

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

A Record of the Slaty Finch for Honduras.—When Miller and Moore (Condor, 56, 1954: 310–311) reported on a female Slaty Finch, *Spodiornis rusticus uniformis*, taken on Volcán Tacaná, Chiapas, México, they were unaware that there were two additional specimens of the species from Honduras in the Moore Collection. These specimens, both adult males, were taken on July 9 and 12, 1936, by C. F. Underwood at Montaña El Chorro and apparently constitute the first record of the species in Honduras. The specimen of July 12 has the label notation, testes “ $\frac{1}{2}$ enlarged.”

The validity of *S. r. barrilesensis* was questioned by Miller and Moore (*op. cit.*) and it was suggested that “further material may result in more definite suppression of *barrilesensis* in contradistinction to *uniformis*,” and this, in fact, seems to be the case. The bill of the type of *barrilesensis* was found to be abnormal and some of the characters must therefore be discredited. *Barrilesensis* does, however, share with *uniformis* a more massive bill than the populations of *S. r. rusticus* to the south. The width of the bill at the nostril of the Honduran specimens is 4.6 and 4.7 mm. and is therefore in agreement with previous findings. This, then, brings us to the supposed greater size of *uniformis* which according to Hellmayr (Cat. Birds. Amer., pt. 11, 1938:371) differentiates it from *barrilesensis*. The wings of the types of *uniformis* and *barrilesensis* as measured by Miller and Moore are 74.5 and 72.2 mm., respectively. However, as they show, this apparent disparity is somewhat reduced by Costa Rican examples, referred to *barrilesensis* by Hellmayr, which measure 72.2 and 73.8 mm. The wings of our specimens from Montaña El Chorro measure 73.6 and 71.2 mm., suggesting a slightly greater degree of individual variation than was previously realized. Although the sample is still too small for any significant statistical treatment, it would appear that there is no sound basis for considering *barrilesensis* as distinct from *uniformis* and it is to the latter that we refer our specimens.—ROBERT T. MOORE and DON R. MEDINA, *Laboratory of Zoology, Occidental College, Los Angeles, California, May 9, 1956.*

Nesting of the Ruffed Grouse in California.—The Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) has long been known as a breeding bird in the extreme northern portion of California. However, most of the breeding records have been based on broods of young. Little information has been available as to nesting requirements and the nature of the nest. Through the courtesy of the late James Patterson of Willow Creek, Humboldt County, California, three nests of this bird were observed near that locality which is situated in the Trinity River area.

The first nest observed was found in late June of 1952, at which time the eggs had hatched and the young had left. The nest was situated on a rather steep slope at least fifty yards from the nearest riparian growth of a small side stream. It was sunk into the forest floor about six inches down hill from the butt end of a down log. The forest at this point was mixed growth of Douglas fir, madrone and oak, with little or no understorey. The nest cavity was small for the size of the bird, which was reputed to have deposited ten eggs.

The second nest was found on May 7, 1955, and contained nine eggs, which had been incubated for about three days. The nest was deserted due to logging operations in the immediate vicinity. Again the nest was about fifty yards from the nearest riparian growth and was situated on a steep hillside. The usual mixed forest growth was present, with little or no underbrush. The nest cavity measured about five inches across and was at least four inches deep, the eggs being well below the surface of the forest floor. An oak tree was just above the nest cavity and formed an effective protective covering. A few dried leaves had fallen into the cavity, breaking up the outline of the clutch of eggs, which was difficult to see.

The third nest was found on May 14, 1955, and this contained eleven eggs. When the bird was flushed, the deep nest was not noticeable, and the few leaves falling into the deep cavity broke up the shape of the clutch of eggs. This nest was about six inches in diameter and about five inches deep. Again, the nest was located about fifty yards from the nearest running water and on a steep hillside. The usual mixed forest growth was present, but in this case there was considerable understorey of the black huckleberry in the vicinity. The nest was outside the huckleberry area and again at the base of an oak.

