

with the stomach contents. On first seeing the sandpipers, we had thought they might be seeking gravel on the pavement, but we found that there was practically no loose gravel on the asphalt.

On the west approach road, where there were no sandpipers, flies also were practically absent, due perhaps to less water along the road here than along the east approach road. The absence of flies here seemed to explain the corresponding absence of sandpipers.

The stomach of a Cliff Swallow picked up on the road contained a mass of food which seemed to be identical with that in the sandpiper stomachs. It seems probable that the horned larks and blackbirds and phalaropes were also feeding on these flies, although evidence here is circumstantial. It would seem that the many blackbirds on the pavement on June 17 were almost certainly feeding on the flies. On the water where the phalaropes were feeding large numbers of these flies floated.

Although the two or three thousand sandpipers noted were practically all feeding on the pavement, the flies were more abundant in the grass and on the lumpy shore bordering the road. In one place on the shore the flies were so numerous that their wings made the ground appear glassy. Since food was abundant in all the habitats (pavement, grass, and lumpy shore) some other factor than presence of food seemed to be determining the habitat choice of the sandpipers.

In feeding, a sandpiper darted after the fly which it had started, seizing it where it lit a few feet away. The smooth pavement facilitated this sort of feeding activity, permitting the bird to run freely after the food and to keep it in sight. If the feeding ground were lumpy, running would be difficult and the bird might lose sight of the fly if it should light behind a lump. The habitat preference of the birds was definitely advantageous to its mode of feeding, suggesting that it was determined primarily by freedom of movement, and also by continuous visibility of prey.—ADOLPH MURIE, *Wildlife Division, National Park Service*, and H. D. BRUCE, *U. S. Forest Service, June 24, 1935*.

**Magpie-jay Robs Nest of Derby Flycatcher.**—Rarely have I observed any species of bird approach nesting sites of the larger tyrant flycatchers; and heretofore, the few that did venture near, were promptly driven off. While hunting near Puerto Humo, province of Guanacaste, Costa Rica, April 17, 1935, my attention was drawn to a large bird as it alighted on a large globular nest, set into top branches of a small acacia tree growing in a semi-wooded pasture. Approaching the site, the bird was recognized as a Magpie-jay (*Calocitta formosa pomposa*), and the nest as of the Derby Flycatcher (*Pitangus sulphuratus derbianus*). The jay was vigorously endeavoring to penetrate the interior of the nest, using both bill and claws. It may be remarked here that the genus *Pitangus* has the nest entrance on the side.

The quest of the jay was successful, for within three minutes it flew away with an egg speared on the bill. A pair of derbies sat during this period in nearby trees, uttering their "war-notes"; but only once did one of these probable owners launch an assault against the marauder, pecking the jay on the back of the head, which appeared to give the latter little discomfort.—AUSTIN SMITH, *Zarcero, Costa Rica, May 9, 1935*.

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## NOTES AND NEWS

The annual meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union will be held this year, October 21 to 24, at Toronto, Canada, under the auspices of the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology. Mr. L. L. Snyder, of the staff of this Museum, is Secretary of the Committee on Arrangements, and from him information can be sought as to hotels, etc. The delightful autumn season, the intellectual profit from the programs, the social opportunities

afforded, the frank hospitality of the Canadian people, are all features attested to by previous occasions of the sort. We advise attendance especially by bird students who have not before attended a Canadian meeting of the A.O.U. All those who have, need no urging.—J. G.

FAMILIAR BIRDS OF THE PACIFIC SOUTHWEST is the title of a new bird guide, by Florence V. V. Dickey, recently published

by the Stanford University Press (lvii + 241 pp., 102 colored illustrations, price \$3.75). The specific aims of this guide should be fully understood to appreciate its service to bird students. It is addressed to the tourist, casual observer or comparatively uninformed nature student as first aid in making the acquaintances of birds. Dr. Casey A. Wood in the introduction expresses the hope that the user will be led to supplement his information gained from the book by turning to such sources as Hoffmann's "Birds of the Pacific States" and Mrs. Bailey's Handbook.

Simplification is the essence of the color and size key designed to "run down" species. This experiment sets a very difficult task of arranging many complexly differentiated birds by these two criteria. Inevitably there are pitfalls, but a thorough testing of the key persuades me that with respect to the more obviously marked common birds it usually will work for the beginner, as something more technical might not. Identifications by the key can be checked with the illustrations and the adequate descriptions of the species that follow. One is led to wonder why the Mountain (Bailey's) Chickadee is classed under sparrow size when the Rock Wren is grouped as a "small wren." The author includes only what she considers to be the more common birds. Omissions or inclusions, therefore, are difficult to appraise, as one must admit a personal factor in deciding what kinds merit inclusion. Yet I question the inclusion of the Large-billed Sparrow when the resident Belding Sparrow or the Western Savannah Sparrow might have been chosen as the racial representative of the Savannah sparrows.

This raises a point for which the author is to be highly commended, namely, the exclusion of subspecies. Only in the matter of form of the common name does the subspecies intrude its unwelcome confusion; for the A.O.U. Check-list with its illogical vernaculars is followed. However, the beginner will, for a time, probably be happily unconscious of the dilemmas in such a system, or lack of system, of common names. Certainly, Mrs. Dickey is not to be blamed for the faults of the official Check-list.

The accounts of species are devoted to non-technical descriptions with the comparative aspect prominent. Varied items of natural history, distribution and local occurrence are included. The facts are accurate and interesting. The contribution of Mr. A. J. van Rossem to these accounts is acknowledged.

The Donald R. Dickey photographs are by far the most spectacular feature of the book. These excellent works of photographic art have gained a justly deserved reputation of the highest order. That they should have been colored will be regretted by ornithologists familiar with the originals, who will see in the colored version a loss of vitality.

The book is well printed, in handy 5 x 7 inch size, convenient for field use, with flexible waterproof cloth binding. It is not a complete handbook; but as an initial aid and focus of interest it should be attractive to the elementary bird student.—A.H.M.

An "Abridged Check-list of North American Birds", based upon the Fourth Edition of the A.O.U. Check-list, can now be purchased for 50 cents from the treasurer of the A.O.U., W. L. McAtee, 3200 22nd St., Cherrydale, Virginia. The small size (3¼ x 5½ inches), and the circumstance that it is printed upon one side only, of a fairly good quality of paper, will make this list useful especially to collectors, for labelling and other purposes. The labor of compiling and proof-reading was performed chiefly by Alexander Wetmore of the United States National Museum.—J. G.

The Malheur Lake region of eastern Oregon once teemed with waterfowl and associated animal life, as attested to by many early reports of competent naturalists who visited it. Then came intensive exploitation of the land by the stockman—the practical exhaustion of all the natural resources including the water-supply—until a condition of almost complete desolation prevailed over the lake basin. The land became well-nigh valueless to man; and only as this stage had been reached did the opportunity come to reverse the processes—toward restoration of primitive conditions. Briefly, a "key" portion of the Malheur basin has been acquired by the Federal government, now to be administered by the Biological Survey as a wildlife sanctuary. This is a gratifying accomplishment, one to be credited, with enthusiasm, to the enterprise of Chief J. N. Darling and his staff. Conservation, on broad lines of definition, appears, indeed, to be in effect in an increasing number of directions.—J.G.

In these alphabetical days we suggest a good test for one's knowledge of organizations concerned with bird study;