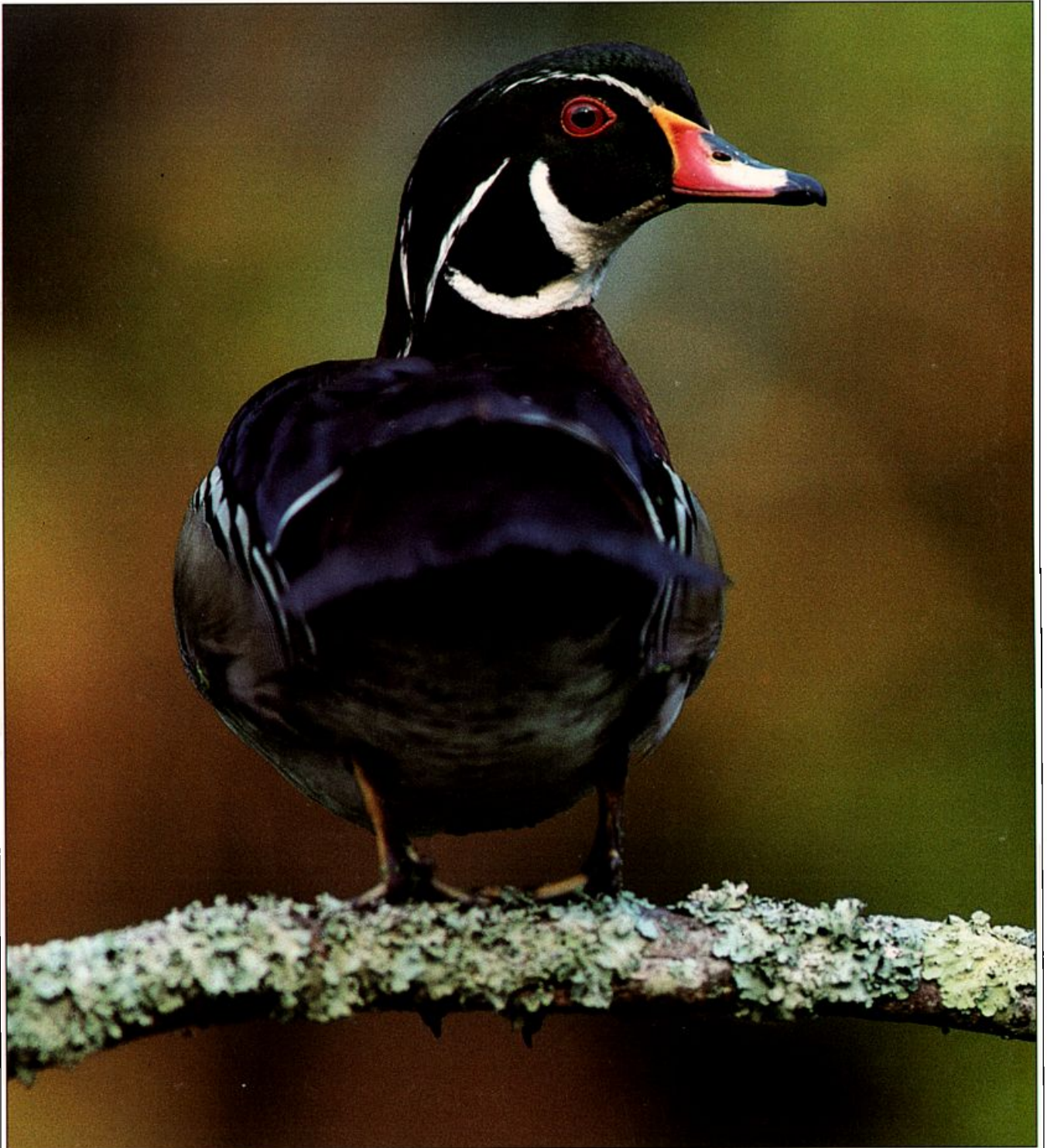


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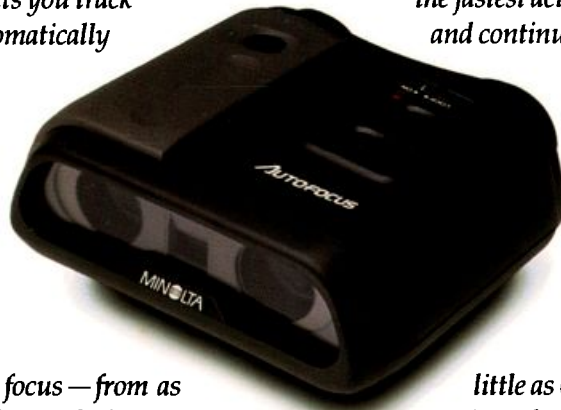
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THE BEAUTIFUL WOOD DUCK, PAGE 206

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Number Seven



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.

