with an oar, and on examination its plumage was found to be saturated with crude oil, particularly on the breast and wings. No injuries were in evidence and its plight was apparently due entirely to the oil.

Numerous other Murres were noted at no great distances, all more or less covered with the oil, which covered the surface of the water from a mere film to a heavy scum. The men who were patrolling the beaches for bodies of the wreck victims reported that there were many of "the same kind of birds" (Murres) dead and dying on the beaches, and frequently the searchers were startled by a bird still alive suddenly struggling and flopping about at their feet. Also, many gulls were observed to have stained breasts, but none were seen to be helpless. On October 30, when about 120 miles south of the scene of the disaster (near Cape Fanshaw), on a passenger steamer, the writer observed one gull with oil-stained breast join the ship for a distance. On January 1, 1919, at Wrangell, nearly two hundred miles south of the wreck, the writer observed a Glaucous-winged Gull (*Larus glaucescens*) walking about the streets, with a spot of discoloration about four inches in diameter on breast and sides that bore every evidence of being crude oil stain and quite possibly came from the wreck to the north in the preceding October.

The extent of the losses among the bird population due to this accident can not even be approximated, but it must have been considerable, as the wreck occurred a short distance north of waters much frequented by Murres, and prevailing winds and tides drove the oil southward for many miles. The twenty-three miles under observation on October 28 were from twenty-two to forty-five miles from the scene of the wreck with considerable shoreline intervening, so there is a good reason to believe that the fatalities to the birds that came under observation of the writer's party were but a small percentage of the total.—ERNEST P. WALKER, *Phoenix, Arizona, March 7, 1920.*

Number of Birds Described as New from California.—The undersigned has prepared a manuscript list of all the birds described from California. Species have been excluded where the type in all probability did not come from within the confines of the present state of California. Even so, it is found that 205 new names have been proposed for birds from California in the strict sense. But 45 of these specific or subspecific names have subsequently proven to be ill founded; in other words they are now considered as synonyms. Therefore 160 valid forms out of the total of 576 at this moment credited to the state list have been described from California—about 28 percent.

Furthermore, it is found that 51 different persons have participated in this sort of ornithological activity. As to responsibility of authors for new names: Grinnell has proposed 38, of which 6 are synonyms; Ridgway 28, with 8 synonyms; Oberholser 13, with 4 synonyms; Cassin 13, with one synonym; Vigors 11, with 4 synonyms; Baird 8, with 3 synonyms; Swarth 6, with no synonyms; Lawrence 5, with 1 synonym; Gambel 5, with 1 synonym; McGregor 5, with 1 synonym; etc. The rest of the 51 authors have named four or fewer real or supposed new forms.

It might be expected that the earlier describers, working at a time when "most everything was new" and when only "full species" were recognized, would have made the best "score", that is, the highest ratio of valid names to total names proposed. However, note that Vigors (1839) made but 63 percent, the lowest ratio among those who have proposed more than ten new names. The best score among those who have launched ten names or more was made by Cassin, 91 percent. A score of 100 percent is to be credited to Xantus, Henshaw, C. H. Townsend, Mearns, and Swarth, among those who have proposed from 3 to 6 new names. Is it to be inferred that the larger the number of names launched the greater the chances of slipping up?

There are numerous factors which enter into the game of species naming, upon which success will depend. Some of these factors are: availability of comparative material, knowledge of the literature, degree of development of the geographic sense, knowledge of plumages and of the meanings of variations, and discriminative acumen. While some of these may in more or less degree be matters of luck, yet in the long run personal qualifications like industry, concentrativeness and caution will figure largely. In systematics it is woefully easy, but forever a *dis*credit, to launch synonyms. There is far less excuse for it now, with abundance of material and well indexed literature, than

in the days of Vigors.—J. GRINNELL, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, December 5, 1921.*

