

Bent, on page 13 of 'Life Histories of North American Gulls and Terns,' 1921, mentions this state in his list of spring arrival dates as, "North Carolina, Cape Hatteras, April 18," but a recent search through his original data, now in the Bureau of Biological Survey, by Mr. Frederick C. Lincoln, failed to disclose this record.—H. H. BRIMLEY, *State Museum, Raleigh, N. C.*

**A Curious Habit of Gulls.**<sup>1</sup>—On September 24, 1933, a flock of Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) had congregated at the eastern end of Fairfield Beach, Fairfield, Conn., the tide being nearly out. The location is near the mouth of a creek and the currents of water change the contour of the shore line from year to year. This year a small sand islet is exposed at low tide leaving a shallow strip of water about thirty feet wide between it and the shore.

Many of the Gulls were standing in this shallow water and, as I approached, I noticed a curious rhythmical splashing sound, like *slop-slop-slop-slop* continuing indefinitely. Observation showed that a dozen or more of the Gulls were producing the sound by moving their feet up and down as though marking time. The several birds kept well together in the movement so that it rather suggested a dance. Now and then one of them would cease its movements, or another one begin them, but some of the birds were performing all of the ten or fifteen minutes that I watched them. I timed them and found that there were regularly thirty-two foot movements in five seconds, or sixteen with each foot.

Most of the birds engaged in this movement seemed to be looking about indifferently, but once one of them suddenly ceased and darted its bill into the mud and water at its feet, evidently obtaining something edible, though just what I could not determine.

On several other occasions this fall I observed the same thing at this place, when the tide was low, and on November 9, noted Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*) with the Herring Gulls, also indulging in the habit. I failed to note this performance at any other point along the coast where Gulls feed at low tide and I find no reference to the habit in the literature at my disposal. Dr. Witmer Stone, however, tells me that the habit has been recorded by several English writers.

I am inclined to think that the birds were attempting to stir up some edible creatures that were hiding in the mud, perhaps marine worms; and that conditions at this particular spot made such a habit useful to them.—  
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**A Key to the Owls of the Genus *Pulsatrix* Kaup.**—Owing chiefly, no doubt, to paucity of material, species of the genus *Pulsatrix* have been much confused in ornithological literature. A key to the species and subspecies is here given in the hope that it will be of use to workers in the museum and field.

<sup>1</sup> Published with the aid of the Dwight Memorial Fund. Cf. also Condor, 1934, p. 32. [Ed.]