

## GENERAL NOTES

**First North American Sighting and Photographic Record of Common Crane, *Grus grus*.**—A Common Crane, *Grus grus*, a Eurasian species, was first seen on April 24, 1958, feeding in the fields at Creamer's Dairy Farm about two miles west of Fairbanks, Alaska. It was readily identified by the light-gray body plumage, the striking black and white head and neck pattern, and the conspicuous "bustle" formed by the inner secondary feathers. During the next two weeks it was seen regularly in the Fairbanks area. It alternated much of the time between Creamer's fields and the fields of the Alaska Agricultural Experiment Station at College, a distance of about three miles. Twice it was reported in the vicinity of Badger Road, about seven miles from Creamer's Dairy. The crane was observed regularly until May 10, but with the possible exception of a report on June 2, it has not been seen since. The attached photograph was taken on May 2, 1958 by Earl L. Schene (Plate 22).

During its stay in the area, the crane was observed a number of times for lengthy periods from a distance of 200 to 300 yards with a 30X spotting scope. The bird appeared to be in sub-adult plumage, since it lacked the typical red crown patch of the adult. It was extremely wary and could not be collected, but several diagnostic photographs were obtained (see Plate 22). The crane frequently was seen feeding and resting with flocks of Canada Geese, *Branta canadensis*, one of the early migrants through the area; when flushed, it usually landed again near the geese. The Sandhill Cranes, *Grus canadensis*, did not arrive until April 28, and the Common Crane showed no particular affinity toward them after they arrived. Throughout the afternoon of April 24, while feeding among about 350 geese, the crane was harassed by several Common Ravens, *Corvus corax*. The ravens pecked at its drooping secondaries, flew over its back, dived at it and at times actually struck it on the back. Several times they forced the crane to fly a short distance in an attempt to rid itself of its persecutors.

*Grus grus* is normally a breeding bird of Europe and Asia. The eastern subspecies, *G. g. lilfordi*, winters as far east as the lowlands of eastern and southeastern China, and summers about as far north in eastern Siberia as 65° N. Latitude and apparently east to the vicinity of the Kolyma River, 155-160° E. Longitude, about 1700 miles from Fairbanks, Alaska. It is said to be paler than the nominate subspecies, which breeds in Europe and western Asia, wintering to Africa.—BRINA KESSEL AND ROBERT W. KELLY, *University of Alaska, College, Alaska*.

**A New Form of Nest in the Scimitar Babblers, *Pomatorhinini*.**—Captain Delacour (L'Oiseau et la R.F.O. 1946:23; 1950: 186) has pointed out that the scimitar babblers of the Indomalayan and Australian regions are morphologically so similar that they seem to be congeneric whereas, from a study of their nidification, they appear to belong to two distinct genera. These are an Indomalayan group (*Pomatorhinus* with five species), which construct a large globular nest cradled on the ground (Smythies, "The Birds of Burma" 1953: 25-26) and an Australian group (*Pomatostomus* with four species) which construct a large globular nest cradled in high forks of trees (Serventy and Whittell, "Birds of Western Australia" 1951: 283 and 285). One of the species (*P. isidori* of New Guinea) was included in the latter group on geographical grounds, pending discovery and study of its nest.

In 1956 in the Finisterre Mountains of New Guinea I stumbled on information concerning an extraordinary nest built by a bird which was quite unknown to me.

This nest was later identified by Dr. Ernst Mayr as that of *Pomatostomus isidori*, the one still awaiting discovery. Dr. Mayr made the identification on the basis of feathers found in the nest-lining and the field observations recorded below.

As will be seen from the photographs (Plate 22), the nest of this species differs markedly from that of the other scimitar babblers, it being a pensile rather than a cradled nest. This is of much interest because of the importance attached to patterns of nidification in these babblers, in which nest form, more than any other character, is used as an expression of systematic difference.

The details of this find are as follows: On July 4, 1956 at 6:10 p.m., while I was observing birds in the Finisterre Mountains (Mt. Tyo; altitude 1600 feet), a band of four birds came through the dark understory of a high semi-open forest. They kept close to the ground and uttered grating, plaintive *keaaa* notes. The birds, which appeared brown with longer than average bills, were the size of a Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*). They flew in stages of eight to fifteen feet, keeping together in an open band. As I was trying to make out the identity of these late dusk travelers, my native assistant Maropa (a middle-aged man from the village of Bogadjim who was the best naturalist among my carriers) informed me that the birds were going to a nest to sleep. I then recorded in my journal his description of their roosting nest which, he said, was pensile with a hole in the side and fifteen to twenty-five feet up in the forest. Maropa emphasized that the nest was always suspended from a single vine—"rope noting," he called it in Pidgin. He also said that the native method of catching these birds, which he called *Cora-cora*, was to trap them in the nest after nightfall. Maropa claimed to have once trapped three fully grown birds that were sleeping in such a nest. He stated that the nests were well known to his people but that they were thinly distributed through the forest.