Painting by
JOHN DAWSON

FLASHING THROUGH OUR FAMILIAR WOODLOT TREES with a burst of color like a living flame, a tanager may seem out of place. And it is: tanagers are birds of the tropics. The tanager group reaches its zenith in South America, on the lower slopes of the Andes, where ten species of brilliantly colored tanagers may feed in the same fruiting tree at the same time. Only a few kinds of tanagers—all pictured on this poster—come as far north as the United States, and they are mostly summer birds here, retreating to the torrid zones for the winter. But while they are with us, their colors and songs bring us a tantalizing taste of the tropics.

TANAGERS

1. Western Tanager 2. Hepatic Tanager
3. Stripe-headed Tanager 4. Summer Tanager
5. Scarlet Tanager

Even the name of this family comes from the tropics. "Tanager" is derived from "tangara," the name used for these birds by the Tupi Indians of the Amazon Basin.

"[The tanager] most takes the eye of any bird... It flies through the green foliage as if it would ignite the leaves."

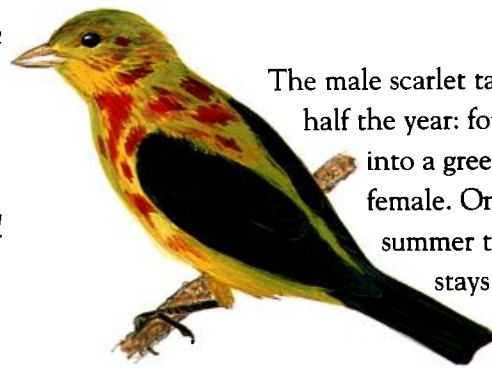
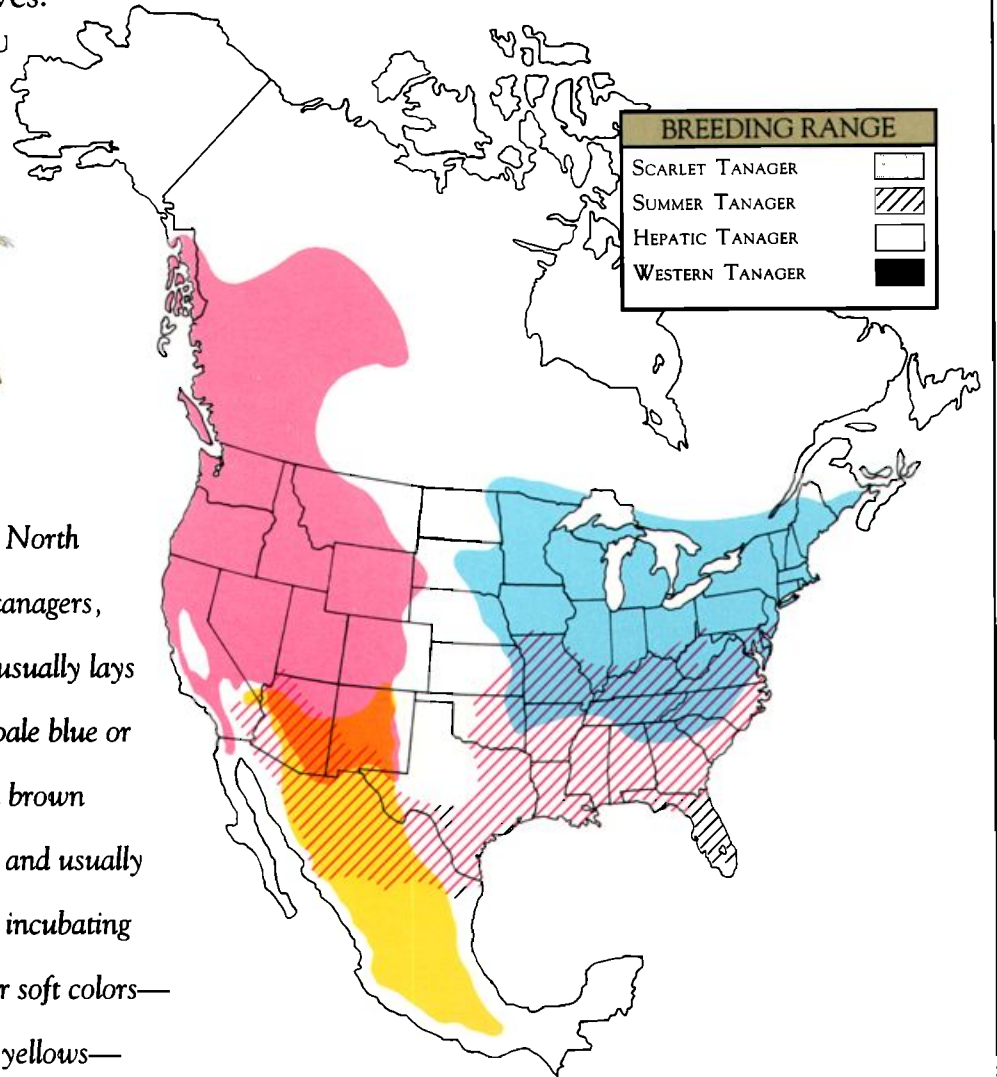
HENRY DAVID THOREAU

