

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Hailstorm Fatal to California Condors.—Two California Condors (*Gymnogyps californianus*) were found dead in Peachtree Canyon, which is about 20 miles northwest of Santa Barbara in the Santa Cruz drainage area, on October 17, 1936, by forest rangers in search of a reported lightning fire. Hailstones as large as walnuts still lay two feet deep in the gullies. They came upon a dead adult Condor lying near the carcass of a horse and, about a quarter of a mile away, a dead immature Condor. Another adult, probably the mate of the first bird, flew off laboriously when the party approached.

The two dead birds were brought to the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History by the Forest Supervisor on October 22. Naturally, they were not in the best condition for mounting, but I managed to save the skins as well as the skeletal parts that were not used in preparing them. Measurements, photographs and notes were taken. Both birds were very fat, the adult female weighing 18¾ pounds and the immature male 22½ pounds. Each had a wing spread of 8 feet 2½ inches from tip to tip of the longest primaries. The head of the immature male was dusky and covered with down and made an interesting study skin (no. 3505, Santa Barbara Mus. Nat. Hist.). I mounted the adult for display in the office of the Forest Service in the Federal Building in Santa Barbara.

Upon examining the bodies, it was found that although the skins were unbroken, the bodies of both were badly bruised. The back and clavicles of each bird were fractured and there were blood clots under the skin and in the region of the heart. The crop and stomach of the adult were empty. A little material was in the crop of the immature bird and only a little hair from a previous feeding was in the stomach.

The circumstances surrounding the discovery of the birds and the condition of their bodies suggest that they had probably just begun to feed upon the carcass of the horse when the hailstorm overtook them. In their attempt to reach cover, they were beaten down by the driving hailstones and killed when they struck the ground.

The condors involved in this tragedy were undoubtedly the ones which, since about 1927, I have known to nest in this region. There are estimated to be between 40 and 50 California Condors now in existence and they are distributed over a comparatively small area. Had the hailstorm covered this entire area, it is conceivable that the California Condor might have been practically exterminated. Drastic weather conditions may thus be a considerable factor in the extermination of depleted or localized species.—EGMONT Z. RETT, *Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, California, March 8 1938.*

Correct Names for the Red-backed Sandpiper and Northern Long-billed Curlew.—In the first edition of the A. O. U. Check-list (1886, p. 152) our Red-backed Sandpiper appeared as *Tringa alpina pacifica* Coues with a range of "North America in general, breeding far north. Eastern Asia." This was repeated in the second edition, but in the *Auk* (vol. 21, 1904, p. 412) the Committee on Nomenclature adopted "*Pelidna alpina sakhalina* (Vieillot)" as an "earlier name." Under this name our bird has appeared in subsequent editions with a type locality of "en Russie=Sakhalin Island, Okhotsk Sea," and a range including North America and Eastern Asia.

This had seemed remarkable to me on account of the great difference in size, especially the bill, between birds from North America and those from Europe. Somewhat recently I secured a series of twenty-one (10 males, 11 females) collected by Mr. J. T. Wright at Hainan, Kingsu, and Liu-chi, Chekiang, China, in late October and December, 1927. Comparison of a similar series of eleven males and twelve females from North Carolina, Connecticut, Texas, Alaska, Oregon and California, taken in the months of March, April, May, June, September, October and December, and picked at random from my series of 175 skins from different parts of North America, shows that both sexes have bills averaging four millimeters longer than those of the Asiatic birds. This necessarily reinstates *P. a. pacifica* (Coues).

| | | Exposed culmen | Wing |
|------------------|--------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>pacifica</i> | male | 37.4 (36.0-39.3) mm. | 118.4 (115.0-123.0) mm. |
| | female | 41.4 (38.2-44.0) | 121.9 (118.0-126.5) |
| <i>sakhalina</i> | male | 33.0 (30.7-34.8) | 117.7 (113.5-124.0) |
| | female | 37.6 (34.5-40.0) | 119.3 (114.3-125.0) |

It will be noticed there is no overlapping in the length of the bills in the males, and very little in the females.

Dr. Oberholser, who kindly looked up the original description of *sakhalina* in the *Nouveau Dictionnaire* for me, writes that Vieillot gave no measurements, but meant apparently the common form of eastern Asia.