

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Salt Feeding Habits of the House Finch.—House Finches (*Carpodacus mexicanus*), Lawrence Goldfinches (*Spinus lawrencei*) and Arkansas Goldfinches (*Spinus psaltria*) may be added to the list of birds that eat salt. Others include Red Crossbill, Cassin Purple Finch, and Pine Siskins, as noted by Aldrich (Condor, 41, 1939:172-173). Marshall added the Evening Grosbeak to the list (Condor, 42, 1940:218-219).

Salt was offered continuously in a partly wooded pasture at 900 feet elevation on the side of Mount Diablo, Contra Costa County, California. A near-by watering trough attracted seventy species during the year, of which four were seen to eat salt.

Direct feeding from the five-inch block was characteristic only of the House Finches. If the block was rain-softened, the birds might stand directly on top and bite off chunks. In dry weather the block was soft only underneath, and the birds then reached under to bite off pieces. Heavy dew induced a growth of crystals on the block. These the finches removed by using the beak sideways as a scraper. The average feeding time of individual birds was two minutes in dry weather, less in wet. Flocks of thirty to fifty House Finches would approach the block, but actual feeding was done alone or in pairs.

Pine Siskins and goldfinches were seen to pick at crystals occasionally, but most of their feeding was from the dirt within a foot of the block. These birds came in flocks and covered the salt-saturated ground. Eventually the blocks would be supported only by a tiny pedestal of dry earth, partly because of the salt dissolving at points of contact and partly due to the birds eating dirt and salt from underneath. Domestic animals were not using this salt and it thus was possible to ascertain accurately the effect of the birds' activities.

Siskins left the area with the passing of winter and Arkansas Goldfinches became less numerous. Lawrence Goldfinches used the salt through part of the mating and nesting seasons, but by June even these birds stopped coming.

House Finches definitely continued salt eating through the courting and mating seasons. If anything, there was an increased use of the salt. During the nesting season half of all birds trapped were taken with salt: total trapped, 60 males, 32 females; salt eaters, 35 males, 19 females. Three traps were used with equal results. Pairs were sometimes taken, one bird acting as decoy for the mate. Some of the birds taken were nesting on the house, most came from elsewhere, with salt as the main attraction.—JAMES G. PETERSON, *Diablo, California, January 2, 1942.*

The Lower California Nighthawk Not a Recognizable Race.—First doubts concerning the tenability of *Chordeiles acutipennis inferior* Oberholser were entertained some years ago (Birds of El Salvador, 1938:244-245) when certain Salvadorian specimens, identified by Oberholser himself as *Chordeiles acutipennis micromeris*, were seen to be indistinguishable from our series of *inferior* from Lower California. However, because the ranges of the two supposed races presumably were separated in northwestern Mexico by the larger *texensis*, the question remained quiescent. A reappraisal is now necessary.

To begin with, Oberholser (Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., 86, 1914:100) recognized *micromeris* as extending north in western Mexico into Jalisco. He evidently included Sinaloa in the range of *texensis* on the basis of a single midwinter bird from Esquinapa and another, undated, from Mazatlan. His Sonora material seemingly also consisted of two birds, one from San Marcial in November, and another from the Colorado River in March. A series of 17 skins from the Tropical Zone of southern Sonora shows that *micromeris* actually extends northward to that point. In characters this series is rather uniform in color and seems to be indistinguishable in this respect from Central American birds. Compared with *texensis* they are darker and grayer dorsally, with more black on the pileum. Ventrally they are darker buff and have more prominent barring. In a series of 13 breeding birds from southern Lower California the darker extremes are completely lost in the Sonora group, although as a whole they are a little paler and more like *texensis*. On the other hand the pale extremes of *micromeris* from El Salvador are just the same as the average of birds from Lower California. As to measurements, the Sonora males are similar to *texensis*, the females to *micromeris*. Much more material is needed, however, to compile reasonably accurate averages, for individual variation is very great, even among birds from the same locality.

To summarize, I can see no reason for the recognition of a Lower California race as distinct from *Chordeiles acutipennis micromeris* Oberholser. In fairness to Dr. Oberholser it is proper to state that I do not believe he would ever have proposed *inferior* had breeding birds from northwestern Mexico been available to him at the time.

