

owls and the absence of pocket gophers and *Peromyscus* (both abundant locally but inactive by day) the large owls; the condition of the bone fragments would appear to eliminate the other hawks of the region.—R. M. BOND, *Piedmont, California, June 30, 1942.*

Shower Bathing of a Spotted Towhee.—In the long dry summers of coastal central California, chaparral-dwelling species may find water locally scarce except as it collects on foliage from the nightly fogs that blow in from the ocean. Use of this supply for drinking is probably widespread, but its availability for bathing had not been appreciated by me.

The morning of July 29, 1942, was cool and foggy in Berkeley, and on the hillside at my home above Cerrito Creek in Contra Costa County, the trees and bushes were dripping with water. An adult Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*) came to the feeding tray at 7:15 and ate some of the cracked grain offered there. It was a dejected looking individual, with bare patches of skin showing around the head, for it was in the middle of its annual molt; indeed it left a spotted tail feather behind on the tray. It flew but a short distance, stopping on top of a tangle of baccharis bushes and poison oak. At once it began scuttling about under and over the wet foliage, rubbing against it and shaking down drops from overhead. The wings were half spread and were fluttered in the fashion customary in bathing; also the bird bent the legs, crouching down rather than standing normally erect. It moved about within a radius of about two feet, always in the crowns of the bushes, three to four feet above ground. After approximately a minute of this the towhee moved on, but it was detected at a distance, perched, fluttering its wings and preening. The bath was not by my standards especially effective, as the bird was only slightly wet, but it had apparently satisfied an instinct at least. All this time there had been a pan of water on the feeding tray but it was small and fairly deep and evidently was not so stimulating of the bathing reaction as the natural supply of water.—ALDEN H. MILLER, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, July 29, 1942.*

Notes on the Occurrence of Some Pelagic Birds Off San Diego County, California.—The ever moving and changing stretches of the ocean offer many hazards and inconveniences to the ornithologist. Hence our knowledge of the birds which come and go over the open sea, seldom touching our shores, is limited when compared with the mass of information that has been gathered on the subject of land birds. The following notes and observations are submitted in the hope that they may provide a small addition to the published facts in the interesting field of pelagic birds.

The status of the Slender-billed Shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) along the Pacific coast, especially to the southward, appears to be rather uncertain. There are scattered records of birds found dead on the beach and of several collected specimens, but the occurrence of this species in large numbers in the winter of 1941-42, near La Jolla, California, is noteworthy.

The first of these birds to come to my notice was a dead female (now in the San Diego Natural History Museum) which I picked up on October 28, 1941, on the beach just north of La Jolla. It had evidently been dead for several days. On examination I found that its stomach and intestines were packed with food and that a fair quantity of fat lined the skin. Death probably resulted from the battering of recent heavy seas. The second bird was found dead, in an emaciated and somewhat decomposed condition, on October 30, 1941, near La Jolla. Two unidentified round worms over an inch long were found in its gullet. A third bird, very much decomposed, was found on November 4, 1941, on the Silver Strand about 4 miles south of Coronado.

I saw my first living Slender-billed Shearwater on November 5, 1941, 1½ miles off La Jolla. Several hundred Black-vented Shearwaters (*Puffinus opisthomelas*) were scattered over a large stretch of glassy sea surface. Among them, a few dark shearwaters were noted. One of these, a Slender-bill, was collected and is now a study skin in my collection. This group of Slender-billed Shearwaters was exceptionally easy to approach. Several times I was able to bring my skiff to within about ten feet of them before they reluctantly exerted enough energy to patter and glide several hundred feet before resting on the surface again. The stomach of the specimen collected was full of fish. This perhaps accounted for the sluggish actions of the birds.

In the late afternoon of November 29, 1941, I again looked for shearwaters off La Jolla. After proceeding over a mile from shore in my outboard motor boat, I encountered two Black Brant (*Branta nigricans*) floating on the water and numbers of Heermann Gulls (*Larus heermanni*) resting on kelp and driftwood, but no shearwaters. After about an hour's fruitless search, I noticed a long and narrow raft of what proved to be several hundred Brandt Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax penicillatus*) lying nearly submerged, with only their long necks and a spot of their backs above the surface. I cruised beside this linear group for perhaps 100 yards and then noticed two dark shearwaters on the water. Since it is difficult to be sure of the identity of such birds in the field, I shot one. It proved

to be a Slender-billed Shearwater. The birds were very tame and the one collected was so gorged with fish that as I gathered it from the water several large fragments dropped from its mouth. These two individuals and a third one identified as the same species constitute all the shearwaters seen on this trip.

