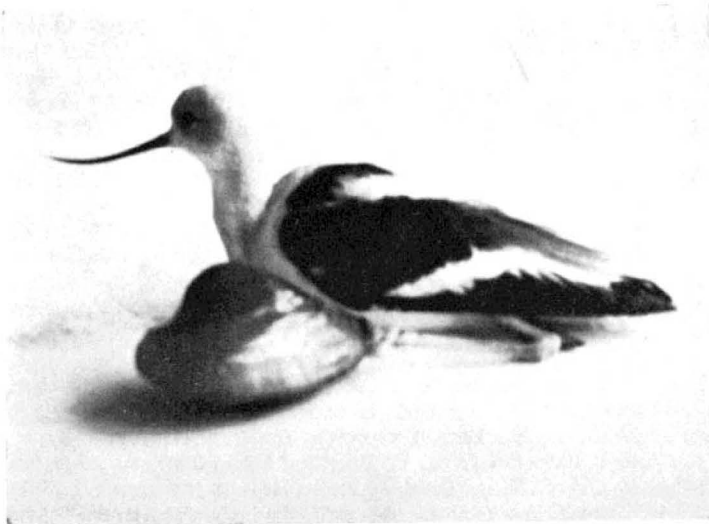


AN AMERICAN AVOCET CAUGHT BY A LARGE CLAM

BY JACK D. TYLER

ON 17 SEPTEMBER 1970, while Brad Carlton, William J. Fox, and I were observing shorebirds at the north end of Lake Ellsworth, 6 miles west of Fletcher, Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma, we noticed an American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*) standing quietly on a mudbar about 50 yards out from shore. Three other avocets joined the quiet bird momentarily, but flew off without it. Puzzled by the fact that the lone avocet had not even tried to fly, we decided to collect it. Fox approached to within about 30 yards and fired, crippling the bird. Now we perceived why it had not flown off: a large freshwater mussel was clinging to its left foot. The mussel was alive.

The water surrounding the mudflat was shallow. The weather had been very hot for several days. It is conceivable that the mussel, lying inconspicuously on the lake's bottom, had opened its valves wide in an attempt to obtain more



AN AVOCET AND THE CLAM THAT CAPTURED IT

Both specimens collected on 17 September 1970 by Jack D. Tyler at the north end of Lake Ellsworth in Comanche County, Oklahoma.

oxygen from the warm, motionless water, and that it had snapped its valves shut on the avocet's foot as the bird was alighting. We had no way of ascertaining, of course, precisely where the mussel had been when it had caught the avocet. It might have been in considerably deeper water. The struggling bird might have dragged it onto the mudbar.

The avocet, an adult female in winter feather, weighed 317.4 grams (very little fat). The mussel, a gravid adult female Great Freshwater Clam (*Anadonta grandis*) weighing 233.6 grams (more than two-thirds the weight of the avocet), was 140 mm. long, 57 mm. wide at the umbo (the knoblike protuberance near the hinges of the valves), and 84 mm. thick at its thickest point. Both the avocet and the mussel are preserved as specimens in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at Cameron College, in Lawton, Oklahoma. I wish to thank my friend James Sickel for identifying the mussel.

On the cover of the August 1918 issue of *The Oologist* (Vol. 35, p. 111) appears a photograph of an immature Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*) "caught by an oyster, James River, Va., 1916." The bird was misidentified as a "young Great Blue Heron [*Ardea herodias*]." The photograph, which does not show the "oyster," was taken by B. R. Bayles.

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73501, 17 OCTOBER 1971.

GENERAL NOTES

Fall specimen of Cattle Egret from Osage County, Oklahoma.—At about 08:00 on 19 October 1972, a mild, sunny day, my husband, Dr. A. Max Mery, collected a first year male Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) from a floating duck-blind about 350 yards out from the north shore of the northeastern cove of Hulah Reservoir, Osage County, northeastern Oklahoma. The egret flew in from the south across a wide expanse of water and circled the blind closely, as if wanting to alight there. Scattered near the blind were about 150 goose and duck decoys.

The egret specimen, mounted by the collector and presented to the bird collection at the University of Oklahoma (UOMZ 7305), is clearly tinged with buff on the crown and very faintly tinged with buff in the middle of the back. Its culmen measures 54 mm., its tarsometatarsus 74. The crown of a first year female specimen (UOMZ 5525) taken on 6 November 1964 at Norman, Cleveland County, central Oklahoma, is a little less strongly suffused with buff than the Osage County specimen, but the color probably would be perceptible in the field. In each of two much younger specimens in the University of Oklahoma collection—one from Tulsa, Tulsa County, northeastern Oklahoma (male, UOMZ 5488, 11 July 1964), the other from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, central Oklahoma (sex uncertain, UOMZ 7164, 24 July 1971)—the crown plumage is dead white and the grayish-buff tinge on the back looks more like soiling than actual color.—Sophia C. Mery, 345 S. E. Boston, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74003, 20 July 1972.