Extreme measurements of wing length in millimeters

Males	
20 <i>texensis</i> from California and Arizona	179-193
9 <i>texensis</i> from northern Sonora (Rancho La Arizona, El Alamo, Pilaes, Hermosillo)	178-196
10 <i>micromeris</i> from southern Sonora (Guaymas, Obregon, Tecoripa, Tesia, Camoa)	174-193
8 <i>micromeris</i> from Lower California	169-185
5 <i>micromeris</i> from El Salvador	173-180
Females	
10 <i>texensis</i> from California and Arizona	175-185
4 <i>texensis</i> from northern Sonora	171-179
7 <i>micromeris</i> from southern Sonora	166-177
4 <i>micromeris</i> from Lower California	167-178
8 <i>micromeris</i> from El Salvador and Costa Rica	171-175

I am indebted to Dr. L. B. Bishop and Mr. George Willett for the loan of certain specimens and to Dr. Pierce Brodkorb for measurements of the Sonora nighthawks at the Museum of Zoology of the University of Michigan.—A. J. VAN ROSSEM, *Dickey Collections, University of California, Los Angeles, December 2, 1941.*

An Unrecorded Eskimo Curlew from Colorado.—On a recent visit to Denver, Colorado, A. M. Bailey called my attention to the fact that the Eskimo Curlew had never been recorded from Colorado. There is a specimen of this bird in my collection, received some years ago. The original label had been replaced by one from the collection of Charles D. Klotz, Chicago, Illinois, and bears the inscription “#56 *Numenius borealis*, Denver, (Smith's Lake) Colorado, April 29, 1882—female—collected by D. D. Stone.” On the reverse of the label is marked “from the collection of H. K. Coale.” Another label attached to the specimen bears the inscription “from the collection of Ashley Hine, Chicago, Illinois,” with no other data. The specimen is now no. 6903 in my collection.—STANLEY G. JEWETT, *Portland, Oregon, September 16, 1941.*

Available Skeletons of the Passenger Pigeon.—Recently there came to our attention a mounted skeleton of a pigeon in the Department of Zoology of the University of California which had been in use for many years in laboratory demonstrations. A worn label pasted to the underside of the stand read “*Ectopistes migratorius*”! In view of the rarity of skeletal material of the Passenger Pigeon, this identification was checked and inquiry was made as to skeletons still extant.

The skeleton at hand originally came from Ward's Natural Science Establishment, Inc., Rochester, New York, and was acquired by the University of California, probably about 1890. The label on the skeleton bears the words “Western U. S.” and a number, “G-9281.” The latter is a number assigned to the Passenger Pigeon in Gray's “Hand-list of Genera and Species of Birds” (Part II, 1870:235); the “G” denotes skeletal material in the stock of Ward's Establishment. Other data on damaged parts of the label, including apparently a price figure and another stock number, are not decipherable. According to communications from Mr. F. H. Ward, this specimen was one of a series obtained in the public markets in the 1880's (certainly prior to 1889), when Passenger Pigeons were cheaper than domestic pigeons. More specific data cannot be given because of the loss of records by fire.

Through the kindness of Dr. Alexander Wetmore, we are able to list from the records of the U. S. National Museum the available complete skeletons of *Ectopistes migratorius*: Two at the U. S. National Museum; one at the Charleston Museum (South Carolina); two at the Peabody Museum, Yale University; and one at the Science Museum, St. Paul Institute, Minnesota. Our skeleton, complete except for certain skull parts, phalanges, and an injured right ulna, is now catalogued (no. 84315) in the collection of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology of the University of California. This list of seven is doubtlessly incomplete. Mr. Ward writes further that at the time Shufeldt's study of the osteology of the Passenger Pigeon appeared (Auk, 31, 1914:358-362), Ward's had eight skeletons in stock. Shufeldt had one from the collections of the U. S. National Museum, the only skeleton known to him at that time.

No other skeletal material of *Ectopistes migratorius* has been at hand for comparison. The identification of our specimen was checked by comparison with specimens of *Zenaidura macroura* and *Columba fasciata*. Howard's study (Condor, 29, 1937:12-14) of remains of the Passenger Pigeon from