On December 4, 1941, after several days of heavy seas, one dead and one very weak Slender-billed Shearwater were found on the beach. The weakened bird died within an hour of the time it was found.

On December 16, 1941, while walking on the beach a little south of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, I noticed a large group of birds, about a quarter of a mile beyond the breakers. Anxious to see if there were Slender-bills among them I got my skiff and rowed out. The shearwaters, well over 200 in number, were apparently "chock full." They sat about lazily for the most part and few seemed able to summon the energy for a take-off. I watched several dive and appear again at the surface, swallowing large sardines. From two to five gulls were usually on hand and attempted to steal the fish, but each time the shearwater ducked back below the surface and apparently finished the meal under water. I was able to get very close to many of the birds and think that, except for about 70 or 80 Black-vented Shearwaters, they were all of the slender-billed species.

On December 25, 1941, five Slender-billed Shearwaters were found dead along a half mile stretch of beach north of La Jolla. The weather previous to that date had been very severe for nearly a week. On December 27, three more were picked up along this same stretch of beach.

Apparently the Slender-billed Shearwater is not as rare a visitor along our coast as the few published records would lead us to believe. Although this season may be one in which these birds have been unusually abundant, I am inclined to believe that they are generally more common than has been supposed. In the first place their appearance in the field is nearly identical with that of the common Sooty Shearwater. Thus their presence could easily be overlooked. Even dead birds in the hand can be puzzling, unless measured or compared with specimens of the Sooty. It is certainly possible that many dead shearwaters on the beach have been passed by as being of the larger species.

Stomach contents of four Slender-billed Shearwaters, which seemed of special interest, were: bird shot November 29, 1941, 15 small clear white quartz pebbles; one bird found dead on beach December 4, 1941, 25 round worms, 3 small pebbles; the other bird found on same date, several round worms and 2 small squid beaks; bird found dead on beach December 25, 1941, 78 small squid beaks and about 15 small round worms. Several other birds examined contained fish only.

Although the occurrence of the Ancient Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*) is to be expected along the coast of southern California, the bird is perhaps still sufficiently rarely seen to warrant presenting the following records of this species. On January 2, 1935, a lone bird, now in my collection, was collected about a mile off La Jolla. Again on January 2, but in 1941, I collected two specimens from a small flock of eight birds less than a half mile from shore at La Jolla. Another small flock of six birds was seen later, farther out. The following day I returned, hoping to collect another specimen, but no Ancient Murrelets were to be found. Of the two secured, one is in the San Diego Natural History Museum and the other in my personal collection. On January 14, 1942, an energetic Ancient Murrelet, together with a Rhinoceros Auklet (*Cerorhinca monocerata*), was observed, while feeding just beyond the breakers in the churning froth only a few feet from the rocks in front of the La Jolla Caves. On January 15, 1942, a dead Ancient Murrelet was found.—KARL W. KENYON, *San Diego Society of Natural History, May 22, 1942.*

Melospiza melodia virginis a Synonym of Melospiza melodia fallax.—Dr. Clarence Cottam had the kindness to call to the attention of Dr. William H. Behle and myself (co-describers of *Melospiza m. virginis* from the Virgin Valley of Utah) the fact that *virginis* is identical with Baird's type of *fallax* from Pueblo Creek, Arizona. Through the courtesy of Dr. Alexander Wetmore, the United States National Museum has forwarded me this type and also the type of *Melospiza fasciata montana*. Since I am responsible for the taxonomic portion of the paper in which *virginis* was described (Condor, 44, 1942:122-124), I feel it my duty to declare the changes in nomenclature which are necessitated by my findings upon comparing these types with specimens of *virginis*. I agree with Cottam that *virginis* is a synonym of *fallax*. The type of *fallax*, a wintering bird, has a ruddy color and lacks black streaks; it is, therefore, a good representative of the song sparrow population breeding in the Virgin Valley and adjacent parts of Nevada. As previously pointed out, this population is racially distinct from, and geographically and ecologically isolated from *saltonis* and from the black-streaked song sparrows occurring at higher elevations to the north and east. The type of *montana* is identical with representatives of this latter population in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology; accordingly, *Melospiza melodia montana* should be reinstated as the correct name of the Mountain Song Sparrow.—JOE T. MARSHALL, JR., *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, August 19, 1942.*