

The most common large insect in the fields where these birds were feeding were grasshoppers. These invertebrates, ranging in size from 20 mm to approximately 50 mm, were abundant in the vegetation—many jumped and flew from underfoot in all directions as I walked through the birds' nesting and feeding areas. This orthopteran is reported by McAtee (1908, *in* Bent, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 327, 1968) as the most important element of the animal food eaten by this species and comprises more than 74% of the food fed to the young. The mantid's large size (most were 75–100 mm and some were in excess of 100 mm), in addition to their slow movements and their tendency to remain motionless when approached must make them most desirable to grosbeaks. Blue Grosbeaks in upper eastern Tennessee are exploiting a food source for which I find no previous record in the literature.—FRED J. ALSOP, III, *Dept. of Biology, East Tennessee State Univ., Kingsport Univ. Center, University Blvd., Kingsport, TN 37660. Accepted 7 Feb. 1978.*

*Wilson Bull.*, 91(1), 1979, pp. 132–133

**Red fox predation on Greater Sandhill Crane chicks.**—At the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon, Littlefield (Proc. Int. Crane Workshop, Baraboo, Wis., 1976: 86–92) established the coyote (*Canis latrans*) as a predator on Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) chicks. He recorded heavy losses of Sandhill Crane young to coyotes in 1973 and 1974 during a low point in black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*) populations. Walkinshaw (The Sandhill Cranes, Cranbrook Inst. Sci., 1949), however, reports having searched many red fox (*Vulpes fulva*) dens located near Sandhill Crane nests without finding any crane remains. During the spring of 1977 we observed 2 instances of red fox predation upon Greater Sandhill Crane chicks (*G. c. tabida*) in southeastern Wisconsin.

On 15 May 1977 Drieslein discovered 2 freshly killed Sandhill Crane chicks at an active red fox den within the Horicon National Wildlife Refuge in Dodge County, Wisconsin. The chicks were lying at an entrance to a den where 3 fox pups had been observed on several occasions earlier in the week. Both chicks had been bitten in the back and neck, and judging from their fresh appearance, they were probably killed that same day. Based on growth curves developed for captive Sandhill Cranes, the chicks were between 3 and 5 days old (Ron Sauey, pers. comm.).

On 22 May 1977 Bennett was observing a pair of Sandhill Cranes and their 6-day-old chick with a 60× spotting scope at a distance of 200 m. The birds were feeding in a 2 ha field of short grass surrounded on 3 sides by shrubs in northern Green Lake County, Wisconsin. At 07:10 a red fox approached from an adjacent field and disappeared into a row of shrubs at the edge of the field where the cranes were feeding. The cranes were visually screened from the fox and did not appear to be aware of his presence. At 07:20 the fox reappeared on a wooded ditch bank directly in line with the cranes at a distance of about 30 m. For the next 15–20 min, the fox remained partially concealed and motionless while the cranes continued feeding along the edge of the ditch. At 07:40 the fox ran toward the cranes, picked up the chick which was within 2 m of 1 adult, and continued running with the chick into the nearest shrubs. Both adult cranes had their heads down when the fox charged and did not react until it was within 6–8 m of the chick. Their initial response was a distraction display with each adult running in opposite directions with head and wings lowered. They continued this display for

10 min after their chick had been captured. The pair of cranes remained in the area for 1 week after the incident but the chick was never seen again.

These observations establish the ability of the red fox to prey on Sandhill Crane chicks up to 1 week of age. The extensive use of upland fields and wooded pastures as feeding sites by cranes with young chicks increases the opportunity for encounters with fox. In the case of Bennett's observation, the ability of the fox to surprise the cranes with a short run from cover was probably very important in his success. The normal distraction behavior of the adults afforded no protection in this situation. Although observations described here are chance encounters, we believe that fox predation may play a more important role than previously believed in the loss of young Sandhill Crane chicks in Wisconsin.

We are grateful to Ron Sauey, International Crane Foundation, Baraboo, Wisconsin, for aging the crane chicks, and Richard Hunt and Jack Toll for helpful suggestions and review of the manuscript.—ROBERT L. DRIESLEIN, *Horicon National Wildlife Refuge, Route 2, Mayville, WI 53050*, and ALAN J. BENNETT, *College of Natural Resources, Univ. of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, WI 54481*. Accepted 30 Nov. 1977.

*Wilson Bull.*, 91(1), 1979, p. 133

**Owl predation on a mobbing crow.**—On 29 November 1962, at 16:30 on an overcast afternoon in a hilly wooded area near Amherst, Virginia, I watched a flock of Common Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) mob a Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*). I was 200 m distant and had 7× binoculars. The loud cawing of the crows drew my attention. The owl was located 10 m up in a tree. The crows flew around the tree, dove at the bird, and perched on nearby branches, as they directed their vocalizations at the predator. After I had observed this activity for 5 min, the owl quickly extended its left foot and grasped a crow which had ventured within reaching distance. At this action, the cawing and diving became more frenzied. The owl held the crow in its talons and pinned it against its lower body and the limb for 30 sec. I didn't observe struggling from the crow. The owl still in possession of the captured bird then flew out of sight into the woods pursued by the noisy flock of crows.

Current thought views mobbing as relatively safe and of correspondingly low risk to those participating in the action. I am unaware of any examples in the literature which reference a mobbing bird actually falling prey to a predator during the mobbing event. This incident demonstrates the relativity of the current theory in relation to mobbing behavior.—RENDER D. DENSON, *Dept. Biological Sciences, Box 5640, Northern Arizona Univ., Flagstaff, AZ 86001*. (Present Address: *Kramer, Chin and Mayo, Inc., 1917 First Ave., Seattle, WA 98101*). Accepted 9 Dec. 1977.

*Wilson Bull.*, 91(1), 1979, pp. 133–135

**Ruddy Turnstones destroy Royal Tern colony.**—The Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) occasionally eats eggs of other birds. Parkes et al. (*Wilson Bull.* 83:306–308, 1971) summarized 3 reports of such behavior by the Old World subspecies (*A. i. interpres*) and presented 2 instances involving the New World subspecies (*A. i. morinella*). We report here a seemingly extreme instance of this behavior.