

**THE BLUE-JAY AS A BIRD OF PREY.**—One morning, about the middle of June, I noticed a Blue-Jay in a tree about ten feet from a window of my house, tearing and eating something held in its feet. From the window, I could clearly see that it held with its toes a young live bird, only partly covered by feathers. The young bird had apparently been stolen from its nest. Hoping to get the young bird for identification, I went out and disturbed the Jay expecting it to fly up and drop its prey. However, to my surprise, it immediately flew away with its prey held in its foot like so many of the large carnivorous birds. I should like to know if it is a common thing for the Jays to carry prey in this manner?—CHAS. W. LOWE, *Winnipeg, Man.*

**THE TEMPEST IN THE TEAPOT.**—Some months ago a well-known member of the Ottawa Naturalists' Club and of a Government Department, prepared a paper and, in a spirit of good-natured humor not too common in the scientific world, titled it "In Townsend's Labrador" as a sly dig at that gentleman's "In Audubon's Labrador" and many other books on the same subject. In due time it appeared in the pages of this publication.

That there could be any exception taken to this title except perhaps, by Dr. Townsend himself, never occurred to anyone cognizant of the paper. But in certain quarters it was taken as a gratuitous reflection upon the memory of the late and lamented Mr. Napoleon Comeau, who alone by these critics was deemed entitled to the honor of such implied proprietorship. This would scarcely be worth mentioning here were it not that the matter was taken so seriously as to have been made the subject of a broadside bulletin that received considerable republication and distribution. Of course, nothing could have been farther from the intentions of the writer, the Department to which he belongs or of this publication than to discredit in any way the work of either Mr. Comeau or of John J. Audubon.

The facts are, that Audubon was the father of Labrador ornithology and Dr. Townsend has been his Boswell as far as his Labrador trip is concerned and—but, pshaw! you cannot explain a joke and no one familiar with the literature and the English history of this coast would have taken the matter otherwise.

This is a good warning to scientific naturalists to suppress their sense of humor and other human characteristics for fear of being misunderstood by a literal-minded public.—ORNITH. ED.

**STARLING'S NEST AT TORONTO.**—The English Starling has now become a regular occurrence at

Toronto, and is known to be nesting. Mr. Harrison Lewis has given this bird a great deal of attention for some months and besides collecting many specimens with a view to studying the bird's food, has established the fact that the bird nests in the open ends of the piping which forms the crossbars of the Hydro Electric towers. This location is not only almost inaccessible, but dangerous to attempt to reach, owing to the nearby high voltage wires. As far as I know, no one has been able to secure a set of eggs from these sites and no one has reported finding other nests.

By one of those mere chances which make bird study so fascinating, I had the good fortune to discover the nest of a starling and secure a set of eggs on May 4th this year. Mrs. Thompson and I had ridden out into the open fields, not far from home, for no other reason than to enjoy the evening and listen to the songs of the meadow lark, vesper and savanna sparrow. We were sitting in the car looking out over the fields and noticed a starling in the tree near-by. The bird flew soon after, circled, and coming up behind us, flew directly to a telephone pole a few yards off and disappeared. I examined the pole and found a woodpecker's hole some fifteen feet from the ground. My repeated knockings failed to bring out any starling. This failure to reappear after entering its hole seems to be characteristic of these birds. Mr. Lewis tells that he might have secured specimens again and again had he been able to bring the birds out from holes he had seen them enter only a moment before.

The following morning, I drove up to the spot carrying a short ladder on the car. With the aid of a kitchen spoon fastened to a piece of iron wire made up only a few minutes before starting, I scooped out the set of six eggs safely. These were pale blue in color, without any markings of any kind and measuring  $1\frac{1}{8}'' \times \frac{7}{8}''$ , all quite fresh.

Judging from the odd remnants that came to light with the eggs, the nest was composed of hen feathers. The hole which the starling had chosen was about fifteen feet from the ground on the east side of the pole and about two inches in diameter. The pole was excavated to the depth of about nine inches.

It would be interesting to know how six starlings could possibly find room in such a narrow space to hatch, grow and thrive. They must be greatly crowded. There seemed to be scarcely room for the eggs side by side. Measuring these later, I found the least possible space the set would require was about two and a half inches in diameter. This leads me to believe that the young birds must, to some extent at least, cling more or less



Taverner, P. A. 1926. "The Tempest in the Teapot." *The Canadian field-naturalist* 40(6), 141–141. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.338687>.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/89074>

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.338687>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/338687>

#### **Holding Institution**

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

#### **Sponsored by**

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

#### **Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

Rights Holder: Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

Rights: <https://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.