recording of only three Pigeon Hawks (*F. columbarius*) suggests that some of this species were overlooked. Other hawks recorded were: Sharp-shinned (*Accipiter striatus*) 613, Cooper's (*A. cooperii*) 6, Red-tailed (*Buteo jamaicensis*) 7, Red-shouldered (*B. lineatus*) 4, Marsh (*Circus cyaneus*) 82, Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) 14, and Peregrine (*F. peregrinus*) 4. Our total for the day was approximately 25,600. This estimate is conservative particularly in view of the fact that birds flying before 09:00 are not included.

We also noted four Turkey Vultures (*Cathartes aura*), 15 flocks of Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) with 50 to 250 in each flock, several flocks of Robins (*Turdus migratorius*), one of about a thousand birds in such a compact mass that it seemed to bounce along in a gusty wind like a ball, a flock of 13 Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*), and overwhelming numbers of small passerines mostly sparrows and warblers.—ERNEST A. CHOATE, *Cape May Point, New Jersey 08212, 20 December 1971.*

**Osprey carrying a mammal.**—During our investigation of the Peace River near its confluence with Branch Creek in Hardee County, Florida, on 6 January 1972 at 14:00, we were surprised to observe an Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) unmistakably carrying a mammal in its talons. The mammal was approximately the size of a squirrel or small rabbit. The bird flew over at a height of 30 feet about 75–100 feet downstream from our position. It paralleled the river for a short distance before disappearing into the bordering woods.

Ospreys are known to be almost exclusively piscivorous, but occasionally are reported to take crustaceans, amphibians, and birds (Brown and Amadon, *Eagles, hawks and falcons of the World*, Vol. 1, p. 198, 1968). Bent (*Life histories of North American birds of prey*, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull., 167:368–369, 1938) mentions that Ospreys have been known to take beetles and reptiles on rare occasions. Sindelar and Schluter (*Wilson Bull.*, 80:103, 1968) reported an Osprey carrying what was believed to be a Cardinal (*Richmondia cardinalis*).

We assume this occurrence occurred as a direct result of a large phosphate slime spill entering the Peace River from a detention pond that burst on 3 December 1971. Over 90 per cent (Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission sample estimate) of the resident fish were killed by the choking slime. The spill may have forced the Osprey to turn to other prey items for sustenance—in this case the mammal.—WILLIAM W. TAIR, H. MALCOLM JOHNSON, AND WILLIAM D. COURSER, *Southwest Florida Water Management District, Post Office Box 457, Brooksville, Florida 33512, 28 January 1972.*

**The migration of the Buff-breasted Sandpiper through Surinam.**—The migration of the Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*) through continental South America, to and from its winterquarters in Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina is but poorly known. According to my cooperator Mr. Th. Renssen, who lived for some time at the sugar estate Marienburg (Commewijne Dist.), Surinam and whom I thank for sending me the specimens mentioned below, it is a regular but not numerous migrant both in the northern fall and spring. It favors open ground with a very low vegetation but especially recently harvested and burnt over sugar cane fields. This same habitat is frequented by the American Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*) and the Upland Plover (*Bartramia longicauda*) and the Buff-breasted Sandpiper is often in company with these two species. The earliest date during the fall migration is 15 August 1969 (sight) and birds were collected (all in the Leiden Museum) on 20 September 1966 (male, weight

50.5 g), 17 October 1963 (male, 43 g) the latest record being 13 November 1968 (Male, 60.5 g). In the northern spring there is a sight record on 15 March 1969, the latest records being two birds collected on 12 May (female, 53 g) and 13 May 1967 (female, 69 g very fat). It is clear from these records that both fall and spring migration is extended over long periods and that the birds seem to be in no hurry.

The Buff-breasted Sandpiper is not yet known from neighboring French Guiana (Berlepsch, Nov. Zool., 15:251, 1909) and there is only a single sight record from Guyana on 20 April 1965 (Snyder, The birds of Guyana, 1966, p. 96).—F. HAVERSCHMIDT, 16 *Wolfskuilstraat, Ommen, Holland, 7 February 1972.*

**Congenital foot abnormality in the Ring-billed Gull.**—During ecological and behavioral studies of Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) on Granite Island, Ontario (48° 43'N, 88° 27'W), we leg-banded 359 newly-hatched chicks. On 10 June 1971 we found a one-day-old Ringbill chick with a foot abnormality known as polydactyly (Fig. 1). An X-ray photograph (Fig. 2) indicates the extra foot elements on each leg originated distally from the median anterior portion of the tibiotarsus. In that the phalangeal portion of the avian foot normally develops from the distal aspect of the tarsometatarsus, it is conceivable that, with secondary induction, phalangeal elements may arise from the metatarsal elements of the tibiotarsus. Although the abnormality reported here is not bilaterally symmetrical, the middle toe is more fully developed on both sides than the inner or outer toes. No hallux is apparent on either extra foot. The bird did not seem to be handicapped by the abnormality at the time of capture.

Relative to the amount of past and current research using larids, the paucity of reports of congenital abnormalities is somewhat surprising (see Austin, Auk, 86:352, 1969 and Smith and Diem, Auk, 88:435, 1971). It may be that non-passerines are not able to adapt their behavior to abnormalities as well as passerines and thus are eliminated rapidly. This was noted by Pomeroy (Brit. Birds, 55:49-72, 1962) referring to bill abnormalities.

Bellaïrs (Skeleton. In A new dictionary of birds, A. L. Thomson, Ed. Nelson & Sons, London, 1964) stated that inherited skeletal abnormalities of many types occur in birds. However, only the "fowl" have been studied extensively, presumably because of their economic importance. Napier (Wildfowl Trust Ann. Rept., 14:170-171, 1963) discussed foot malformations in Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and noted polydactyly can occur from genetically determined increases in mesenchymal plates which later give rise to the foot. Little information is available on effects of secondary inducers which may affect early embryonic development in wild birds. Kear (Wildfowl Trust Ann. Rept., 15:99, 1964) summarized results of studies of congenital malformations in wildfowl bred at Slimbridge, England. She reported an incidence (0.56 per cent) of abnormalities in 1961 which did not occur in the subsequent two seasons and suggested the effects of agricultural chemicals might be investigated.

We do not infer the malformation reported here is necessarily purely genetic in origin. Recently Hays and Risebrough (Auk, 89:19-35, 1972) recorded incidences of 0.1 per cent abnormalities in 1969 and 1.3 per cent in 1970 from a sample of over 4,000 young Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) and more than 1,600 young Roseate Terns (*S. dougallii*) at Great Gull Island, New York. The abnormalities reported by Hays and Risebrough (ibid.) resemble those produced experimentally in domestic chickens by the chlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins and some polychlorinated biphenyls.

In view of a possible important relationship between chemical residues in birds, and congenital abnormalities we ask for increased monitoring and communication of inci-