

INFORMATION SERVICE

Answers to questions submitted will be given by specialists in cases where the reply is of general interest. Questions of less general interest will be answered by mail.

Would you kindly advise me where the male hummingbird goes to after the mating season?

Would you also advise me if the robins of Alberta make a temporary migration after the fledglings are able to fly?

The robin population of Alberta appears to be increasing very rapidly. It is no exaggeration to say that there are thousands around this town every spring and summer for the last few years. In the early part of August they disappear and from then on until fall very few are to be seen. The writer does considerable driving through the country and an examination of the woods and thickets reveals the presence of very few robins during the time indicated above.

Any information you can give me on these matters will be greatly appreciated.—A.M., *Lacombe, Alta.*

It is an interesting question where the adult male hummingbirds disappear to in the summer. As soon as serious nesting begins with the female, the male seems to vanish and is never seen in the vicinity of the nest. Thereafter the great majority of the hummers observed are females and young birds. This summer I saw a single adult male in my garden shortly after the middle of August which is the latest I can recall ever having seen one. In British Columbia the common impression is that the males follow the flower season up the mountains to the alpine meadows. Whether this is the result of inference only or of direct observation I do not know, but it cannot be true to the east where there are no mountains; yet the same absence of males can be noted. Perhaps these males return south again as early in the season as their services can be dispensed with.

Of course August is a very quiet time for most birds. As soon as their reproductive duties are over most of them undergo a complete moult, a process that is a considerable tax on their systems. During it they are usually very retiring and quiet and largely disappear from observation. After they acquire a new plumage they become more active again rebuilding their systems for the exertions of migration. At this time many species join together in large flocks before leaving in a body.

Under various local food conditions much of this sequence of retirement, reappearance, flocking and

leaving is obscured in the case of the Robin. They are very fond of small fruit and, as soon as such is ripe or the insect or worm requirements of their young are past, subsist upon it almost exclusively. Here in the east Robins consume great quantities of mountain ash, honey-suckle, climbing bitter-sweet berries, wild grapes, apples, etc. They may entirely desert their familiar habitats and concentrate where such food is available. If the Robins seem to desert your locality in August I should surmise that the above is the reason; they are seeking soft fruit and are likely to be found in some concentration in such sheltered coulees or other localities where such food can be found. The reappearance of the species again in the fall may be due to the passage of northern birds in migration, the exhaustion of the food supply elsewhere, or both. In any event it would be an interesting problem for you to work out.—P.A.T.

Will you kindly tell me if any of the eagles line their nests with down (from the mother's breast) and also whether they pull the nests apart later on, in order that the young will learn to fly. I heard these statements made recently and wondered if this is the case.—A. E. McL., *Hamilton, Ont.*

I do not think there is any ground for either of these more or less popular beliefs.

The usual nest of the Bald Eagle is a large mass of sticks, many of them of considerable size, in tops of tall trees or occasionally on ledges of cliffs. With the Golden Eagle the two locations are reversed and the cliff nest is the more usual.

The tops of the nests are usually scarcely, if at all, cupped but merely flat platforms with the interstices filled in with rubbish, grass, and dirt adhering to the roots but contain no more feathers or down than is accidentally worn or dropped from the parents or partially plucked prey they bring.

The young, as they approach flight stage wander over the nest platform and finally work their way to adjoining branches, and, when strong enough, require little or no urging to make their first flight. The whole idea that young birds have to be taught to fly is, I think, wrong. A young bird taking off from the nest for the first time flies perfectly and instinctively, only lacking strength and endurance. Sometimes birds are frightened from the nest or are forced from other causes to leave the nest prematurely and before their muscles are strong enough to support them. It is such flutterings

and the anxiety of the parents to lead them to safety that has suggested that the parents "teach" them to fly. I have seen many birds take their first flight from the nest and, when properly grown, they do so with surprising sureness, and little lack of coordination but tire easily. Normally there is no necessity to force them from the nest, the natural restlessness of growing strength being sufficient urge for them to try their wings.

Nests that have been trampled over for some time by heavy, nearly grown, youngsters are naturally often in need of repair and may be more

or less broken down, which may have given rise to the belief that the old birds tear them apart. Nests are occupied year after year and are repaired and added to at the beginning of each nesting season, often assuming immense size through annual accretions.

Intimate and detailed accounts of the home life of the Bald Eagle have been given by Prof. Francis H. Herrick, *Auk*, 41, 1924, and 49, 1932, from observations made from blinds on steel towers purposely erected for the purpose beside tree nests.—P. A. TAVERNER.

ALFRED BROOKER KLUGH

BORN 1882

DIED 1932



DR. A. BROOKER KLUGH, Associate Professor of Biology in Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, died on June 1, 1932, of injuries received earlier in the day when his automobile was struck by a railway train on a level crossing near Kingston. By his death, naturalists and the science of biology suffer a heavy loss.

Alfred Brooker Klugh was born in London, England, in 1882, and received his primary education in a private school in England. He came to Canada with his parents in 1896 and continued his studies with private tutors. He then spent five years at the Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph, and during part of that time was an instructor in nature study and especially ornithology. He entered Queen's University in 1906, graduating in 1910 with the degree of M.A. and with the medal in Botany. In the next session he was appointed lecturer in Biology in Queen's University, and remained on the staff there until his death. He obtained leave of absence to study physiology at Harvard and zoology at Cornell, and received the degree of Ph.D. from the latter in 1926. He is survived by his wife and both his parents.

Dr. Klugh combined in a rare and remarkable degree the traditions of the old school of naturalists, who took all Nature as their field, with the ability for intensive study of the modern, highly specialized scientist. His studies covered every group, from microscopic forms to mammals, and every problem of classification, ecology, distribution, life history, and behaviour. This broad knowledge, available instantly through his accurate memory, was invaluable to him and to his students and formed the foundation for his intensive research on special problems. The results of his studies have appeared in the papers which he contributed to scientific journals, and at the same

time he increased the general interest in nature study by articles in more popular magazines. His publications include many series of articles on wild life and nature study, on the distribution, migration, and behaviour of birds, on the distribution and behaviour of animals, on the productivity of lakes and other topics of ecology, on nature photography including colour photography, and on ecological photometry and the measurement of ultraviolet light and the effect of ultraviolet light on plants and animals.

Ecological photometry was latterly his greatest interest. He designed a photometer to measure the intensity of visible and ultraviolet light on land and under water. He found that ultraviolet light has a lethal effect on many small animals in the sea, and he correlated the sensitiveness of these animals to ultraviolet light with their distribution and movements in the sea. He studied the rate of photosynthesis of marine plants in light of different colours, and he correlated this with their colour and the intensity of the light which reaches them at various depths. The scientific and economic importance of his researches were generally recognized, and he received practical and financial assistance from Queen's University, The National Research Council of Canada, and The Biological Board of Canada, the latter body building for his use a special laboratory at the Atlantic Biological Station at St. Andrews, N.B.

Dr. Klugh was not only a student; he was also a teacher. His wide knowledge was always available to his fellow workers and enabled him to direct and assist his students in many fields of biological investigations. But he imparted much more than information and advice to his students; he gave them also an eager enthusiasm in their search for knowledge. It is by his students that his loss will be most keenly felt.—R.O.M.



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