TANAGERS



The few kinds of tanagers that come to North America find most of their insect food by searching methodically along branches and foliage, as befits such stolid birds. But they will also take to the air, flying out to nab passing insects with surprising grace. They do not hesitate to catch bees and wasps, deftly avoiding getting stung in the process. Summer tanagers may develop a taste for these insects and learn to raid the nests of paper wasps, eating both the young wasp grubs and the adults.

Among the North American tanagers, the female usually lays four eggs (pale blue or green, with brown markings), and usually does all the incubating herself. Her soft colors—greens and yellows—make better camouflage than the flashy tones of the male. After the eggs hatch, however, the male does his full share of bringing food to the nestlings.



The male scarlet tanager is scarlet for only half the year: for the winter, he molts into a greenish plumage like that of the female. On the other hand, the male summer tanager (despite the name) stays red both summer and winter after he becomes an adult.

SPECIES	SIZE/APPEARANCE	HABITAT	NEST	VOICE	FOOD
SCARLET TANAGER <i>Piranga olivacea</i> The flashy male is unmistakable, but it is often hard to see in the dense foliage of the treetops.	Length: 7" Male: bright red with black wings and tail. Female: yellow-green with dark wings and tail. Male in winter looks like female.	Tall deciduous or mixed forest.	An untidy cup of grass, weeds, and twigs, far out on a horizontal branch.	Song, whistled phrases with a hoarse or burry quality. Callnote, <i>kip-brrr</i> or <i>kip</i> .	Mostly insects, also small wild fruits.
SUMMER TANAGER <i>Piranga rubra</i> A widespread bird, the summer tanager is most common in the Deep South.	Length: 7.75" Male: bright rose-red all over, with whitish bill. Female: tawny-yellow with whitish bill.	Oak and pine-oak woodlands, riverside cottonwood groves.	A loose cup of grass and weed stems, placed on a horizontal branch.	Song, lazy robin-like whistles. Callnote, a crackling <i>pickituck</i> .	Mostly insects, including wasps and bees. Also wild fruits.
HEPATIC TANAGER <i>Piranga flava</i> The word "hepatic" can mean "liver-colored," a reference to the brick-red shade of the male.	Length: 8" Male: brick-red all over, with gray face patch and dark bill. Female: tawny-yellow with gray face patch and dark bill.	Open woodlands of pine and oak in mountainous country.	A shallow cup of grass and weeds, placed in a fork of a horizontal branch.	Song, robin-like whistles. Callnote, a low <i>chuck</i> .	Mostly insects and wild fruits, sometimes nectar from flowers.
WESTERN TANAGER <i>Piranga ludoviciana</i>	Length: 7" Male: yellow with black wings and tail, pale wingbars; red face in summer. Female: yellow with gray wings, pale wingbars.	Nests in open forest of pine, spruce, and fir, mixed with oak or aspen; widespread in migration.	A cup of grass, twigs, and pine needles, placed on a horizontal branch of a conifer.	Rising and falling phrases with a robin-like quality make up the song. Callnote is a rising <i>prri-ddi-ddit</i> .	Mostly insects, including many wasps. Sometimes eats wild fruits or nectar.
STRIPE-HEADED TANAGER <i>Spindalis zena</i> Common in the West Indies, and sometimes strays into southern Florida from the Bahamas.	Length: 6.75" Male: black, chestnut, and yellow, with white stripes on face and wings. Female: plain greenish gray with white in wings.	Open woods, tropical scrub, and pine forest.	A loose cup of grass or plant fibers, placed in a bush or tree.	The song is a thin, high-pitched series of weak notes and twitters. Callnote, <i>seep</i> .	Mostly small wild fruits, also insects.