Later, without consulting me, Maropa travelled a long distance to collect the nest which is shown in the accompanying illustration. After photographing, measuring and collecting some of the lining, I made an unsuccessful attempt to visit the spot where it had been collected. The details of this nest, which are given below, and the following observations, that were made on July 6 in the afternoon during the course of an all-day vigil under the display limbs of a King Bird of Paradise, are all I have in my journals about the Scimitar Babbler: "Flock of babblers. Size of brown thrasher. Breast and lower neck cinnamon brown. Head and throat mouse gray. A noisy group. Flight in trees rushing and accompanied by squeaky "White-white-throw-white" notes. Feeding and chasing in low crown [35 feet up]. Often heard, not often seen. Elusive. Move through forest very rapidly."

The nest was constructed largely of wild pandanus leaf strippings and other dried fibres. These were intertwined to form a structure that measured six feet six inches in length and one foot in maximum width. This large structure was attached to a single vine which was half the diameter of a pencil. As in all scimitar babblers, the nest was domed and the entrance consisted of a hole in the side. Below the egg cavity there hung a long "beard" of leaf strippings which appeared to serve as camouflage for the nest. The nest hole, which was 50 mm. wide, was near the bottom of the nest and only about 45 mm. above the floor of the egg cavity. This cavity was 135 mm. wide and about 145 mm. high. It was lined with green bamboo leaves, thin pandanus strippings, and a few skeletonized tree leaves. Also included were a number of brown feathers. Some seven of these were collected. All belonged to *P. isidori*.

When I realized that I would be unable to visit the spot where Maropa had collected the nest, I instructed him to walk with me in the forest and to find a similar nest location. He pointed out a spot 35 to 40 feet up in high open forest and indicated that the nest had been suspended about ten feet out from the nearest tree trunk, also that the nest itself had dangled about four feet below a slender limb. In view of the accuracy of his other information concerning this nest, it is most probable that these statements are also exact.—E. THOMAS GILLIARD, *American Museum of Natural History, New York 24, N. Y.*

**Extralimital Records for the Eastern Kingbird, Tree Swallow, and Blackpoll Warbler.**—Eastern Kingbird, *Tyrannus tyrannus*. Jones (1859, p. 26) listed the "Tyrant Fly-Catcher" as numerous in Bermuda in April, 1850. Capt. Reid (1884, pp. 205-206) recorded a number in April, 1875, took several specimens, and reported others at Hungry Bay, September 22 of the same year. Three of Reid's skins are in the collection of the British Museum (Natural History) in London where I examined them in June, 1958. The published records mentioned were included in the first draft of the Fifth Edition of the A.O.U. Check-list (1957), but through an oversight Bermuda was omitted in the final manuscript.

In addition to the Bermuda skins, there is another in the British Museum collections from Cocos Island, off the Pacific coast of Costa Rica, the first to be reported from that distant point. A note attached to the specimen reads in part "Collected by Percy Howe at Wafer Bay, Cocos Island on 15th November, 1932. The bird \* \* \* was exhausted and taking cover just behind the camp in cleared ground. It is the only one seen of its kind during a year's residence on the Island."

Tree Swallow, *Iridoprocne bicolor*. There is a skin of an immature female, taken on Swan Island (Caribbean Sea), November 14, 1937, in the British Museum (Natural History) that constitutes the only report for this island group. The record was made by Jean Delacour while on a cruise with Lord Moyne on the yacht *Rosaura*, Tree Swallows being noted first (Delacour, 1938, p. 544) among other migrants on October 20, while the skin was obtained on a later visit during the cruise. There are also 3 males of this species in the same museum taken by C. H. Lankester February 4, 1918, at Colonia El Salvador, Province of Heredia, on the Caribbean slope of northeastern Costa Rica. To these I add the occurrence of this swallow near Changuinola, Province of Bocas del Toro, Panamá, where I saw more than 100 on January 17, 1958, and where on March 4 I shot a male from a group of several flying with Barn and Rough-winged Swallows. The locality last-mentioned is the farthest south at which the species has been recorded to date.

Blackpoll Warbler, *Dendroica striata*. In view of the lack of Central American records of this species, except for one from Oaxaca, it is of interest to report an old specimen in the British Museum, labelled "Panama. J. McLeannan," received with the Tweeddale Collection. To students of the birds of Panamá the name "J. McLeannan" is well known as that of a station-master on the Panamá Railroad who was an ardent collector of birds and other natural history material for a period of more than ten years, beginning in the late 1850's. McLeannan sent many skins to George N. Lawrence in New York and to Osbert Salvin in London. After having handled hundreds of McLeannan's specimens I am certain that the Tweeddale skin is properly labelled as to source, since it exhibits the peculiarities, particularly in the method of sewing shut the bill, characteristic of McLeannan's work in his later years. The bird is an adult male in full spring plumage, and constitutes the only specimen record to date for Panamá.