

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Feeding of Gulls on Pismo Clams.**—Low tide at Sunset Beach, Santa Cruz County, California, on February 16, 1939, brought men of several races and gulls of several species together with the common purpose of preying on the Pismo clam. Man took the "legal" clams, over five inches in length, while the gulls took the smaller, rejected ones.

The gulls would follow right after the men digging clams, and pick up the smaller ones discarded as below the legal limit. Clams near five inches were apparently too large for the gulls to carry, but those four inches or smaller were seized in the bill and carried away. The birds would then mount thirty to fifty feet in the air over the hard, water-packed sand and let the clam drop. Often two or three tries were necessary, but finally the two halves would fall apart or the shell would break. Then amid much fighting and thieving the feast would begin, with Sanderlings waiting nearby to pick up any scraps that might fall to them. Attempts by the writer to open clams by methods similar to the gulls' resulted in failure, leading to the belief that there is yet something to be found out about the gulls' method of opening the shellfish.

The above observation has been checked since, at times when the tide was low and clams were dug, and the same procedure was followed by the various species of gulls.—ALBERT C. HAWBECKER, *Watsonville, California, March 21, 1939.*

**A Motive for Killing a White-tailed Kite.**—On February 17, 1937, a friend brought me a male White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*) which he said had been killed that day by the keeper of a gun club near Vallejo, California. I visited the club a few days later and informed the keeper of the penalty for killing this protected species, advising him also of its beneficial habits and of the fact that these birds had never been known to do anything which might be considered as harmful.

He disagreed with me in my last statement. He said that he knew of three birds of this species on his property and that he had for some time been endeavoring to "get" this particular bird. At night it roosted under the eaves of the club house, splattering the sidewall on one side of the building with excrement. The roosting location was the top rung of a ladder leaning against the north side of the building and reaching to a point just under the eaves. The location apparently offered the bird a satisfactory roosting place, there being no trees on the club grounds or within a mile.

This is the only instance coming to my attention where a kite has been relegated to the English Sparrow class of building splatters. Personally I would be delighted to have such a close acquaintance with this amiable species and would not mind the splattering.—EMERSON A. STONER, *Benicia, California, March 17, 1939.*

**Winter Robins and Waxwings in Montana and Western North Dakota.**—During the winter of 1936-37, the failure of other employment led me to undertake the use of my natural interest in plants by the collection of native material for planting purposes. The largest single item was seed of the western red cedar (*Juniperus scopulorum*), which is abundant in some parts of the Badlands of western North Dakota. The year 1937 produced quite an abundant crop of berries. About the first of December, the Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) began to congregate in the cedars, where they remained until about March 1, feeding upon the berries. Magpies also ate the berries. Snowfall was unusually heavy that winter and collecting was a laborious, not to say hazardous, occupation.

The year 1938 produced very little fruit on the cedars, perhaps due in part to the fact that they require two years to mature. Hearing that the crop was good in the mountains, I moved to a locality in the region of Butte, Montana, where collecting was good until competition with the Bohemian Waxwings (*Bombycilla garrula*) developed. About the first of January, I estimated that 1000 pounds of berries remained on the trees where I was working. In less than a week's time there was scarcely a berry left. Inspection of other areas in the vicinity showed similar conditions. The fruits of snowberry (*Symphoricarpos racemosus*) had also been eaten and those of wild roses made up a considerable part of the birds' food.

It is interesting to watch the waxwings pillage a tree. The birds are usually so numerous that the tree is covered so thickly that it is difficult to see the foliage. Even though there is an adjacent tree covered with berries, they all stick to the same tree until it is stripped. They usually leave the tree simultaneously, their hundreds of wings making a loud sound, not unlike that of a landslide.

The loss of the berries was a considerable item to me, but I realize that I was disturbing the balance of nature, or rather, trying to effect a wider distribution of the seeds. The birds digest only

the pulp and scatter the seeds, which then germinate more readily. If one could only reclaim the seeds after the birds have cleaned them, it would be a real coöperative enterprise!—E. C. MORAN, *Medora, North Dakota, March 13, 1939*. [Transmitted by Prof. O. A. Stevens.]