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American Birds

The Magazine of Record and Discovery

FROM THE PRESIDENT

AS WE GO TO PRESS WITH our summer issue of *American Birds*, the fate of Arctic wildlife is being hashed out on Capitol Hill. George Bush has vowed to veto any energy legislation that doesn't include a provision to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil exploration. That habitat, comprised of 1.5 million acres along the Alaskan coast, is critical to Arctic wildlife. Among the 130 bird species making their home in the refuge are Golden Eagles, Snowy and Short-eared owls, Tundra Swans, and the endangered Arctic race of the Peregrine Falcon. The area is also vital to migrating Snow Geese, a species whose population is expected to decrease by 50 percent if the Refuge is opened to drilling.

According to the Department of Interior's best estimate, there may be 3.5 billion barrels of oil in the refuge. The most optimistic estimates equal only 3 percent of current imports. Given the fact that that much oil could alone

be saved by increasing fuel efficiency by a mere two miles per gallon, drilling in the Arctic coastal plains is insupportable. We need to make lawmakers look at more cost-effective alternatives, such as improving fuel efficiency and developing renewable sources of energy.

Oil advocates argue that this 110-mile-long coastal stretch is not worth the environmental uproar. But less than 4 percent of this country's original wilderness still exists, and half of that is in Alaska. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is the only remaining Alaskan coastline not open to oil development. As birders, and as citizens, won't you please help us block this legislation before North America's last Arctic wilderness frontier is destroyed?

Robert W. Reeder



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American Birds

Summer 1991, Vol. 45, No. 2

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December 1, 1990-February 28, 1991

Front cover: The Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*). "Yes, it's a duck," says artist *Doug Pratt*, "but it's not a flat-billed quacker." The Wood Duck has spectacular colors, which is also what draws *Dale Zimmerman* to it. "The iridescent blues, greens, and purples," he says, "are strengthened by velvety dark areas outlined in white, glossy wine-red breast feathers, and a red bill tipped black and outlined in yellow." The bird's graceful proportions are what attract artist *Diane Pierce* to it. "It has a small bill, large eyes, and beautiful crest," she says. "The pattern of the head is exquisite." But as *Pratt* points out, "it's fancy without being gaudy." Photograph/Stephen Kirkpatrick.

FROM THE EDITOR

ONE OF THE TOUGHEST things you can ask a birder to do is to single out the most beautiful birds, among the 9000 known species. The idea of "beauty" is one that the philosophers and poets have been wrestling with for centuries. Webster's defines it as "the quality or aggregate of qualities in a person or thing that gives pleasure to the senses or pleasurably exalts the mind or spirit." The definition's looseness points out just how subjective the idea of beauty really is. We put ten extremely talented bird artists to the test by asking them to choose their favorite

birds ["The World's Most Beautiful Birds," p. 206]. The answers were surprising in the extent to which they revealed very personal things about each artist's aesthetic. Still, there are some objective criteria the artists applied: A bird's shape and size, its carriage, wing span, pattern, and especially color, often figured prominently in the responses.

Which brings me to the next question. Beauty aside, why should any bird even wear bright colors in the first place? Drab colors and protective camouflage patterns are easy to explain, as defense against predators, but what accounts for the flamboyant shocking hues of a Resplendent Quetzal or a bird of paradise? The answer seems to be that bright colors on a bird are meant to be seen by others of its own kind. Unlike mammals, of which many species are color-blind, birds in general have highly developed color vision. They will see every detail of color on neighbors, rivals, and potential mates.

Some of the most elaborate color combinations are found on male birds in species that display to attract females, as Paul R. Ehrlich explains



in his column "Birding for Fun: Sexual Selection." Males of hummingbirds and many ducks, for example, take no part in incubating eggs or caring for young; all their evolutionary energy has gone into developing bright patterns, to attract momentary mates. This trend reaches its extreme in some of the tropical American manakins and birds of

paradise, birds festooned with colors and patterns and plumes that almost seem outlandish. It would be unfair, however, to blame the more garish male plumages on the tastes of female birds. In the long evolution of these patterns, there may have been as much

pressure caused by the males' need to impress or intimidate each other.

