



Roundtable

... with Louis C. Fink

Caution

Bird-watching may be growing too fast in popularity for its own good. There have been no complaints in the Carolinas, but other parts of the country are reporting damage to habitat and to the birds.

The Audubon Rare Bird Alert in New York has had to stop giving the exact location of unusual birds. Over-zealous bird-watchers prompted the change.

In Massachusetts, a Boreal Owl was lifted from its roost and its feathers plucked.

Near West Point, N.Y., a Cerulean Warbler left the area when disturbed by recordings.

In Arizona, the Black Hawk and Gray Hawk have been driven from their specialized habitat by photographers seeking extreme close-ups.

Robert Arbib, editor of *American Birds*, says, "There will always be a few eager beavers who feel that it's a competitive, macho thing to add birds to their list."

The *New York Times*, which reported this problem, says that owners of private property are especially careful. Let a rare bird be reported and scores or hundreds of people will descend, destroying lawns, crops, and trees.

Carolínians can take warning.—LCF

More on Rock Dove Behavior

With regard to Crutchfield's observations of a Rock Dove on Forest Lake in Fayetteville, in the Spring number of *Chat*, although I have never seen a Rock Dove on fresh water, I have seen them light on salt water, and in the British literature it is said that they drink sea water.

The strange peninsula called Nahant, just outside of Lynn, Massachusetts, ends in cliffs that furnish breeding sites for the only completely feral colony of Rock Doves in Massachusetts. It is quite easy here to see the doves descend onto the ocean, stop briefly, and take off again.—CHARLES H. BLAKE, Box 10, Hillsborough, N.C. 27278.

North Carolina Special

American Birds for March 1979 looked like a special Tar Heel issue. Edmund and Harry LeGrand contributed a major article on the Bodie-Pea Island area, complete with photo and map. David S. Lee was represented with a 2-page report on the second North American record of the South Trinidad Petrel. Both Carolinas were mentioned in an article on the status of the Rufous Hummingbird in eastern North America. And our region was covered thoroughly by Harry's season report on the South Atlantic Coast and George Hall's on the Appalachians.

Lee's *Pterodroma arminjoniana* was a dark-phase female bird collected 74 km ESE of Oregon Inlet on 20 August 1978 as part of a long-term study of pelagic vertebrates off the upper portion of the North Carolina coast (*Chat* 43:1-9). This species breeds in the Southern Hemisphere and is not known to wander widely. The only previously known North American record of the South Trinidad Petrel was a hurricane-driven specimen taken near Ithaca, New

York, 24 August 1933. Another Northern Hemisphere record is an individual that struck the rigging of a yacht in the mid-Atlantic 31 December 1905. The North Carolina occurrence does not appear to have been associated with abnormal weather conditions. Lee suggests that this small dark petrel might easily be mistaken for a Sooty Shearwater or even a jaeger under certain conditions.

Clemson Papers Session

Three scientific papers were presented at Long Hall, Clemson University, the afternoon of 19 May 1979 in conjunction with the spring meeting of Carolina Bird Club. Papers were solicited by Paul B. Hamel, who presided over the well-attended session. Titles and authors of the papers are as follows:

Daily and Seasonal Time Budget of the Eastern Bluebird. Carroll Belser, Department of Entomology and Economic Zoology, Clemson University, Clemson, S.C. 29631.

Trends in the Number of Diurnal Raptors Seen on Recent North and South Carolina Christmas Bird Counts. Keith L. Bildstein, Department of Biology, Winthrop College, Rock Hill, S.C. 29633.

The Role of the Southeastern Forest Experiment Station in Determining the General Biology and Status of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. Richard F. Harlow, Southeastern Forest Experiment Station, Department of Forestry, Clemson University, Clemson, S.C. 29631.

The lively discussion and warm fellowship at this session, as well as at the one organized by Julian Harrison for the midwinter meeting at Pawleys Island, suggest that the presentation of papers should become a regular feature of CBC meetings.—EFP

Volunteer Bird Population Monitors Needed

The 1976 symposium on endangered and threatened species held at Charleston listed 13 species of "special concern" in South Carolina. We need to learn more about their true status and population trends in the state; therefore, we are seeking volunteers willing to monitor these species through breeding bird surveys, county-wide censuses, and other types of studies. Long-term studies of 5-year duration or longer would be especially valuable.

The 13 species of special concern are Canvasback, Merlin, Mississippi Kite, Wilson's Plover, Barn Owl, Ground Dove, Great Horned Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Common Raven, Bewick's Wren, Loggerhead Shrike, and Swainson's Warbler.

