

Prompted by the discovery of a specimen, we canvassed other licensed Illinois falconers and learned that the Gyrfalcon has been trapped in Illinois at least 3 other times (sex was judged on size by respective falconers): 4 October 1966, Spring Bluff Forest Preserve, Lake Co. by Ken Sterner (immature female in gray phase, weight 1524.1 g when trapped); 7 January 1973, 4.8 km SE Esmond, De Kalb Co. by Ron Kern (first-year haggard female in gray phase, weight 1959.5 g when trapped); and 12 October 1973, 3.2 km E Roscoe, Winnebago Co. by Jack Oar (immature male in gray phase, no weight taken). All trapped birds showed no signs of captivity and behaved in the manner typical of wild caught falcons. Photographs of the trapped birds have been deposited with the Section of Wildlife Research, Illinois Natural History Survey, Urbana. Additional sight records include one individual observed in February 1964 at Chatsworth, Livingston Co. by E. C. Fitch; one observed 8 October 1972 at Spring Bluff Forest Preserve, Lake Co., by E. C. Fitch and Ken Sterner; and one observed in December 1973, 3.2 km SW Polo, Ogle Co. by Roland Lindsay.

Although there were 3 Gyrfalcons recorded for Illinois in 1973, there is no indication that this was a major flight year for the entire Midwest. Gyrfalcons have never been reported from Cedar Grove Ornithological Station, Wisconsin (D. D. Berger, pers. comm.), and are sporadic in occurrence in Minnesota. Perhaps the preponderance of records in 1973 is a reflection of more intense trapping and observation during this particular time period.

In light of these Illinois records and its reported occurrence in Iowa (Musgrove, Iowa Bird Life 19:22-23, 1949), Missouri (Moore, Bluebird 16:1, 1949), northern Ohio (Mosely, Auk 60:598, 1943), and Wisconsin (Stoddard, Auk 40:325, 1923; Gromme, Auk 55:273-274, 1938; Black, Auk 58:254, 1941), the Gyrfalcon should perhaps be considered a rare transient and winter visitant in Illinois.

We are grateful to E. C. Fitch, Ken Invergo, Jack J. Oar, Roland Lindsay, and Ken Sterner for their valuable contributions of data and to Daniel D. Berger for his comments concerning Gyrfalcons in Wisconsin.—BROOKS M. BURR, *Illinois Natural History Survey, Urbana 61801*; and DAVID M. CURRENT, *202 S Dodson Drive, Urbana, IL 61801. Accepted 24 Oct. 1974.*

**An encounter between a Turkey and a bullsnake.**—At 08:40 on 31 May 1974 while making one of our spring-summer Rio Grande wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo intermedia*) brood surveys in Brooks Co., Texas, we saw 2 adult female Turkeys on the ground under a motte of trees at approximately 30 m. We stopped our vehicle to observe the birds with binoculars to determine if they were accompanied by poults. No poults were seen. The peculiar behavior of one hen cautioned us to observe in more detail. She periodically picked up a snake in her beak and shook it back and forth. The Turkeys were frightened off when we got out of the vehicle in an attempt to photograph the event. The snake, a female bullsnake (*Pituophis melanoleucus*), appeared dead, but its muscles were still quivering. The snake was 140 cm long and weighed 314.6 g.

We put the snake in our truck to take to the lab for necropsy. In approximately 20 min the snake began crawling around in the truck, and we killed it. A necropsy performed by Dr. J. L. Kiel at the Texas A&M University School of Veterinary Medicine indicated the snake probably would not have died from the damage inflicted by the

Turkey to that time, but the bird may have continued her attack if we had not interfered. The bird had apparently pecked the snake several times on the head as multiple superficial wounds were present, and the brille and cornea of the right eye and the brille of the left eye were perforated. The only other external wound was 65.5 cm posterior to the rostrum where the Turkey apparently pecked the snake as she picked it up and shook it.

The conditions under which this Turkey-snake encounter took place are unknown. However, this event occurred during the normal nesting season for Turkeys. That there were only 2 hens in the group suggests they were involved in nesting activities since females in this area rarely occur in such small aggregations except during successful breeding seasons.

Though rarely reported, Turkey-snake encounters are not unprecedented. Jennings (Texas Game and Fish, 14[8]:3, 1956) reported a Turkey hen severely beating a 1 m rattlesnake with her wing.—SAMUEL L. BEASOM AND OLIVER H. PATTEE, *Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences, Texas A&M Univ., College Station 77843. Accepted 29 Oct. 1974.*

**Hooded Merganser kills a meadow vole.**—On 27 August 1974 at 12:30, I saw an immature (1½ years old) male Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) kill a young meadow vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*) and attempt to swallow it. The vole, a female, was 83 mm long (body and tail) and weighed 9.1 g. The merganser was in an outdoor pen (4.5 m × 9.0 m) at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, Maryland. It was hatched from an egg collected in the wild and artificially incubated and maintained on a diet of duck breeder pellets and dry dog food. The merganser caught the vole in tall grass at the edge of a water tank and bit down on the head repeatedly. After the vole was dead, the bird made several unsuccessful attempts to ingest it. I found that the vole's skull was completely crushed. On 29 August, I found a second juvenile vole dead in the water tank. It was a male, 95 mm long and weighing 10.0 g. Its skull was crushed also. These observations suggest that Hooded Mergansers may on occasion capture and ingest small mammals.

The food of Hooded Mergansers consists mainly of crustaceans, small fish, frogs, insects, and some vegetable matter (Kortright, The ducks, geese, and swans of North America, American Wildlife Inst., Washington, D.C., 1942; Bent, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 126, 1923; Vermeer et al., J. Wildl. Manage., 37:58–61, 1973). I have found no report of small mammals being taken as food by Hooded Mergansers, although Salyer and Lagler (J. Wildl. Manage., 4:186–219, 1940) report shrews (*Sorex*) being found in the stomachs of two American Mergansers (*Mergus merganser*).—DONALD H. WHITE, *Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, MD 20811. Accepted 7 Nov. 1974.*

**Food washing by grackles.**—It is well known that Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*) will place hard bread and crackers in water to soften them before eating (Bent, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 211, 1958), but variations of this kind of behavior do not seem to have been recorded. At my winter home in Ocala, Florida, for years I have watched this species “dunk” bread in water. The local Common Grackles will do this