

Notes on California Song Sparrows.

BY RICHARD C. MCGREGOR.

Melospiza fasciata pusillula Ridgway. The Salt Marsh Song Sparrow is described by Mr. Ridgway (*Auk*, Jan. 1899, 35) as having the "superciliary stripe and under parts more or less tinged with yellowish, the latter never (?) pure white." In a series of twenty-six skins of the race before me twenty-one are more or less yellowish. They are from the following localities: Alviso, Haywards, Palo Alto, Alameda and West Berkeley; five from West Berkeley, one from Alviso, and one from Alameda, lack the yellowish both of superciliary stripe and lower parts, but are of an equally small size. One of my smallest birds (189, West Berkeley, Feb. 2, 1889) is faintly washed with yellowish on breast, belly, sides and flanks; throat, chin and superciliary stripe white. Three examples (1518, 1529, Alviso, Sept. 9, 1896; and 1634, Haywards salt marsh, Oct. 13, 1894) have nearly the whole plumage suffused with dark yellowish, even the median crown stripe, neck and back being washed with yellowish. A series of lighter yellow birds were taken on Palo Alto marsh in March. The white birds were taken in February, one in September.

The specimens at hand indicate that the yellowish coloration is independent of season, age, sex or condition of plumage. This seems to be a case parallel to that of *Ammodramus sandwichensis bryanti* and *A. s. alaudinus*. I find that these two *Ammodrami* intergrade beautifully in size and the smaller (*bryanti*) often is lighter and less yellow than the larger (*alaudinus*).

In the Pacific R. R. Report IX, 479, Baird describes *Melospiza gouldii* as "similar to *M. heermanni* but very much smaller. Breast and sides conspicuously streaked with black; back and head distinctly streaked; length 4.70; wing 2.10; tail 2.38." Concerning the type Mr. Ridgway wrote me April 14, 1894: "The type of *M. gouldii* Baird, although of unknown locality only 'California' being its known origin, agrees with the southern coast specimens in its less rusty coloration." Baird emphasizes the fact that *M. gouldii* has the wing and tail very small. Now the white birds which I have referred to *M. pusillula* are the smallest song sparrows I have seen and if they agree with Baird's type, the subspecies would stand as *Melospiza melodia gouldii* Baird. Many specimens of song sparrows from the southern coast district, especially breeding birds, are needed before we can hope to map the range of the California *Melospizæ*.

Measurements are given to show the relative sizes of Samuels' and the Salt Marsh Song Sparrows. They are taken from five skins of the white form and ten skins each of *samuelis* and the yellow *pusillula*.

		Wing.	Tail.	Exposed Culmen.
<i>pusillula</i>	White birds	2.24-2.37 (2.32)	2.06-2.18 (2.12)	.36-.40 (.39)
	Yellow birds	2.14-2.44 (2.29)	1.93-2.30 (2.10)	.38-.45 (.41)
<i>samuelis</i>		2.31-2.50 (2.38)	2.17-2.39 (2.29)	.41-.46 (.42)

Ammodramus samuelis Baird was described from two birds collected at Petaluma, Sonoma County, by E. Samuels. Skins from that exact locality not being available, three from San Geronimo, two from Ukiah and one from Cloverdale are here taken as probably representing this form. Five skins from the west coast of Mendocino County differ so remarkably from these and in fact from all others in my series of *samuelis*, some thirty skins, that I venture to give the coast bird a new name.

***Melospiza melodia cleonensis*, subsp. nov. MENDOCINO SONG SPARROW.**

Subsp. char. Size of *M. m. samuelis* but lighter and more rusty; black markings of back more restricted; spots of breast broadly edged with rusty; black on side of head and neck almost entirely replaced by rusty or reddish brown.

Type. No. 288, ♀ worn nuptial plumage, McGregor Coll., Westport, Mendocino Co., California, May 28, 1889. Wing 2.28; tail 2.10; exposed culmen .42.

Co-type. No. 287, ♂ worn nuptial plumage, McGregor Coll., Westport, Mendocino Co., California, May 28, 1889. Wing 2.38; tail 2.22; exposed culmen .42.

Range. Coast of Mendocino County.

The name is taken from Cleone, the town where three of the specimens were collected.

Mr. A. W. Anthony has kindly loaned me a large series of song sparrows which he took on Coronado Island, Lower California. These are undoubtedly of the same variety as the sparrow on San Clemente Island. The range of *Melospiza melodia clementæ* is therefore extended to include the Mexican islands named.

If the specific name *Melospiza melodia* (Wilson) be reinstated as suggested in the *Auk* XVI, 183, then the song sparrow described by me in the March BULLETIN should stand *Melospiza melodia ingersolli*.



Lassoing a California Vulture.

BY F. STEPHENS, WITCH CREEK, SAN DIEGO CO., CAL.

[Read before the Northern Division of the Cooper Orn. Club, Sept. 2, 1899.]

I HAD heard of California Vultures being lassoed, but had been somewhat skeptical of the actual occurrence, because I had never seen their near relatives, the Turkey Vultures, gorged to the necessary extent. As others may have doubted the probability of this statement also I will relate the circumstances of the capture of a California Vulture near here with a riata.

May 24, 1899, I was at the principal dairy of the Santa Ysabel Rancho. Late in the afternoon Massimo Morelli, a Swiss vaquero employed on the ranch, came to me and said he had that afternoon caught a California Vulture with his riata and it was then at one of the other dairies, alive in a box. I arranged to purchase it and sent a wagon after the bird, which he returned with it after dark. As the box it was in was too small to allow the bird to stand upright I changed its quarters, but it seemed unable to stand up. I meant to keep it alive some time to study its habits in captivity and photograph it; however in the morning it was dead, greatly to my disappointment. On skinning it I found the flesh discolored on the lower part of the neck and believe the choking of the rope caused its death. The bird was an adult male in fair condition; weight 20 pounds; stomach nearly empty; length 45 inches; spread of wing 112 inches.

I have known Morelli several years, and know him to be reliable. The following is his account of the capture. He was out on the range looking after the stock as usual. Shortly after noon he saw this vulture at the carcass of a calf. As the bird seemed stupid he made a dash at it and threw his riata over its neck before it rose. He says the bird ran but did not seem able to fly. The bird proved difficult to handle, and struggled so that he was afraid it would get away, so he tied its wings together across its back with his handkerchief, and finally had to lash the bird to a pole to keep it from flapping under his horses feet, as he was afraid to drag it behind him too much. Massimo says when he caught the bird it disgorged and stunk horribly. From his manner I fancied that he received more of the veal than he liked. The bird struck him several severe blows with his bill.



H. R. PAINTON of College Park, a well known member of the Club, is serving his second term as principal of the New Almaden, Cal. public school.

W. B. JUDSON of Los Angeles has returned after a two years' absence in Dawson City, where he had mining interests.