

they nest in similar situations, usually at the end of a spreading limb high in a tall conifer, and details of nest structure and eggs are closely similar. It will be noted, too, that in their geographical distribution they are complementary, the Olive-sided northern, Coues Flycatcher southern, but both of the Transition zone or higher.

Most of the minor structural peculiarities of *Nuttallornis borealis* may be conceded, though it should be pointed out that that species and Coues Flycatcher are of similarly large size as compared with the small wood pewees, and that the tufts of silky white feathers upon the thighs of the Olive-sided are also present in Coues Flycatcher. My contention is that the characteristics of habits, actions and call notes that are common to both species, and peculiar to them, are sufficiently indicative of close relationship to outweigh the differences in structure. I should say that without question the Olive-sided and Coues Flycatchers are northern and southern representatives of one group, the wood pewees in another group, and I would divide the genera accordingly. Whether this involves any nomenclatural changes beyond shifting the forms of *pertinax* into the genus *Nuttallornis* I leave to others who have knowledge of the South American species that might be affected.

Dr. Oberholser has recently suggested generic separation of Coues Flycatcher (*Myiochanes*) and the wood pewees (*Horizopus*) (Sci. Publ. Cleveland Mus. Nat. Hist., 1, 1930, p. 91), which brings up the subject of monotypic genera. This has been discussed at length recently and need not detain us now. Obviously there are some species taxonomically isolated so as to require such systematic treatment, but, just as clearly, it seems to me if separate genera are erected for a large proportion of species and merely to indicate differences, we arrive at a needless duplication of terms that is the reverse of helpful. Generic grouping should indicate resemblances. The question I wish to raise here concerns the proper basis for such grouping.

Recently, upon the Galapagos Islands, I was happily able to make first-hand observations on living representatives of that remarkable avifauna. I was impressed with the way in which certain family traits—habits and mannerisms apparently useless in themselves—had persisted in some species, surviving unchanged although the bird itself had altered so as to be accorded specific or generic distinction from its mainland relatives.

On the other hand, as an example of the kind of structural differences that are often used in classification, consider the following, extracted from Ridgway's long, detailed, and unquestionably accurate definition of *Myiochanes*: "Wing-tip longer (the longest primaries exceeding secondaries by at least combined length of tarsus and half the middle toe, usually by more than tarsus and whole middle toe)." Such criteria may be useful in the skilfully constructed "key" to species or genera with which we are all familiar, and they may be tolerated in studies that, through lack of field observations, are necessarily restricted to prepared specimens, but they should not weigh heavily against the sort of evidence I have cited as obtainable from the living bird. I could not concede that they indicated "without doubt generic rank" if the bird itself said otherwise.—H. S. SWARTH, *California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, May 1, 1933.*

Further Notes on the Birds of Big Bear Valley, San Bernardino Mountains, California.—The writer spent the time from June 20 to September 10, 1932, at Big Bear Valley, and the following observations of interest were noted:

On July 12, a pair of Spotted Sandpipers (*Actitis macularia*) with four small young was found in the grass and weeds on the edge of a little bay near Windy Point on the south shore of Big Bear Lake. When disturbed, both adults were noisy as they flew about the locality where the young were hidden. The young were near the water's edge and they took readily to the water, where they were able to swim about like small ducks. The day following, which was cold and windy, I flushed one of the adults from the weeds in the same locality, where it seemed to be brooding two of the little ones. This seems to be the first breeding record for this species in Big Bear Valley. Another pair of these birds was noted several times at the east end of Bear Lake and by their actions I thought that they had young, though I was unable to locate them.

On August 5, 1932, a beautiful adult Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) flew over me on the north shore. This is rather an uncommon bird for this locality, though one or two migrating individuals are usually seen every August.

Another new bird for Big Bear Valley was seen on August 6, when a Mockingbird, presumably of the western race (*Mimus polyglottos leucopterus*), was flushed from some small junipers near the main highway on the north side of the lake near the Ranger Station.

I should also like to record the nesting of the Ruddy Duck (*Erismatura jamaicensis*) on Baldwin Lake. About a dozen pairs were seen there during early July, and by the latter part of that month small young were seen with their parents, swimming near the tules at both the northwest and south ends of the lake. Last year (1931) this lake was nearly dry, but this year it held considerable water and the usual birds found nesting were present again, Ruddy Ducks, American Coots, American Eared Grebes, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds.—WRIGHT M. PIERCE, Claremont, California, September 15, 1932.

The California Spotted Owl in Yosemite Valley, California.—The outstanding adventure of the month for me and for Mrs. Michael was a visit with a pair of Spotted Owls (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*). We were wandering through a cool wood on the south side of the valley about a mile below the old Yosemite Village. It was two o'clock in the afternoon of April 23, 1933, the day was overcast, with the sun occasionally gathering strength enough to cast a shadow. Hermit and Calaveras warblers were singing and we made squeaking sounds to attract their attention.

In response to our squeakings there came what we took to be the barking of a dog. Seemingly the dog was about a quarter of a mile away, but the sound of his barking came distinctly to our ears. In answer to the barkings there came close at hand the unmistakable hootings of an owl, remindful of Horned Owl hootings, yet slightly different, perhaps shorter and not so melodious. As a matter of fact we did not get a clear ear-picture of the sounds, for just at the time of the hootings we caught sight of the owl.

In the filtered forest light this owl looked as big as a turkey. It was a round-faced owl without ear tufts. Its very deep set eyes appeared as dying coals that were turning black, but still had a touch of fire. When the coals went dead a ghostly bird appeared to gaze from empty eye sockets. Those deep-set unearthly eyes were the fascinating feature of the bird; they gave to its face a weird, mysterious, spectral look. Over the eyes were grey eyebrows, then a brown area, and then high on the forehead were heavy dark eyebrows as though the bird wore heavy horn-rimmed spectacles. The hooked bill, sort of tucked in the feathers, was a greenish horn color. The feathers of the crown were a rich brown flecked with white and appeared smoothly brushed back over the round head. Over the shoulders hung a rich brown cape, all neatly flecked with round white markings. Below the shoulder cape there hung a second cape, of the same pattern, which appeared to drape loosely to the banded tail. The breast of the owl was buffy, much lighter than the back, but also flecked with white. The belly was of lighter color than the breast.

While we watched the owl from a distance of fifty feet it uttered soft pitched, whispered, *oooa* notes. When it turned its face directly away from us and sounded these soft notes they seemed to come from a far distance. These notes were answered by a second bird who spoke in owl fashion with a *who—whoo—whoo—whooo*. It was this call that reminded us so much of the Horned Owl. There was also from the second bird a weird jumble of notes, all ventriloquially uttered which suggested to me chatter of several monkeys gathered together to exchange gossip.

After looking us over for a minute or two our owl friend lost interest and as she settled on her perch she appeared to shrink and now we thought her possibly a size smaller than the Horned Owl. After ten, or possibly fifteen minutes, our first owl took wing and although only fifty feet away no sound came to us from her wings. She slipped away through the wood, we thought for a short flight.