Additionally, the symposium listed Least Tern, Cooper's Hawk, Wood Stork, and American Osprey as threatened. The state list of endangered species includes three not on the federal list, namely Swallow-tailed Kite, Golden Eagle, and Ipswich (Savannah) Sparrow.

Volunteers should call my office (758-6113 in Columbia) or write me at the address given below.—JOHN EMMETT CELY, Coordinator, Nongame & Endangered Species Section, South Carolina Wildlife & Marine Resources Department, P.O. Box 167, Dutch Plaza, Building D, Columbia, S.C. 29202.

[Readers who attended the spring CBC meeting in Clemson will recall Mr. Cely's very beautiful and informative slide talk on the Natural Heritage Program in South Carolina.—ED.]

Exotics!

On numerous occasions between 1976 and 1979 I watched House Sparrows feeding on insects adhering to automobile grilles and radiators. Individual House Sparrows, as well as those feeding in groups of two to five, would typically fly to the ground beneath the front of a car and then fly up, grab an insect, and drop back to the ground, before eating the insect. Dates for most observations were not recorded but all were obviously during the warmer months when insects are active and all sightings were on asphalt parking lots in downtown Raleigh, N.C.

On 24 April 1979 I watched two adult birds working several cars for approximately 15 minutes. After seizing an insect, the birds would fly off with it and then quickly return and

repeat the process. It is assumed they were feeding nestlings. The energetic benefits of this foraging strategy in heavily paved urban environments is obvious and may partly explain the relatively dense populations of House Sparrows that can occur in these areas.

Several summers ago Micou Browne called to my attention another interesting feeding behavior of House Sparrows. He noted that small flocks frequently feed in the center of foraging groups of Rock Doves on the lawns of the Capitol grounds in downtown Raleigh. Here, where there is continual pedestrian traffic, the House Sparrows were able to feed while using the flushing of pigeons as an alarm system when people approached too closely. It is assumed that this behavior allows the smaller birds to concentrate more energy on feeding while not needing to remain on a constant vigil for the frequent human disturbance. I have witnessed this behavior on several subsequent occasions, and it appears that at certain times the sparrows are deliberately seeking foraging pigeon flocks.

Additionally, commensal feeding behavior has been noted in another exotic species—the Starling. In the spring of 1973, on five consecutive afternoons in late April, I watched groups of three to eight Starlings circle Grey Squirrels feeding on walnuts in a suburban yard in Towson, Maryland. After a squirrel would discard one partly eaten nut and start on another, a Starling would run in, grab a fragment of the shell in its beak, retreat several yards away from the squirrel, and then pick at meat fragments left in the shell.

A repertoire of learned feeding behaviors such as these have apparently allowed both House Sparrows and Starlings to adapt successfully to a wide spectrum of edificarian habitats and to cope with the seasonal variations in types and availability of foods. Perhaps as the decline of species diversity accelerates with our expanding land modifications—or as energy deficits force bird students to work close to home—we will at least have the potential for observing interesting behavioral patterns among the few seemingly monotonous species that persist locally.—DAVID S. LEE, North Carolina State Museum, Raleigh.

Bald Eagle in Cabarrus County, N.C.

The Bald Eagle that appears on the cover of this issue was seen by half a dozen people when it picked up a dead rabbit from a roadway in southern Cabarrus County, N.C., on 24 May 1979. The bird had been seen earlier by a number of local residents, and it remained in the vicinity until at least 3 June. Although it was seen near, but not on, a large tangle of sticks in the fork of a tree, there is no evidence of breeding. The above information was supplied by Ron MacRae of the *Concord Tribune*. The cover photograph by Frank Furr originally appeared in that newspaper.

An Up-date from F.A. Reid

In a recent letter to Bill and Margaret Wagner, former Chapel Hill resident F.A. Reid shares some of his experiences from field work along the Mississippi River. "It seems hard to believe what trouble we have finding Red-headed Woodpeckers in Chapel Hill, as they are the most common woodpecker here. One has no problem seeing thirty or more in a day. Many feed flycatcher style over the Mississippi shore at dusk and some even join the blackbirds in the field to search out grasshoppers. . . . My research is an investigation into the general ecology of aquatic invertebrates and how their availability is utilized by migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. Recent investigations have found that the old gut analysis on waterfowl was mainly conducted on gizzards. Soft-shelled invertebrates are much more easily digested than coated seeds, and often were already broken down by the time they would be in the gizzard. Now research has shown that pre-breeding females and young consume huge amounts of animal material (makes sense as they need calcium for egg laying and protein for growth). My research [should] clarify some of these relationships." Mr. Reid's present address is Ted Shanks Wildlife Area, Box 13, Ashburn, Missouri 63433.