

## NOTES OF INTEREST

**A case of mistaken identity.** While watching a Wood Pewee hawking insects near one of the trails through the shell mounds on Dauphin Island this past November, I was surprised to see the bird suddenly dart from its perch and fly straight toward me at eye level. When it was a few feet from my face and still coming, I closed my eyes and a second later felt it light on the top of my head! After a half minute or so (it seemed longer), the bird launched into the air, snapped an insect, and settled back on my head! A minute later it took off and vanished into the woods, not to be seen again. I was once mistaken for a stump by a Black-and-white Warbler while sitting in the woods turkey hunting, but this was the first time I had ever been used as a fence post! *Bill Summerour, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama 36265.*

**Laughing Gull puzzled by puffer's defense.** While standing on a narrow crescent of sand beach near the airport marsh on Dauphin Island, my attention was drawn to a Laughing Gull that lit nearby in the water's edge, holding an inflated puffer in its mouth. The puffer was about the size of a tennis ball, requiring that the gull stretch its mouth as wide open as possible in order to hold the fish. It stood for several minutes puzzled as to how to go about swallowing a three-inch ball; normal swallowing procedures were obviously unworkable and out of the question. Appearing at a loss as to how to solve the problem, the gull finally dropped the fish into the water where it promptly floated like a white balloon and bobbed about on the surface whenever the gull tried to peck it.

After watching for about ten minutes, I decided to rush the bird while the puffer was floating in the water, hoping to frighten it away so that I could examine the fish. But instead of flying off in a panic when I charged with arms waving, it looked at me, startled, then back at the puffer, then ran over and grabbed the fish and took off! It flew to a shell island about 30 meters (100 feet) away where it was last seen still trying to crack the puffer's effective survival strategy.

Scott Duncan described having watched a Laughing Gull attempting to swallow a snake or legless lizard in an earlier edition of *Alabama Birdlife* 34: 6. Like most gulls, Laughing Gulls are apparently opportunists that will attempt to eat just about anything they can get their mouths around. *Bill Summerour, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, AL 36265.*