

May 11, 1965

Dr. N. L. Cuthbert
Central Michigan University
Mount Pleasant, Michigan

Dear Nick:

Each time I get one of your letters I feel like rushing up to Mio. I am not surprised that you are excited about your work with the cowbird. I really believe that there is hardly any fact you discover that will not be a contribution on this mysterious and interesting bird.

For example, if your collecting shows that the sex ratios are nearly equal, this may be the only conclusive evidence we have on that fact. To clinch it, give special attention to the factors that make you think the birds shot are truly representative of the population in that region. That is, try to eliminate, if you can, any reasons for believing that your shooting is selective either for males or for females.

I am sure you have several purposes in making your dissections and my next point may be pretty obvious. But it would be very interesting to know if the cowbirds that lay early in the spring and those that lay up in mid-summer are the same birds or different birds. The cowbird seems to have a rather long laying period as a species, but whether this is because some of them lay at different times or because each female has a protracted season in which it is possible for her to lay, we do not know.

It has occurred to me that conceivably there might be someone in the National Forest organization who might be interested in helping on the trapping project. Building a large trap of chicken wire is the kind of a thing that might appeal as a project to a person who wanted to help but was not an expert ornithologist.

These are just a few thoughts prompted by your nice letter. I am sorry that I will not see you at the Wilson Society meeting but perhaps our paths will cross before the summer is over.

Sincerely yours,

Harold Mayfield:eh
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Waterville, Ohio

