

associated with nuthatches. The call is a clear, short, and repeatedly uttered whistle, with very short intervals. The adult birds uttered this call in flight as well as when perching, recalling the habit but not the voice of linnets.—CLAUDE GIGNOUX, *Berkeley, California, August 24, 1923.*

**Additional Records of the European Widgeon in Oregon.**—Through the courtesy of State Game Warden A. E. Burghdoff, I have had a chance to examine two specimens of the European Widgeon (*Mareca penelope*) during the past few years. The first was an adult male shot by Ed King, of Portland, Oregon, on Sauvies Island in the Columbia River, Multnomah County, Oregon, during November, 1920. The second was a beautiful adult male shot by J. L. Stafford, of Gresham, Oregon, on the Morgan ranch, on Sauvies Island, about the first of December, 1922.

Both these birds were mounted by Ed Gonty, taxidermist of Portland, and are in the possession of the men who shot them. Another mounted specimen is in the possession of the Portland Library Association and, upon inquiry, the only information I could get was that it was "shot along the Columbia River."

These, with Mr. Walker's record (CONDOR, xxv, p. 70), constitute three authentic records for northwestern Oregon. There is an element of doubt as to the exact locality of the specimen in the possession of the Portland Library Association.—STANLEY G. JEWETT, *Portland, Oregon, July 12, 1923.*

**The Note of the Ruddy.**—The note of the Ruddy Duck (*Erismatura jamaicensis*) being unknown to me, I resolved to become acquainted with it, if possible, in the season of 1923; and the opportunity came to me on June 8. I was on a collecting trip to Lake Majeau with Messrs. R. C. Harlow, Geo. H. Stuart, 3rd, and J. Fletcher Street, and while wading through a bed of tules I observed three Ruddies, two drakes and a female, a short distance out in the open water.

The drakes were evidently courting the female and gave their love note repeatedly. As near as I can render it, it is *chica, chica, chica, chica, quack*. It is given with a feeble utterance, especially the *chica* sounds; the final *quack* is louder. This call is very rapidly uttered by the drakes while the head is quickly jerked up and down, the bill striking the water at the end of each word sound. The only note uttered by the female was a feeble *quack*.

Afterwards I often heard the Ruddies near my home at Lac La Nonne, where at least three pairs were breeding in a bed of tules in front of the house. At a distance of about one hundred yards, the *chica* sounds were not audible, but the final *quack* or *quowk* was quite distinct. The notes of these birds differed slightly from the ones heard at Lake Majeau: the *chica* sounds were not the regular four heard there, but were given in twos and threes, also, and the ending was more often *quowk*, than *quack*.

I heard the Ruddies principally in the evenings and on the clear moonlight nights of the last few days in June and the first part of July. Later they seemed to be silent. Probably, when the female is sitting on the completed clutch of eggs, the drake ceases to call.—A. D. HENDERSON, *Belvedere, Alberta, August 13, 1923.*

**A Possible Function of the Whiteness of the Breast in Crevice-searching Birds.**—In reviewing one's field experience with birds, certain species are likely to stand out in memory by reason of their striking color, behavior, or voice, or of two or even all three of these features in combination. A person of an enquiring turn of mind will be led to ponder over the possible significance of these conspicuous features, and he will "gain merit," intellectually, by so doing, even if he never finds himself ready to offer a conclusive explanation.

At the moment of writing, I have vividly in mind the Dotted Canyon Wren (*Catherpes mexicanus punctulatus*), a bird met with, never in large numbers, but under circumstances which as a rule concentrate attention upon it. Let the reader, with me, recall this bird in its normal surroundings. Our first glimpse is likely to be of a fleeting avian figure, seen momentarily in a remote recess of a broken cliff face or of a rock slide. The bird may disappear for minutes at a time. By patiently waiting, one may again see the bird, barely indicated in the gloom of some cavern. What one then sees is a spot of white moving jerkily up and down, and this way and that.

We should here recollect the general coloration of the Canyon Wren as seen in full view close at hand. It is solidly dark brown, save for the brilliant white throat and chest. This expansive white area is well set off by the otherwise dark hue of the body. In shadow, the dark contour of the bird as seen in front or from the side vanishes, and there remains, reflecting what little light there is, the satiny white of the foreparts. And the "nervous" mannerism of the bird—the spasmodic squat and recovery and the side-to-side swing—means the abrupt movement of this white area in such a manner as to quickly attract the attention of an observer.

The interpretation which would most generally be offered for this combination of large contrasting white chest with dark inclosing area is that of a "directive" marking. By its means individuals of a family would be quickly apprised of one another's presence. This directive marking would be particularly useful in the case of a family of young still dependent for food upon their parents. The crevices in the rock faces, of course, provide the food materials. It is to the advantage of the family that the young keep in close touch with their foraging parents, so as quickly to receive the food items retrieved.

I am quite ready to concede the "directive" value of the Canyon Wren's scheme of coloration, and would emphasize its value under the conditions of shadow in which the birds normally forage. It has occurred to me, however, that there is another significance of the white breast, a value not in conflict with the one just indicated, and this value is realized by each individual bird independently of its associates and throughout the year. This is in the *reflection* of whatever light there may be from the white throat and chest *into* the small chinks and crannies of the rock surface which the bird is scrutinizing; in other words, the brilliant white has an *illuminating* effect upon the surface that is being searched for minute objects. A further factor enters, that of movement. The bird is continually facing this way and that, which means the shifting of the shadows of small objects on the background, correspondingly, that way and this. The rounded surface of the bird's foreparts means that *some* light is caught and reflected, whatever the bird's position relative to the direction of the outside daylight. Practically anywhere that the bird can see at all, its white area would thus help it to distinguish small objects. One can test the principle apparently here involved by twisting a piece of white paper around his finger and trying out the illuminating effect on the wall in a photographic dark-room, where a limited shaft of daylight is allowed to enter.

We can go farther, and find other instances of the utilitarian scheme of coloration here seemingly in evidence. Think of other shade and crevice hunters: the Bewick Wren, the Creepers, the White-breasted Nuthatch, and certain Woodpeckers.

The constitutionally skeptical, of course, will immediately come back with citations of other wrens, nuthatches, and woodpeckers which have dull or dark-colored breasts. Entirely different factors may, however, in such cases come into play, modifying the situation altogether. I believe a fairly sound interpretation of its significance can be found for practically every feature or combination of features displayed by any animal. In seeking such meanings one is not necessarily guilty of idle or hopeless speculation.—J. GRINNELL, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley, September 14, 1923.*

**The Raided Rookeries of Laysan, a Belated Echo.**—A quarter of a century ago the two species of albatross found on the coast of California, *Diomedea nigripes* and *D. albatrus*, collectively known to those who go down to the sea in ships as Goonies, were as much a part of the ocean outside of the hundred fathom curve as were the gulls along shore. Ten miles from land they were almost certain to be found, and in the waters nearer land they were by no means uncommon. As a matter of fact the writer has, on one or two occasions, seen the Black-footed Albatross in San Diego Bay. A trip to the Coronado Islands was not often made without sighting one or more of these stately petrels.

In sailing from the southern ports to San Francisco and more northern harbors, from one to four or five albatrosses usually accompanied the steamer, ever alert to claim a full share of the refuse from the galley, until within a few miles of the enclosed waters. In offshore expeditions, it was not unusual to be followed for days by six or eight birds, that were never, day or night, more than a mile or two