

THE FOLLOWING finalists in the color salon competition are herewith congratulated and their names and subjects listed. Note that Rod Planck and Robert Pitman are double winners this year, that Adrian Dignan was the Grand Prize winner in 1978, and won last year, and that John Gerlach had no less than three entries in the finals. Edward Mednick, of Flushing, New York, sent us a striking shot of cliffs and Shag, but unfortunately this Old World cormorant is not yet on the North American list.

William Ervin, Boulder, Colorado. "Male Bay-breasted Warbler".

Donald R. Hoechlin, Riverside, California. "Lichtenstein's Oriole".

Steven G. Wilson, Grouse Lake, Isabella, Minnesota. "Great Gray Owl".

W A. Montevicchi, St. John's, Newfoundland. "Murre against the sun".

Richard Lewis, Bristol, Tennessee. "Savannah Sparrow among dried grasses".

Roger S. Everett, Mansfield, Massachusetts. "Chipping Sparrow on a bare branch".

Robert Pitman, Charleston, Oregon. "Pigeon Guillemot on a rock". "Blue-faced Booby and young".

Larry G. Jensen, Mt. Vernon, Washington. "Goose in the Snow".

Adrian Dignan, Freeport, New York. "Stilt Sandpiper".

Jim Greaves, Goleta, California. "Common and Snowy Egret".

Robert J. Connelly, Royersford, Pennsylvania. "Canada Geese".

James W. Williams, Lahaska, Pennsylvania. "Gray-phase Screech Owl".

Brian Prescott, Riverside, California. "Black-throated Sparrow".

John Gerlach, Spruce, Michigan. "Female Bobolink at Nest", "Nashville Warbler feeding young and Cowbird".

Michael Chaneske, Lansing, Illinois. "Henslow's Sparrow".

Greg W. Lasley, Austin, Texas. "Sharp-tailed Sparrow".

John Peterson, Brookville, Ohio. "Elegant Trogon".

Gaëtan Duquette, St. Lambert, Québec. "White-rumped Sandpiper".

William A. Paff, Elkhart, Indiana. "Royal Terns' Courtship Display".

G.B. May, Toronto, Ontario. "Cape May Warbler".

Rod Planck, Spruce, Michigan. "Juvenile Saw-whet Owl".

Shooting Skylarks

To the Editor:

On browsing through the November 1979 *American Birds*, published by the National Audubon Society, I began to wonder whether the post can now be taking 150 years to cross the Atlantic. In the generally admiring description of the conduct of his friend John James Audubon in the field in his *History of British Birds* our late professor, William MacGillivray, once found it necessary to reprove him publicly for the number of birds he shot in the breeding season, and it seems little has changed.

Several points about your correspondent Robert A. Duncan's letter about the Californian Skylark (*Am. Birds* 33:262,310,910) puzzle me, and I wonder if he could explain them further?

1. "Should it never be decided what (the most controversial bird in California's birding history) was, California birders will get what they deserve." What will

they get, a second chance to claim the first American Oriental Skylark? Is this good or bad, and why will they "deserve" it?


2. How do you "pin down" things with photographs, or even shot? If you are a good observer it may not be necessary, and if you are a bad one it may not be enough, as we once found out in this country around Hastings. Consider also the Great Shearwater once literally pinned down by your patron Audubon (has anyone ever considered it; some have failed to do so quite recently)?

3. Who says posterity will be grateful to people who collect things? Is anyone grateful to the people who knocked off so many Passenger Pigeons? Would we really prefer it if Shelley had decided to salute his blithe spirit with a hail of shot in the way now suggested for Californians?

4. Why is it timid not to shoot things? We receive the impression that in America it is much braver to claim a rare bird when you did not shoot it, as in the present case in California, so that rather a lot are shot quite unnecessarily. It seems time there was more resistance to this convention.

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5. Quite what has the appearance of exotic skylarks on the American list got to do with "science" in any case? If there is only one of anything it is hardly an event of much scientific importance, and it is scientifically much more interesting to observe what happens to it next than to put it away in a cabinet. If anyone wants a Skylark I am prepared to send them one.

I have just spent lunch discussing this case with William MacGillivray's current successor, who is also the chairman of the Home Office Advisory Committees which deal with our bird protection policy. Their reaction to it would have been that while they would have had no objection if an attempt had been made to capture it unobtrusively to see what it was, they would not have issued a license for its collection on the grounds that in this overcrowded island it is more important to set a good example to the public not to disturb rare birds than to confirm the identity of some stray vagrant. Anyone can have a license to collect reasonable numbers of common birds for useful purposes.

—W.R.P. Bourne
Zoology Department, Tillydrone Avenue, Aberdeen, Scotland. April 29, 1980



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To the Editor:

Robert A. Duncan's indictment of California ornithologists for failing to collect the *Alauda* lark which wintered at Pt. Reyes, California (Letters to the Editor, November 1979) ignores several critical points. In particular, I urge Mr. Duncan to realize, first, that it is frequently awkward and sometimes impossible to secure a vagrant as a specimen and, second, that there exists in California a scientific and successful system for assessing the validity of non-specimen-supported records.

An extensive report on the lark was submitted to the Western Field Ornithologists' California Bird Records Committee; this report included on-the-spot field descriptions from several observers as well as dozens of photographs taken in the field which show virtually every aspect of the bird's plumage and structure. The report also included opinions from authorities throughout the world. The members of the California Bird Records Committee reviewed this report and concluded that the bird was *Alauda arvensis* (of one of the northeast Asian subspecies). This report is on file with the secretary of the committee and is available for scrutiny to any interested party.

The California Bird Records Committee was *not* established with the elimination of specimen corroboration of unusual records in mind; it simply provides a method of dealing with records lacking such documentation. In this case, the skylark occurred within the Pt. Reyes National Seashore, making the feasibility of collection quite low. Prior publicity about the bird was widespread, and collection would have aroused unfortunate public furore, perhaps heightening the existing backlash against scientific collecting. And, in hindsight, there is an ad-

ditional argument against the collection of this particular individual: its return briefly in late fall 1979 taught us something about winter philopatry of vagrants.

The California Bird Records Committee invites Mr. Duncan to review the voluminous documentation of the record in question and judge for himself the validity of the committee's decision. I trust that such inspection would enlighten his thinking about the methods of documenting rarities.

—Kimball L. Garrett, Member, California Bird Records Committee, Department of Biology, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90024. May 7, 1980

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE Eastern Bluebird Study

During the spring and summer of 1980, the Muddy Run Ecological Laboratory conducted an Eastern Bluebird banding project at the Muddy Run Project Area, near the towns of Holtwood and Drumore, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Bluebirds were banded with numbered, colored leg bands of either red, yellow, green, or blue, in addition to the standard Fish and Wildlife Service leg bands. Observers of these birds are asked to report such details as sex, exact location, date, time of day, number of bluebirds in the flock, number (if possible), color and position of bands (e.g. left leg green over metal or left leg green, right leg metal). Please report sightings, along with your name, address, and telephone number, to the Bird Banding Laboratory, Laurel, MD 20811, with a copy to ROBERT M. SCHUTSKY, Muddy Run Ecological Laboratory, P. O. Box 10, Drumore, Pennsylvania 17518 (phone 717-548-2121). All reports will be fully acknowledged.

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