

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

on carrion or road kills (Bent, A.C. 1937, *Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey, Part One*). Neither do they usually feed in associations, but only solitarily. **Julian L. Dusi**, Department of Zoology and Wildlife Science, Auburn University, AL 36849.

### **RING-BILLED GULLS (LARUS DELAWARENSIS) FEEDING ON MUSSELS**

Daniel J. Drennen

In this note I document Ring-Billed Gulls feeding on three different species of mussels, describe aspects of their feeding behavior and gauge the lake water level necessary for it to occur.

On 6 January and 10 January 1994, I observed Ring-Billed Gulls picking up mussels from the shoreline with their beaks and dropping them on the asphalt parking lot (approximately 0.5 acre, 0.2 hectare; rectangular in shape) immediately adjacent to Lake Eufaula at Lake Point State Park (Barbour Co., Alabama). Most of the mussels were exposed to the air in the mud shoreline and were readily available to gulls. Some mussels were covered with < 1 foot ( 0.3 m) of water. Lake water levels during the observations were 185.08 msl (mean sea level) and 185.13 msl, respectively. Full pool for the lake is 190.0 msl. Normal msl for the lake in January is 3-4 feet (0.9-1.2 m) below this stage.

The gulls would carry the mussels to an estimated height of 10-30 feet (3.0-9.1 m) and drop them on the asphalt parking lot. If the mussel missed the asphalt or did not open on impact, the gulls would pick it up and drop it again.

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They would immediately descend on cracked shells and pick out the flesh. Some gulls would pursue other gulls with mussels in their beaks in order to rob them.

Welty (1975, *The Life of Birds*) stated that, in general, gulls were known to fly over rocky ground with mussels and drop them to break them open and expose their edible interiors. Imhof (1976, *Alabama Birds*) and Bent (1921, *Life Histories of North American Gulls and Terns*) discussed the food habits of several gull species but neither mention that Ring-Billed Gulls consume mussels. No specific notation of Ring-Billed Gulls feeding on mussels was found in other literature reviewed.

Within the area of the parking lot I found more than 200 opened mussel shells. No fleshy portions remained except for remnant pieces around the shell hinges. I collected various shell samples and sent them for identification to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Mollusk Research office at the University of Florida.

Species collected were Corbicula fluminea, Anodonta imbecillis, and A. grandis and ranged in shell length from approximately 3.5 cm to 10.16 cm. These species are common throughout the lake area and are exposed in great numbers when water levels drop below 186.0 msl. C. fluminea was the most numerous species collected.

C. fluminea is an exotic species, introduced to North America from Southeast Asia in the early 1900's, which has successfully occupied habitat within the lake bottom substrate. Their numbers seem to be increasing and may

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even be in direct competition with native species (J. Brim, pers. comm., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). C. fluminea may be an important food source to wintering Ring-Billed Gulls when water levels are below 186.0 msl.

During January 1995 I did not observe this particular feeding behavior and did not see any mussel shells in the parking lot. The water level was above 188.0 msl and too high for gulls to feed on mussels. **Daniel J. Drennen**, Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, Rt. 2, Box 97-B, Eufaula, Alabama, 36027.

### THE THIRD ALABAMA RECORDS COMMITTEE REPORT

William J. Bremser Jr.

The "official" Alabama State List now contains 394 species, with 11 species listed in the hypothetical category (no acceptable photograph, specimen, or not seen by at least three experienced observers). The Eurasian Collared-Dove (Streptopelia decaoeto) which was recently accepted by the AOU, would have increased the state total to 395; however, at the same time the Eurasian Collared-Dove was accepted, the Ringed Turtle-Dove (Streptopelia risoria) was deleted by the AOU.

Tables 1 and 2 cover the years 1992 and 1993 respectively. Table 3 contains an update of the 1990 and 1991 unreported evaluations. Forty-three records were appraised and finalized.