

liver weights in the Bonin Island Petrel, which is nocturnal and marine, and which subsists largely on squids. In this petrel the cycle of liver weights follows the pattern of change of the body weights, but percentagewise the liver variations are three times as great. The greater fluctuation in liver weight in the female petrels, as contrasted with greater fluctuation in the male of other species, may be related to the prebreeding condition of the petrels and the wintering status of the Redwings and Starlings.—HARVEY I. FISHER, *Department of Zoology, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois.*

Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola limicola* Vieillot) Breeding at Vermilion, Alberta.—On 6 July 1958 an adult male Virginia Rail was collected from a partially flooded *Carex* meadow in Grizzly Bear Coulee, five miles south and three miles east of the town of Vermilion, Alberta. The specimen was deposited in the National Museum of Canada (Catalogue Number 41559), on behalf of the Canadian Wildlife Service, by which the author was temporarily employed to assist in waterfowl studies.

At the time the bird was collected, there was one other adult present. Both birds were exhibiting a distraction behavior as though there was a nest or a brood present. Three days later, an adult was seen feeding two downy young approximately three feet from the site where the specimen had been collected. At this time, two more adult Virginia Rails were observed. One was seen one-half mile west, and the other, one mile west of the collection site. These birds also exhibited distraction behavior.

The A.O.U. *Check-list of North American Birds* (1957, Fifth Edition) defines the northern limit of the breeding range of the Virginia Rail in Alberta as Brooks, 200 miles south of Vermilion. Prior to the collection of the specimen reported herein, the only other specimen collected north of Brooks was an adult male taken near Fort Chipewyan by T. M. Shortt on 30 June 1945 (Specimen Number 72295, Royal Ontario Museum). Although the Virginia Rail has been recorded from this more northerly point, the author believes that the collection of the adult Virginia Rail at Vermilion and the subsequent observation of an adult feeding two downy young at the same site would serve to constitute a new northern record for the breeding range of this species in Alberta.—JAMES K. LOWTHER, *Department of Zoology, University of Toronto, Toronto 5, Ontario, Canada.*

Plumage Peculiarity in Cedar Waxwing.—A specimen of Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) was collected from a flock of 18 to 20 birds at Stoneham, 40 kilometers (25 miles) north of Quebec City, on 7 July 1957. Examination of the specimen showed a peculiar coloration of the terminal appendages of the secondaries, the usual bright red being replaced by a bright yellow.

The bird was an adult female whose ovary was well developed. The color of other external parts did not prove different upon comparison with a series of females in the Quebec Provincial Museum. The mean lengths of the wing and culmen of 10 females were: wing 92.6 mm. and culmen 9.5 mm., while for the abnormally colored specimen these measurements were 93.6 mm. and 9.5 mm., respectively. The specimen is preserved in the author's collection as Number 147.—HENRI OUELLET, 341 Fourth St., Quebec City, P.Q. Canada, or The University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, N.B., Canada.

Behavior of a California Gull Devouring a Juvenile Coot.—On 3 June 1960, while driving along the west side of Unit 2 of the Bear River Migratory Bird

Refuge located west of Brigham City, Utah, I observed a California gull (*Larus californicus* Lawrence) flying low over open water as it dropped a dark, limp object from its mouth. The object proved to be a dead juvenile coot (*Fulica americana americana* Gmelin) about two weeks of age. The gull alighted on the water immediately and placed the carcass at a right angle and to the right of itself. The head of the coot was grasped and squeezed in an apparent effort to crush the skull, as the carcass was lifted off the water. The gull worked the coot through its bill by a series of head and neck movements somewhat like throwing and catching an object at different points progressively down its length. Thus the coot was mouthed from head to foot before it was dropped to the water again. The gull then methodically attacked the carcass with the tip of its bill. Powerful, short jabs were made at various parts of the body to soften it even more. This mouthing and stabbing procedure was repeated several times in the same manner until three other California gulls appeared. These intruders made swooping passes at the dead coot, which caused the feeding gull quickly to grab its meal and attempt an escape. The carcass was gripped by the neck in the tip of the gull's bill, which caused the burden to be unbalanced and too cumbersome to carry. As the coot was dropped from a height of about 10 meters, there immediately occurred a series of midair acrobatics amidst a squawking of fighting gulls. Within less than half a minute the three intruders were beaten off without a single attempt to dive down and take the carcass.

The original owner alighted beside the coot again and, without further hesitation, lined the carcass up in front of itself, head first, and began to swallow it. When the coot's head disappeared down the gull's throat, the mandible of the gull was in a position directly underneath the carcass so that the coot could be lifted off the water and held aloft. The weight of the coot, thus arranged, allowed it to be swallowed easily and quickly as the gull held it over its head. When just the feet protruded from the mouth, the gull took flight. Just after the feet of the coot disappeared down the throat of the airborne gull, two more gulls appeared on the scene. They made a pass, but the meal was safely hidden and stowed away for digestion as the feeding gull continued on its way.—NICHOLAS J. CHURA, *Wildlife Research Unit, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.*

Woodcock Nesting in Brazos County, Texas.—On several occasions in the past 20 years I have seen, or had reported to me, wintering woodcock (*Philohela minor*) in Brazos County, Texas, but not until 1959 was I able to determine with certainty that woodcocks also nest in this area.

On 27 February 1959 students who were mapping vegetation on a section of the Range Management Pasture about two miles west of College Station reported a woodcock nest with four eggs. On 28 February I confirmed the identification, and Professor Jack Inglis took several photographs of the incubating female and of the nest and eggs. The nest consisted of a few dead oak leaves placed in a slight depression on a knoll in a moderate stand of post oak trees. The understory was mainly yaupon. The set of eggs was collected and is now deposited in the Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection. I estimated on the basis of embryo development that the eggs had been incubated about 10 days.

A second nest containing three eggs was found by Knox Walker on 20 March 1959, in a section of the archery range (within half a mile of nest No. 1) that had been burned over about three weeks previously. A third nest with four eggs was