**New Bird Records for Nevada.**—The following observations made along the shore of Lake Mead near the site of St. Thomas, Clark County, Nevada, provide new records for the State of Nevada.

*Squatarola squatarola*. Black-bellied Plover. On May 6, 1938, ten of these birds were observed along the lake shore. The following day no trace of them could be found. Apparently they had stopped only briefly on their flight northward.

*Hydranassa tricolor ruficollis*. Louisiana Heron. Observed along the lake shore on November 21, 1938. A careful search of the vicinity revealed only the one individual.—RUSSELL K. GRATER, *Boulder Dam Recreational Area, Nevada, December 10, 1938*.

**Eastern Brown Thrasher Banded in Hollywood Hills, California.**—On January 13, 1939, I trapped and banded a Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*). The bird was subsequently observed daily up to February 28, 1939. It appeared to be here alone. This bird was also seen by Mr. Josiah Keely and Mrs. Mary Barnes Salmon, both of whom are familiar with this species in the East. [The bird is still present on April 17.]

Mr. George Willett advised me that the Brown Thrasher has only been observed once before in southern California when it was seen in Pasadena from December 1, 1932, to March 12, 1933.—C. V. DUFF, *Hollywood, California, March 6, 1939*.

**Guadalupe Island Xantus Murrelet in California Waters.**—After reading the interesting article by J. Elton Green and Lee W. Arnold, in the Condor for January, 1939, the writer studied, in comparison with their findings, the specimens of *Endomychura hypoleuca* in the Los Angeles Museum. The series now in this institution (collections L. A. Museum, L. B. Bishop, J. S. Garth, and G. Willett) numbers 31 birds, two from Guadalupe Island, fourteen from Los Coronados, the remainder from Californian waters.

The results of this study appear to substantiate the conclusion of Green and Arnold that there are two races of *hypoleuca*, one of which has been found nesting only at Guadalupe Island. Our two examples from the latter locality are like the ones figured by Green and Arnold. There are, also, two specimens (nos. 2803, 2804 coll. G. W.), undoubtedly migrants, taken by the writer in the channel between San Pedro and Catalina Island, August 11 and 13, 1928, that appear referable to the Guadalupe Island form, *E. h. hypoleuca*. That this bird should occur as a migrant along our coast is not strange, when the rather common occurrence of the related species, *E. craveri*, is considered.

That the relationship of the Guadalupe Island bird is closer to the breeding bird of California than it is to *craveri*, is substantiated by a study of our specimens. The black area beneath the eye is quite variable in width, and in some of our birds from Los Coronados Islands and Anacapa Island it is much narrower than in the figured type of *scrippsi*.—G. WILLETT, *Los Angeles Museum, Los Angeles, California, January 30, 1939*.

**White-throated Sparrow Coincidence and Other Notes.**—At my home in Eureka, Humboldt County, California, on November 29, 1934, I took a male White-throated Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) from a flock of Golden-crowned Sparrows. I shot this bird from my pantry window at a distance of 22 feet. On March 13, 1938, I took a male White-throated Sparrow from a flock of Golden-crowned Sparrows, also shot from my pantry window at a distance of exactly 22 feet and in almost exactly the same spot, under a mock orange bush.

June 21, 1938, I took a male specimen of the Blue-winged Teal (*Querquedula discors*) from a fresh-water slough two and one-half miles north of Arcata, Humboldt County. This was at 10:30 a.m.; the female taking wing made a circle, doubling back, just out of gun range, then turned due west, fading from sight in the distant perspective. At six p.m., I went back and the female was in the slough, near where I took the male. After a half-mile circle on the old county road, I approached to a high bank shooting position; but the female was gone. It seems very unusual to find this species here in the month of June.

On August 21, 1938, I took a specimen of Surf Bird (*Aphriza virgata*), male, from a group of three at roaring surf's edge, open ocean, at the base of high cliffs on the south edge of Trinidad Head, Humboldt County.—C. I. CLAY, *Eureka, California, February 14, 1939*.

**Winter Bird Notes from Roosevelt Lake, Arizona.**—Roosevelt Lake, at an average altitude of about 2000 feet, is at the junction of Salt River and Tonto Creek, at the western edge of