

Robert W. McFarlane (*in litt.*) stated that this was one of 14 recoveries of Black-footed Albatrosses taken in a mass banding project conducted primarily at Midway. He mentioned that this bird at Pearl and Hermes Reef was in a breeding colony, but its status was not definitely determined.—CHARLES F. YOCOM, *Division of Natural Resources, Humboldt State College, Arcata, California, July 20, 1964.*

**Louisiana Waterthrush in Baja California.**—Although Northern Waterthrushes (*Seiurus noveboracensis*) have frequently been reported from southern Baja California (Pac. Coast Avif. No. 33, 1957:257), the Louisiana Waterthrush (*S. motacilla*) is unknown from the peninsula. Indeed, Grinnell (Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., 32, 1928:202–203) noted that no waterthrushes had been observed in what is now the state of Baja California. On April 27, 1964, while the senior author was collecting along a tributary of the San Simón River at Rancho Rosarito, at about 2500 feet in the foothill region 34 miles east of San Quintin, Baja California, he was surprised to see a waterthrush feeding by the water at an open drinking spot for cattle. The stream was otherwise bordered by willows and cottonwoods, beyond which upland desert stretched in all directions. The bird was collected and proved to be a Louisiana Waterthrush, the first record of that species from the Baja Californian peninsula. It was observed hobbling its tail as it fed and it emitted no vocalizations. The bird was a male with enlarged ( $8 \times 5$  mm.) testes, and it weighed 21.6 gm.; no fat was noted. The specimen is now in the national collection (integrated United States National Museum—Fish and Wildlife Service collection), and bears USNM no. 480452.

We wish to thank Dr. Rodolfo Hernandez Corzo of the Mexican Dirección General de Caza for permission to collect in Baja California.—LESTER L. SHORT, JR., *Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, United States National Museum, Washington, D. C.*, and RICHARD C. BANKS, *Natural History Museum, San Diego, California, August 24, 1964.*

**Notes on the Behavior of the Rufous-winged Sparrow.**—On December 15, 1946, Anne Anderson and I discovered a small number of Rufous-winged Sparrows (*Aimophila carpalis*) on the mesa between Pantano Wash and the eastern border of Tucson, Arizona. They were in a strip of land about 100 yards wide and one-half mile in length that lay somewhat lower than the surrounding desert of creosote bush and cholla cacti. In and among the several shallow channels eroded by the summer rains were scattered mesquites (*Prosopis juliflora*), paloverdes (*Cercidium floridum* and *C. microphyllum*) and hackberry (*Celtis pallida*), with a sprinkling of smaller shrubs, including cholla cacti. Dry grass of several species covered considerable portions of the ground, but there were also many bare areas of sand and brown soil.

In the course of the next two years about 35 weekend trips were made to the area in the hope of learning something of the unusual nesting behavior of this species. Unfortunately, lack of time in the important summer months prevented regular visits. We did not observe any nest building. On July 20, 1947, both of us searched every bush in the area. Anne Anderson found the first nest, containing two eggs on that day. I found another nest with three eggs on August 23. The nesting attempt of July 20 may have failed, for it was not until September 7 that I saw the first fledgling. In 1952 the land was cleared for a rapidly expanding subdivision and the Rufous-wings disappeared.

Despite the frustrating outcome of the task, considerable data were obtained on other behavior; and in view of the paucity of detailed information on song and call notes, it seems worthwhile to report what took place in the spring and early summer.

Each song of the Rufous-winged Sparrow was brief, lasting only two or three seconds, after which came a three second pause. The frequency was twelve to fourteen songs per minute. Both Bendire (Ornith. and Ool., 7, 1882:122) and Pitelka (Wilson Bull., 63, 1951:48) have described the song as weak and monotonous. Actually it appears weak only in comparison with that of larger birds. The volume of sound is probably as great as that of other Arizona fringillids whose songs in June can at times be all but obliterated by the shrill noise of cicadas. It can be termed monotonous chiefly in the sense that each variation is repeated over and over, before another is begun. The song can be divided into a variable first part of one, two, or three notes, uttered with relative deliberation, and a second part consisting of a uniform series of high-pitched,

