

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

of New York." Kenneth Parkes (**Birds of New York State and Their Taxonomy**), in summarizing information on distribution acquired since Eaton's book was published, found this statement to be still true, with only a few sight records since those listed by Eaton. A few specimens taken in the state are in museum collections. Parkes states that "observers in the warmer parts of the state should be on the alert for this species." The last preceding record was apparently that of a pair in Dutchess County on May 2, 1960 (**Kingbird**, July, 1960, p. 77). One wonders whether the present record was one of those two birds). — Mrs. Henry Thurston, Claverack.

Ruffed Grouse Eating a Snake: In October, 1959, a Ruffed Grouse was shot at Dry Hill near Watertown. It had eaten a DeKay's snake (*Storeria dekayi*) about nine inches long. The head and part of the body of the snake were in the gizzard of the grouse, and digestion had just started. The tail of the snake was in the crop of the bird. The gizzard was cut open to show the snake inside, and the snake



Gizzard of Ruffed Grouse containing snake.

Photo by Cecil Dake

and gizzard have been preserved in the Science Department of Case Junior High School in Watertown.

While there are other published records of a Grouse having eaten a snake, this seems unusual enough as a food item for this species to be worth recording again. — Frank A. Clinch, 173 Haley Street, Watertown.

An Albany Airport Ceilometer Disaster in 1956: Birds and airports don't always mix. There have been more than just a few cases in which small land birds, migrating at night, have been lured en masse to their destruction by airport ceilometers. The exact cause of such disasters is perhaps still a matter of speculation. Such an occurrence took place at the Albany Airport during the fall migration of 1956, and although an account of this particular episode has been published elsewhere, many readers may not have heretofore been aware of it.