All three nests were notable for their smallness and depth compared to those of other galliforms

that the writer has observed. All nests were on slopes adjacent to streams, where this species is chiefly found. The nesting period appears to be in the month of May. Clutch size ranged from nine to eleven eggs.—ROBERT R. TALMADGE, *Willow Creek, California, September 30, 1956.*

Avian-pinniped Feeding Associations.—While serving on an icebreaker in arctic waters, the writer observed several instances of marine birds feeding in association with pinnipeds. It appeared that the birds were attracted to the vicinity of pinnipeds where they fed either on scraps of fish or other marine animals that the aquatic mammals strewed about the ocean surface, or upon small fry frightened to the surface by the feeding antics of the pinnipeds. Probably some of the birds followed the pinnipeds to feed on their feces. In the southern hemisphere, the Elliot Storm-petrel (*Oceanites gracilis*) has been observed following whales (Murphy, *Oceanic Birds of South America*, 1936:759) and the Wilson Storm-petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*) has been seen following feeding schools of fish such as carangids in search of scraps from their slaughter (*op. cit.*: 751). Flocks of Greater Shearwaters (*Puffinus gravis*) were also reported as following whales and porpoises to feed on their feces (*op. cit.*: 663).

The following are a few specific accounts noted in the Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean, arranged by mammalian species.

Odobenus divergens. Pacific Walrus. Ivory Gulls (*Pagophila alba*) and Glaucous Gulls (*Larus hyperboreus*) were seen feeding among walruses resting on the pack ice ten to twenty miles south of St. Lawrence Island in February, 1953. Apparently the gulls were feeding on walrus feces. On September 13, 1953, ten miles northwest of Atanik, Alaska, Glaucous Gulls were seen riding small, drifting ice floes with walruses, again apparently feeding on their feces. Nearby a flock of ten to fifteen Red Phalaropes (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) alighted on the water in the midst of a herd of swimming walruses and began feeding, relatively unconcerned with the bellowing, snorting, and splashing of the huge mammals, who were frightened by the approach of our ship. The phalaropes had miles of open water in which to feed but chose the association of the walruses, perhaps finding macroplankton more easily where the walruses had agitated the water.

Phoca hispida. Ringed Seal. In the Bering Sea during the winter of 1953, Kittiwakes (*Rissa tri-dactyla*) and Glaucous and Ivory gulls were seen feeding on seal carcasses but not in close association with living seals. On February 8, 1953, Fulmars (*Fulmarus glacialis*), in flocks of three or four individuals, were observed swimming in steaming open leads in the ice at about 179°W and 61°N in relatively close proximity to seals. Perhaps the two species were simply utilizing the same open water for feeding, neither profiting by the other's presence. In late August, 1953, ringed seals were found especially abundant in the loose pack ice in the northern end of Prince of Wales Strait between Banks and Victoria islands. Their presence was first detected by seeing small flocks of ten to fifteen Sabine Gulls (*Xema sabini*) and lesser numbers of Arctic Terns (*Sterna paradisaea*) hovering low over the water. The birds periodically dropped to the water, apparently picking up scraps of food that floated away from seals that surfaced. At one time, three such mixed flocks were seen flying after small parties of swimming seals. Throughout the latter part of August and the first week of September, 1953, practically every seal seen swimming was accompanied by an aerial escort of Sabine Gulls or Arctic Terns. Herring Gulls from the nesting colony on Princess Royal Island were also observed following seals, but they quickly deserted them in favor of the ship's garbage. Nesting Glaucous Gulls were more timid and were not seen among the seals, whereas flocks of Red Phalaropes up to fifty in number were observed resting on the ice and feeding in the water in close proximity to seals. Individual Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers (*Stercorarius pomarinus* and *S. parasiticus*) followed the gulls and terns, robbing them of their catches, but did not feed among the seals.

Eumetopias jubata. Steller Sea-Lion. Tremendously large flocks of shearwaters, mainly the Slender-billed Shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*), were encountered in the Bering Sea from July 17 to 21, 1953. Many of these birds seemed so full that they could not fly but only splash and flap ahead of the ship. During this passage, sea-lions were also fairly numerous. Two individuals had dead fish which they tossed about and shook, much as a terrier shakes a rat. The fish were reddish colored and estimated to be about two feet long. Twenty to thirty shearwaters congregated about each sea-lion. At first glance, it appeared that a sea-lion had caught a shearwater and other shearwaters had gathered about their fallen companion. However, closer observation disclosed that the birds were feeding.