rapidly emitted short notes. The song that I heard most frequently was *chip, chip, chip, chi chi chi chi chi chi chi chi*. With no change in emphasis, and with no variations at all, the Rufous-winged Sparrows sang this particular song type for periods of from one to four minutes. Occasionally one, or sometimes two of the preliminary *chips* were omitted, but such omissions constituted a new song, to be repeated again and again. At rare intervals I noted a variation of the final series of notes in which they were pitched almost into the high inaudible range for my ears. A surprising variation was a peculiar low, whistle-like *wheoo*, very suggestive of the call of a Say Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*). It began *chip, chip, wheoo*, followed by the usual rapid series. This song, too, sometimes lacked the first *chip*. The mellow *wheoo*, when uttered alone, was rather startling when it came unexpectedly from a bird concealed in a dense bush. In another variation a high sharp *seeep*, with rising inflection, replaced the last *chip* note. Thus it became: *chip, chip, seeep*, and so forth. One felt as though the singer paused momentarily, out of breath, after the first *chip* or two; then during the following deep inhalation it produced a high squeak or whistle! The final *chi* notes came in the hurried exhalation.

Singing occurred in every month of the year. It was less frequent during November, December, and January. Usually the top of a bush was the favorite station, but occasionally a bird would sing from the lower branches or even while hopping about on the ground. I could not confirm Bendire's (*op. cit.*) observation that they sometimes sing "while hovering a few feet in the air." The only hovering which I noted was a brief flycatching attempt above a bush.

Up to the end of March, singing seemed to be invariably prompted by my approach. At a distance I heard no singing. When I advanced to obtain a better view of a Rufous-winged Sparrow that was feeding at the edge of a patch of grass or cacti, it always flew to the top of a bush. Then, after a hesitant *chip* or two it began singing. As it continued to sing, others in the area answered, often with similar songs. If the bird was not further disturbed, it dropped to the ground and resumed feeding. Soon all was quiet again. If I crowded the singer, it flew to another bush and sang anew. In the course of its attempts to evade my approach it sometimes sang two or three song types from its repertoire.

The Rufous-winged Sparrows fed on the ground, often within the small groups of Brewer Sparrows (*Spizella breweri*), White-crowned Sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*), and Black-throated Sparrows (*Amphispiza bilineata*) that roamed the area in the spring. In March, singing stations, six or seven in number, were fairly evenly spaced in the 500-yard strip, and although apparently used only when prompted, they gave the impression that territories had been established. At this time I usually searched in vain for the females. It was not until mid-April and May that I encountered pairs of birds on the ground. They now sang in most of their territories, prompted only by their own adjacent neighbors. I can devise no satisfactory explanation for the early eccentric singing behavior. It seems incredible that a bird should begin to advertise its territory the moment I trespassed and disturbed it, instead of seeking to escape. The first hesitant *chips* may have been alarm notes, but they invariably combined into the remainder of the full song.

The Rufous-winged Sparrows seemed to experience no difficulty in perching in or climbing about the spiniest chollas (*Opuntia fulgida*). We found three nests in the two summers, two in hackberry bushes and one in a paloverde tree. At two of the nests the incubating bird slipped away silently; at the third the bird stopped a short distance away and uttered a low *dzip* note at irregular intervals. Now and then it changed to a *chip* like that at the beginning of a song. Another alarm note, which I heard on November 11, sounded like an anxious *tseep*. It came repeatedly from both members of a pair that may have had fledglings nearby, for they were reluctant to leave and returned when I left. Once I heard a short warble. The fledgling which we saw on September 7 perched in a hackberry bush and uttered rapid *peep* notes while it received food from its parent. In August, 1948, a fledgling gave a weak *tseep* call, resembling the adult alarm note mentioned above. At the approach of its parent, the note changed to an urgent *tsit tsit*. When the parent uttered a brief warble, the fledgling flew to it at once.