The White Gyrfalcon in Montana.—A bird as rare in the United States as the White Gyrfalcon (*Falco islandus*) seems worthy of recording whenever found and correctly identified. The specimen under consideration I believe has not been put on record up to the present date. It was sent to Mr. Oscar Gard, of Seattle, Washington, by Mr. Geo. B. Daniels, of Fort Benton, Montana. Mr. Benton writes that he shot the bird on November 18, 1917, on Shonkin Creek, just east of the town of Shonkin and about twenty miles from Fort Benton, Montana. When shot it was sitting on a post of a wire fence in very open country. The bird was in an advanced condition of decay by the time it reached Mr. Gard, who nevertheless made it into a very handsome specimen and it is now in my collection. Unfortunately the sex was not taken, but the extremely large size leaves practically no doubt that it is a female. It is very white and must have been fully adult, and is unquestionably one of the most beautiful birds that I have ever seen.—J. HOOPER BOWLES, *Tacoma, Washington, November 7, 1921.*

A Specimen of the Markham Petrel.—Mr. Chas. Fagan, chief wireless operator on the SS. "Santa Elisa," W. R. Grace and Co., has forwarded to the Biological Survey a petrel that proves to be the Markham Petrel, *Oceanodroma markhami* (Salvin). The bird was captured July 6, 1921, at sea off the coast of Peru at a point approximately thirty-five miles north of the port of Callao. *Oceanodroma markhami*, very close allied to *tristrami*, is distinguished from that bird by shorter tarsus, smaller foot, and somewhat more ashy tinge of the back and head. It differs from *O. melania* in more slender bill and in the grayish cast of the dorsal surface. Measurements of the present specimen are as follows: wing 175.5 mm.; tail 95 mm.; chord of exposed culmen 18 mm.; tarsus 23.3 mm.; middle toe with claw 23.5 mm.; outer toe with claw 22.5 mm.

The Markham Petrel was described by Salvin (Proc. Zool. Soc. London, 1883, p. 430) from a female specimen taken by Captain Markham in December, 1881, near the coast of Peru at lat. 19° 40′ S., long. 75° W. (given incorrectly in the Cat. Birds Brit. Mus., XXV, 1896, p. 354, as lat. 10° 40′ S.). A second specimen, also a female, was secured in the same region at lat. 23° S., long. 73° W. Loomis (Proc. California Acad. Sci., 4th ser., II, pt. II, p. 174) records two taken by R. H. Beck, one on August 1, 1905, in lat. 13° 28′ N., long. 108° 52′ W., and another September 1, 1905, near lat. 5° N., long. 87° W., about thirty miles south of Cocos Island. Captain R. Paefsler (Journ. Ornith., 1913, p. 49; 1914, p. 277) has published notes on the occurrence of this species on the west coast of South America but apparently merely from sight observation (no mention is made of specimens) so that his notes must be considered as open to doubt. The specimen secured by Mr. Fagan is of great interest as it is the first Markham Petrel that has come to the United States National Museum, and seems to constitute the fifth example of the species that has been recorded.—ALEXANDER WETMORE, *Biological Survey, U. S. Dept. Agriculture, November 21, 1921.*

Possible Occurrence of the Blue-footed Booby in Southern California.—A *Sula* of this type was seen by Mr. Edward J. Brown and the writer, between Anaheim Landing and Sunset Beach, Orange County, California, on October 25, 1921. It came from the ocean and made a complete circle around us at a distance of about a hundred yards. While ordinarily opposed to the publication of sight records, it seems to me permissible in this case; for a bird exhibiting such striking coloration and flight could hardly be mistaken for anything else. No claim is made for admission to the state list of the above species as we, of course, cannot say further than that it was a black and white *Sula*. As *S. nebouxi*, according to the A. O. U. Check-list, breeds in the Gulf of Lower California, the bird probably belonged to that form.—A. J. VAN ROSSEM, *Los Angeles, California, November 5, 1921.*

Summer Record of Blue-winged Teal in California, and Notes on Other Birds.—On May 21, 1921, at Buena Vista Lake, Kern County, California, I saw a pair of Blue-winged Teal (*Querquedula discors*) the male of which I secured. On sexing it I found