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COMMUNICATIONS

To the Editor:

A letter by Karen Nickey in the May 1981 issue of *American Birds* called attention to what she believed to be a contradiction in an article by John T. Ratti (*AB* 34: 860-866). This contradiction I believe resulted from the interpretation of Ratti's reference to "overlapping populations [of flickers]". Although "overlapping" was not the best choice of words, it is incorrect to equate overlapping with sympatric. The populations of flickers in question are essentially allopatric with well-defined zones of contact where hybrids result (allopatric hybridization). An excellent discussion of this subject (also using flickers as an example) can be found on pages 194-197 of Mayr's *Principles of Systematic Zoology*. These hybrid zones indicate that one species of flicker is involved and the three former species are correctly reduced to subspecies.

C. Ray Chandler
Route 2, Box 8C
Amherst, VA 24521

To the Editor:

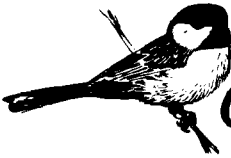
In response to the letter by Karen Nickey (*Am. Birds* 35: 345), I offer the following explanation. Speciation is a continuous but slow process, and many unusual situations exist that do not conform nicely to our definitions. By definition, subspecific populations of the same species are not sympatric while in breeding condition. However, this statement requires some

qualification. Subspecific populations evolve in allopatry, and often these populations, through range expansion, become sympatric with the parent species. If the ranges overlap to the extent that the majority of the members of both populations are in contact, loss of subspecific characters will be fairly rapid due to interbreeding. On the other hand, the range of subspecific populations may overlap only on the periphery of their distribution. This marginal contact may provide enough evidence that the populations are truly subspecies (by observation of frequent interbreeding in *zones* of contact), but the majority of the members of the populations may remain allopatric if the zone of sympatry is relatively small and static. Thus, a large percentage of individuals will maintain those morphological characteristics used initially to classify the populations. In this case we have evidence of conspecific status, but the majority of the members of each population still meet the general definition of subspecies. I believe this example is similar to the flicker situation referred to in Ms. Nickey's letter.

John T. Ratti
Wildlife Biology
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To the Editor:

Working on a Winter Bird-Population Study in South Florida in 1975 I found a considerable discrepancy between visual observations and netting captures (*AB* 30: 1075)



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Making a feeder population study on the first two days of each winter month 1981-82 I applied this comparison to Black-capped Chickadees. This species flits so rapidly between feeders, pine boughs, and bird pool that it is impossible accurately to determine its numbers. I estimated perhaps eight seen at one time, a neighbor within 150 feet, ten at his feeder. On January 1 I set out a two-cell Potter trap, and banded 24 new birds, with 8 additional repeating from previous years. As I was still seeing unbanded birds I intended continuing this study a second day, but rain and the presence of a Sharp-shinned hawk prevented this. The editorial comment on my first article was that "careful consideration should be given to calculating or estimating the percentage of possible error and adjusting the conclusions accordingly."

Erma J. Fisk

Box 407, South Orleans, MA 02662.

To the Editor:

I see from the March 1980 issue of *American Birds* (AB 34: 200) that Cook's Petrels have been reported off California in the region of the Davidson Seamount. As you see from the attached notes, I saw some recently rather farther north, and closer to land, off Point Arenas, northern California, and the birds were also locally very common well offshore from Baja California.

Cookilaria Petrels off Baja and northern California

In the course of a cruise from Puntarenas, Costa Rica, to Victoria, British

Columbia, in April-May 1981 I found *Cookilaria* petrels at several points off the coast of Baja California and, in one case, off northern California as well. The birds were about the size of Townsend's Shearwaters (*Puffinus auricularis*), with which they were often associated, and with a rather similar flight, with less swooping/soaring than I'd have expected from a gadfly petrel. The birds had white foreheads and underparts, including the underwings; this seems to reduce the choice to Cook's (*Pterodroma cookii*) or Stejneger's (*P. longirostris*) petrels. The upperparts were a rather scruffy gray-brown, with a fairly well-marked darker, M-shaped band extending from wing-tip to wing-tip across the back. This suggests Cook's rather than Stejneger's, although Stejneger's could have been overlooked. Many of the birds appeared to be moulting their primaries. Observed at:

April 22: 20°51'N 109°11'W (c. 200 miles south of Cabo San Lucas): 1 bird.

April 23: 21°44'N 110°09'W to 22°22'N 110°56'W (c. 200 miles south of Cabo San Lucas): c. 300 birds.

April 24: 24°10'N 112°39'W (c. 75 miles west of Bahia Magdalena): c. 30 birds.

April 26: single birds at 26°07'N 115°06'W and 27°05'N 115°43'W, c. 200 miles west of Bahia Magdalena.

May 4: 38°02'N 125°12'W (c. 75 miles west of Point Arenas, northern California): 2 definite, 2 probables.

—R. G. B. Brown
Seabird Research Unit
Canadian Wildlife Service
P.O. Box 1006
Dartmouth, N.S. B2Y 4A2

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NORTHEASTERN BIRD-BANDING ASSOCIATION RESEARCH GRANT

The E. Alexander Bergstrom Memorial Research Fund of the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association, Inc., promotes research on birds. Small grants, usually not exceeding \$200, are available to cover expenses but not salaries or overhead charges to institutions. Further details and application forms may be obtained from Susan Roney Drennan, Chairman, NEBBA Research Committee, *American Birds*, 950 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022. The deadline for filing completed applications is March 1, 1982.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team is trying to assemble information on all observations of Kirtland's Warblers made during migration, both spring and fall. Many of these may have been reported in *American Birds* or various local publications, but usually few details are given. Appropriate information would be date, location, habitat, sex of bird (or birds) observed, whether males were singing, behavior, general weather information, and comments on the abundance of other warbler species present. Send records to: Lawrence A. Ryel, In-charge, Surveys and Statistics, Wildlife Division, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Box 30028, Lansing, Michigan 48909.

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