

There have been only a few Barn Owl records from Onondaga County in recent years. There was a nest with four young in a silo at Warners in 1955, with the egg dates estimated to be June 1 to June 7. On April 18, 1956, an adult Barn Owl was inadvertently caught in a tower at a Syracuse lumber yard. Another nesting with four young was reported at Warners in 1956, with the approximate egg date July 1. In the summer of 1958 a family of Barn Owls was seen near a deserted brick home near Syracuse. In the winter of 1957-1958 an adult was found dead in a barn near Syracuse; the bird had become squeezed between some bags of grain and was unable to extricate itself. During that same winter a Barn Owl became covered with oil in downtown Syracuse, was captured, cleaned up, and released (**Kingbird**, Vol 8, No. 1, p. 22) — Benjamin P. Burtt, 109 Haffenden Road, Syracuse 10.

Move to Protect Golden Eagle: The Golden Eagle, efficiently decimated by aerial gunning in the southwestern states and to some extent in California, may be coming in for legislative attention in the forthcoming Congress. Whether anything is finally done depends, of course, upon the manifestation of public demand. At any rate, four to five senators are expected to jointly sponsor a bill designed to halt in particular the hunting of these birds from airplanes. There is even a move under-way to obtain action by the Canadian government, since it appears quite probable that many of the wintering birds killed in our South come from Canada.

A phenomenon of the past fifteen years is that clubs have been organized exclusively around the airplane hunting of eagles. One hunter has become known for his marksmanship, having been credited with 8,000 of these birds. The airplane hunting accounts for 90% of the destruction of these birds, according to John A. Alderman, former member of the Texas Ornithological Society's conservation committee and now a New York City businessman (Ed — see also "Texans Shoot Golden Eagles from Airplanes," **National Wildlands News**, July, 1960). Active in mustering support for protection, Mr. Alderman may be reached at 220 Church Street, Mail Station 144, New York City 13. For those interested, the Federal Government has published an interesting booklet: "The Golden Eagle, Its Economic Status." It is Bulletin No. 27 of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C. — Maxwell C. Wheat, Jr., 333 Bedell Street, Freeport, Long Island.

Observations on Diet of Goldfinches: Four reports of Goldfinches feeding on beet leaves came to my attention this past summer. While this habit has been observed before, it has by no means been widely publicized. One of the women who made the report to me indicated that she had been planting beets for several years especially for Goldfinches.

There were two other reports of Goldfinches feeding on the leaves of Swiss chard. The birds apparently bite small portions from the edges of the leaves. It has been suggested by several, including Sally Hoyt of the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology, that the Goldfinches may be satisfying some craving for a salt or other chemical in the leaves. Both beet and Swiss chard leaves are high in calcium, but then too so are many other plants which are apparently untouched.

If others have observed this phenomenon or know of any studies that have been made on the subject, I would be happy to hear from them — Benjamin P. Burtt, 109 Haffenden Road, Syracuse 10.

Experiences with A Nighthawk: Last September 18 a Common Nighthawk was brought to me by a neighbor, Lou Brown. Mr. Brown, a railroad brakeman, had found the bird sitting on the front of the engine. The Nighthawk did not appear to be injured, but its flight indicated that it was apparently a young bird.

Quite a few injured birds are brought to me from time to time (I hold the required licenses for this), but this was the first Nighthawk I had cared for. I immediately called Mrs. Harold Alsdorf, who has had considerable experience in looking after and feeding many species of birds. Looking through her files she came up with a proper diet for the Nighthawk; this had been given to her in turn by a Mrs. Schoonmaker of Washington State. The diet was most interesting, I thought, and the bird looks forward eagerly to each feeding. It includes a jar of strained beef heart, two tablespoons mashed potato, a tablespoon mashed carrot, two teaspoons butter, and four drops Vi Penta vitamins.

As of this writing (November 4) I still have the Nighthawk. Because of the lateness in the season when the bird was able to fly, I decided to take no chance of its being unable to find sufficient food. — Martha Earl, Farmingdale Road, Blooming Grove.

Nocturnal Songsters: Nocturnal singing of birds has been well known and recognized for centuries. I have always been very much interested in this activity and find myself attracted to any such sounds with avid interest.

On April 14, 1960, I was spending a night at a motel close by the New York State Thruway at Utica. The spring evening was warm and a gentle rain was falling. While working in my room, I had the window open.

Just before retiring for the night at 11:40 P. M., I was pleased to hear the sweet song of the Song Sparrow coming from a pine tree a short distance from the window. The rain had stopped, and so I stepped outside to better hear this delightful songster. The surrounding grounds of the motel were very well illuminated with brilliant floodlamps which seemed to bathe the area in daylight. Upon investigating further, I was delighted to observe the Sparrow singing atop a pine. From across the grounds another Song Sparrow commenced a competitive lay. I noted that the nearer bird flew about with utter ease and was just as active as if it were broad daylight. On strolling around the rim of the swimming pool, I heard a Robin scolding nearby.

Modern, bright floodlighting may become an important factor in bird life in this twentieth century. Poultry farmers have known for some time that chickens can be forced into greater productivity by the use of controlled electric lighting in the coops. One wonders what the long-range effect can and will be on modern day wild birds that choose to nest in proximity to man. We already know only too well that TV towers, radar installations, and airport ceilometers reap their toll. Might not increased activity of individuals increase the number and success of broods and allow a higher ratio of young per year? Winston W. Brockner, 63 Ardmore Place, Buffalo 13.

Jamaica Bay Sanctuary Ducks: In early August, 1960, forty-eight young Red-heads, five weeks old, were released at Jamaica Bay Sanctuary as part of a large-scale attempt to propagate this species which is down so in numbers.

The ducklings were released in the west pond, all having survived the trip downstate, and they jauntily swam off, glad to be restored to their natural element. The birds were brought to the sanctuary on the theory that they will return the following year to the place where they learned to fly. It is hoped that they will come back in the spring to nest. At any rate they are assured of a good food supply. The four prolific crops available are: widgeon grass, three-square, musk grass, and duck weed. To prove the value of a good available food supply together with shelter and protection, ducks nesting at Jamaica Bay Sanctuary this past summer included the Gadwell, Blue-winged Teal, Shoveller, and Ruddy. Common Gallinules and Coots also bred. Nesting Redheads would make an attractive addition.

While on the subject of ducks, I might mention an observation among Black Ducks of their taking in cold weather a food item not usually associated with their diet. Along the west pond's sandy upper stretches grow a fair number of sturdy rose bushes. These are abundantly loaded, late in the season, with large seed pods (or hips). Occasionally the Black Ducks would climb the slopes, reach up and fed upon the lower hips until their crops were full. I have seen no other species of duck do this. — Herbert Johnson (as told to John J. Elliott), Jamaica Bay Bird Sanctuary, Park Department, No. Channel Bridge, Broad Channel, Queens.

Black Vulture in Columbia County: On October 8, 1960, while turning from Route 9 onto Route 82, my attention was attracted to Bell's Pond which is cupped in the North-east bend of this intersection, about 500 feet from the road. On its surface was a flock of 25 Canada Geese. While watching them I happened to notice a vulture flying to the south, which, because it was not soaring in usual vulture fashion, held my attention. Binoculars gave a beautiful view of a Black Vulture, head and short tail being doubly confirmed by its flight pattern, so entirely different from that of the Turkey Vulture. The bird was in sight for about fifteen minutes, then sailed and flapped in the direction of Lake Taghkanic (Ed. note — E. H. Eaton in **Birds in New York** speaks of the Black Vulture as a "rare and irregular visitor to the State