There is very little permanent water in any of the locations where the Rufous-winged Sparrow is now reported in southern Arizona. Negative data, however, can be misleading because of inadequate field observations. On the afternoon of January 11, 1948, at our Tucson home, a lone,

stray Rufous-winged Sparrow suddenly appeared and took a bath in our small bird pool! It stayed five minutes in a cholla to fluff and preen. We saw it again on the 15th; on the 19th it drank and bathed. On February 15 it tried to drink from the frozen pool; then it went to the drip at the pump. Again on March 14 and 17 it came to drink. It was last seen on March 31; its origin and destination remain unknown.—ANDERS H. ANDERSON, *Tucson, Arizona, July 7, 1964.*

**Pyrrhuloxia Feeding on Cactus Fruits.**—On December 10, 1956, a male and a female Pyrrhuloxia (*Pyrrhuloxia sinuata*) were observed feeding on the fruits of the Christmasberry cholla (*Opuntia leptocollis*) growing in a cactus garden near the old tick office building at Carlsbad Caverns National Park, approximately 30 miles southwest of Carlsbad, New Mexico. The pair made several flights to the cactus and were seen carrying away several of the small purplish fruits. While many studies have reported on the food habits of *Pyrrhuloxia*, I can find no record of their using the fruits of this cactus. Martin, Zim, and Nelson (American Wildlife and Plants, 1951) list grain and grass seeds as the principal foods of these birds.—LOUIS N. LOCKE, *Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, Maryland, September 14, 1964.*

**American Oystercatcher on Anacapa Island, California.**—On May 24, 1964, I observed several Black Oystercatchers (*Haematopus bachmani*) on the north side of Anacapa Island, off the coast of southern California. These birds, quite to be expected on this island, were noisy, giving their whistling calls in an excited manner. Most of them appeared to be paired birds, and judging from their actions, they may have been nesting. However, also in this area, on the north side of the easternmost island, where there is a naval installation, I saw an American Oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*). The bird, seen from about 175 feet offshore, stood for a while, giving everyone in our party an excellent view. Soon it departed, flying along the edge of the water for quite a distance and then returned, calling while in flight. According to Grinnell and Miller (Pac. Coast Avif. No. 27, 1944:133) this type of oystercatcher occurred formerly as a vagrant and apparently as an occasional resident north to Ventura County. They also state that none has been recorded since 1910 in California although it has been found south of the Mexican boundary.

Kenyon (Condor, 51, 1949:193–199) observed oystercatchers in Lower California in April and May of 1946. He found Black and American oystercatchers interbreeding quite commonly and observed several nesting pairs where one bird was black and its mate a pied oystercatcher. It is not possible to determine whether the bird we saw was an American Oystercatcher or a hybrid of the two forms.—WALDO G. ABBOTT, *Department of Ornithology and Mammalogy, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Santa Barbara, California, August 25, 1964.*

**Eagle Versus Fish.**—While doing a deer count on Mitkoff Highway, 33 miles south of Petersburg, Alaska, my wife and I were surprised to see a large bird, partly submerged in the water, violently flapping its wings. On closer examination through a 7 × 50 monocular we could see it was a mature Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) with a large fish in its talons. From the size of the fish and the time of the year, there is a strong possibility that it was a king salmon, but this is only conjecture as we were unable to examine the fish closely.

As we watched the eagle it appeared that it was trying to fly with the fish in its talons, but the struggle the fish was putting up coupled with its size made it impossible for the eagle to fly. The longer we watched the clearer the picture became: the eagle, realizing that it was unable to fly with the fish, was dragging it toward a sandspit, about one hundred yards away, that had been exposed by the low tide. The eagle would struggle with the fish for several minutes then it would rest and the fish would try to shake itself free. Several times during the rest periods the fish would jump out of the water and seemingly knock the eagle about in a violent fashion. After approximately 15 minutes the eagle was able to drag the fish onto the sandspit and after a brief rest began pecking at it. At this point we were forced to leave the scene, but it was apparent that the eagle had won the battle.—JOSEPH R. BLUM, *Petersburg, Alaska, June 22, 1964.*