

with the "corner of her mouth". Although forced to secure her food by this abnormal method, she does not appear to be at any disadvantage in obtaining her share of seed placed on the feed table.

It seems rather remarkable that a bird, when its bill becomes unfitted to pick up its food in the manner common to its kind, should be able to invent a method of securing its food so at variance with the way taught it by instinct. Instead of starving to death it succeeded in adapting itself to the requirements of the situation.

For the attention of those interested in the migration of birds, I will state that the first Golden-crowned Sparrow to return from the far north to Diablo, appeared at my feed table September 19. This is four days earlier than last year.—FRANK A. LEACH, *Diablo, California, September 20, 1926.*

Shrike Attacking Snake.—The Raptores and perhaps some other birds, the Road-runner for example, are known to eat snakes. I had never ascribed this habit (if it in fact be a habit) to Shrikes. It was somewhat of a surprise to actually see a Shrike assailing a snake, about fifteen inches long, at the edge of a road about a mile southwest of Terra Bella, Tulare County, California, on October 15, 1925.

I assume this Shrike was of the race *Lanius ludovicianus excubitorides*, but a Shrike it certainly was. I was driving northwardly in an automobile. The wheel of this car is on the left side. I was driving rather slowly (as I always do) and noticed a bird ahead of me springing about in the most energetic manner at the left edge of the road. When I was less than a car-length away, the bird flushed and I pulled off to the right in order to examine the spot from which the bird had risen, after first watching the bird in flight so as to be sure of its identification. The bird flew off a few yards and came to rest in a small tree. I had a very good look at it and know it was a Shrike.

I then investigated the place at the side of the road, where I found a small snake writhing about in extremis. Two inches from the head, on the under part, was a small, fresh, irregular and bleeding incision. No other injury was visible, but the snake seemed clearly done for. It was unable to crawl off the road, although I urged it with a weed stalk. There seems no doubt but that I had disturbed a Shrike while it was securing a meal, or a supply for several meals, although the performance had not reached its denouement.—CLAUDE GIGNOUX, *73 The Tunnel Road, Berkeley, California, November 22, 1926.*

A New Race of Sclater Oriole.¹—The following comments serve as a synopsis of the conclusions reached in identifying a series of *Icterus sclateri* Cassin, recently collected by the writer in Salvador, for Mr. Donald R. Dickey.

Seasonal and individual variation are the factors governing the amount of black present in the backs of adults. Individual variation is by far the more important. There appears to be no correlation between altitude and the relative amounts of black and yellow present, for the extremes were encountered practically wherever the species occurred. Indeed, the only bird with back practically solid black is a breeding male from Lake Olomega at an altitude of 200 feet, while the yellowest backed extreme is also from the same locality. Nor are birds from San Salvador (altitude 2100 feet) in any respect different from the lowland individuals. Seasonal variation results from the wearing away of the yellowish tips and edgings to the feathers, thereby increasing the relative amount of black present. No association of size with altitude is apparent. The two largest males (wing 111.5-112.5 mm.) are from Divisadero, altitude 800 feet; and males with wings varying from 105.0 to 109.0 are at hand from Lake Olomega and San Salvador. The two large males from Divisadero are of average coloration, in other words with a considerable amount of yellow streaking in the back. The very smallest male examined is from "Guatemala" (wing 101.0) and has only a trace of yellow in the back. It is without date, but in fresh plumage, and its back with a slight amount of abrasion would have become practically solid black. From the above it is evident that birds with black backs and of large size are not confined to altitudes above 2000 feet; that small birds with spotted backs are not confined to the lowlands, nor do black backs go with large size and spotted backs with small size, as was indicated by the material examined by Miller and Griscom when they described *Icterus sclateri alticola*. (See Amer. Museum Novitates, no. 184, September 24, 1925, p. 4.)

¹ Contribution from the California Institute of Technology.