

species upon the breeding grounds, at least in that portion included in the Chiricahua Mountains, Arizona, is very much later. In this range of mountains, about fifteen miles distant from Rodeo, the Stephens Whip-poor-will is a fairly common summer visitant to the oak region, but I did not record it there during 1917 until May 21, this at Paradise Post Office.—AUSTIN PAUL SMITH, *Rio Hondo, Texas, December 29, 1917.*

**Some Pugnacious Coots.**—Our boat house rests in a cut opening out of Butte Slough, in Colusa County, California. Between the end of the boat house and the current of the slough, there are sixty or eighty feet of still water; three Mud Hens (*Fulica americana*) have taken possession of this spot. They have grown quite tame; not only do they come up to the boat house for their food, but when hungry swim up and are clamorously insistent with their "put-put-put".

The men have frequently told me that they were murderous fighters against their own kind, and one day I was a witness of such a fight. A strange Mud Hen swam from the creek into the quiet water. The first of the three to see him attacked the stranger at once, "putting" harshly, and the intruder gave battle without the slightest attempt to retreat. They pecked at each other savagely. The other two boat house Mud Hens swam up to the fray, one of them joining in, the other, the smallest of the three and probably the female, simply looking on. In time they pecked the strange Mud Hen into a state of exhaustion. It was manifestly too weak to fly, but tried to make its escape by swimming. They followed it up, and one actually stood on its body while the other held its head under the water until it was dead. When satisfied of this, they left it.

The men tell me that nearly every day they murder one of their kind in this manner, and yet oddly enough they pay not the slightest attention to crippled ducks which drift down the current and often take refuge in the same cut. It would, of course, be perfectly easy for the Mud Hen which is attacked to escape by flight, but in no instance, my men say, has one ever attempted to do so.

The third and smaller Mud Hen never takes part in the fight, but is always an interested spectator. Once a battle began when only one of the boat house Mud Hens was present, but its call soon brought the other two, which had drifted down the creek, and they came back to the rescue flying. It seemed to me to be a curious phase of pugnacity, considering the gregarious habits of the bird.—F. W. HENSHAW, *San Francisco, January 26, 1918.*

**The Name of the American Barn Swallow.**—In a recent paper entitled "The Birds of the Anamba Islands" (Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., no. 98, June 30, 1917, pp. v+75, 2 pls.), Dr. H. C. Oberholser discusses the relationships of the American Barn Swallow with the closely similar forms of the Old World. He concludes that intergradation is complete through several intervening races between *Hirundo rustica*, the common Swallow of Europe, and our own Barn Swallow, and hence adopts the trinomial form of designation for the latter—*Hirundo rustica erythrogasteris*. Also the race *palmeri* once proposed by me from Alaska is not deemed tenable. With regard to both contentions the supporting facts presented seem to me now conclusive.

In the spelling of the subspecific name of the American form, however, I believe Oberholser to be wrong, and *erythrogaster* should be the proper spelling, not *erythrogasteris*. The term *erythrogaster* cannot be considered an adjective. It is a Greek noun, retaining its own gender and case when Latinized. *Hirundo* is feminine, but that should not affect the ending of the third term of the trinomial the case of which is, in this instance, nominative. If there were any doubt about this, final appeal to the original describer ought to settle it. The bird was described as *Hirundo erythrogaster*, which shows well enough the writer's intention. The name of our Barn Swallow ought to stand as *Hirundo rustica erythrogaster*. I am indebted to Professor W. A. Merrill, of the Latin department of the University of California, for pertinent information in connection with my present enquiry.

There seems to be a tendency even yet towards unnecessarily tampering with the spelling of names as originally proposed by describers. In this regard I wish also to protest against Oberholser's misquotation of my name *Guiraca caerulea salicarius*, emending it to *G. c. salicaria* (Auk, vol. 34, April, 1917, p. 204). *Salicarius* was employed as a noun, obviously.—J. GRINNELL, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, January 9, 1918.*