In the end, the qualities of a bird which most delight the senses are often those which also delight the intellect. Gorgeous colors, patterns, shapes, and sizes are usually the practical result of a bird's evolution, a testimony to the fact that beauty, whatever else it may be, is sometimes a bird's best weapon for survival.

—S.R. Drennan

ANSWERS TO THAT'S BIRD ENTERTAINMENT, VOLUME 45, NO. 1, SPRING 1991 *AMERICAN BIRDS*

1. Billy Martin
2. Dave Winfield
3. Bunting
4. Birdie
5. Mark "the bird" Fidrych
6. Runners on base, or bases loaded
7. Goose eggs
8. Toledo Mud Hens
9. Sunflower seeds
10. Phil Regan
11. Clutch (hitter)
12. Ken Harrelson
13. Syd Finch
14. Robin Roberts
15. Parrot
16. Flycatcher, or ball hawk
17. The Robins
18. A dying quail
19. St. Louis Cardinals, Toronto Blue Jays, Baltimore Orioles
20. Fritz Peterson

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We're switching gears and taking our "That's Bird Entertainment" quiz on the road. Playing won't help your real-world driving or freeway-cruise duty but you should be able to steer through the quiz backroads at modest speeds. Our fleet of questions embodies smooth styling and "Fahrvergnugen" influence. So get behind the wheel, rev up your motor, and take off with us.

1. What bright, high-spirited, two-seater Ford auto of the mid-fifties was "America's Most Wanted Car?"
2. Name the British sports car manufacturer that shares its name with hummingbirds of the temperate Andes.
3. Name the popular Japanese car named after the haggard's sire.
4. In 1932 when the Jaguar first appeared on the market, people gulped when they saw the price tag. What did the initials SS stand for in the emblem?
5. Baltimore baseball fans were thrilled when Pontiac introduced this namesake of their fiery-colored mascot in 1967.
6. Like a shot across the sky, Mercury introduced this astronomical compact in 1960 as successor to the obsolete Ford Edsel.
7. If you made your escape in this Bondian car, enemies would be purple with rage.
8. Famous car designer John Fitch built a sensationally beautiful prototype sports car in 1966 in Italy. Though never produced, its mythical name was resurrected by Pontiac for a production car 15 years later.
9. Name the 1968 Plymouth two-door coupe with a "beep-beep" horn as standard equipment.
10. Name the California replica manufacturer who built quick automobiles resembling the Model T and the Stutz Bearcat in the late fifties and early sixties.
11. What new family sedan was produced after Renault joined forces with the American Motors Corporation?
12. With a song of exaltation, Buick introduced this sports coupe in 1961.
13. Ford's 1960 entrant into the compact car race was three feet shorter than full-sized models.

THAT'S BIRD & CAR ENTERTAINMENT

14. These very American cars, designed and built by famous American driver Dan Gurney, were often in the winner's circle at both Formula 1 and Indy races.
15. In 1946, famous designer Talmadge Judd named a small, light, two-seat roadster after a small light bird but found no takers for its manufacture.
16. Named after both a butterfly and a bird, Mercury introduced in 1975 this regal downsized luxury car.
17. By introducing this happy, profitable, two-door, hardtop coupe in 1959 Studebaker catapulted itself to the forefront of small car development for several years.
18. Now extinct, the 1956 Studebaker line of sport coupes and hardtops featured a square-shaped grille and flat-backed deck lid. What family of proud predators was chosen for the name?
19. In 1949, when Dodge introduced this boxy model, convenience options included electric clock, turn signals, radio, heater, and white sidewall tires. It sipped more fuel than its zippy little namesake.
20. Now, for a *really* hard question, answer this baby: Name the mascot found on Hispano-Suiza race cars.

If you think you answered **less than 10** correctly, you probably did very well in driver's education. If you think you got **10 to 12 right**, you can tell a Mustang from a Camaro, and wish you didn't have to drive the family wagon. If you think you answered **13 to 15 correctly**, you've seen *Vanishing Point* at least three times, and think that "Audubon" sounds like "autobahn." If you have the driving notion that you got **16 or more correct**, heel-and-toe comes as naturally as raising binoculars, 30,000 miles a year in search of birds doesn't seem unreasonable, and you're probably on a first-name basis with most of the local constabulary.

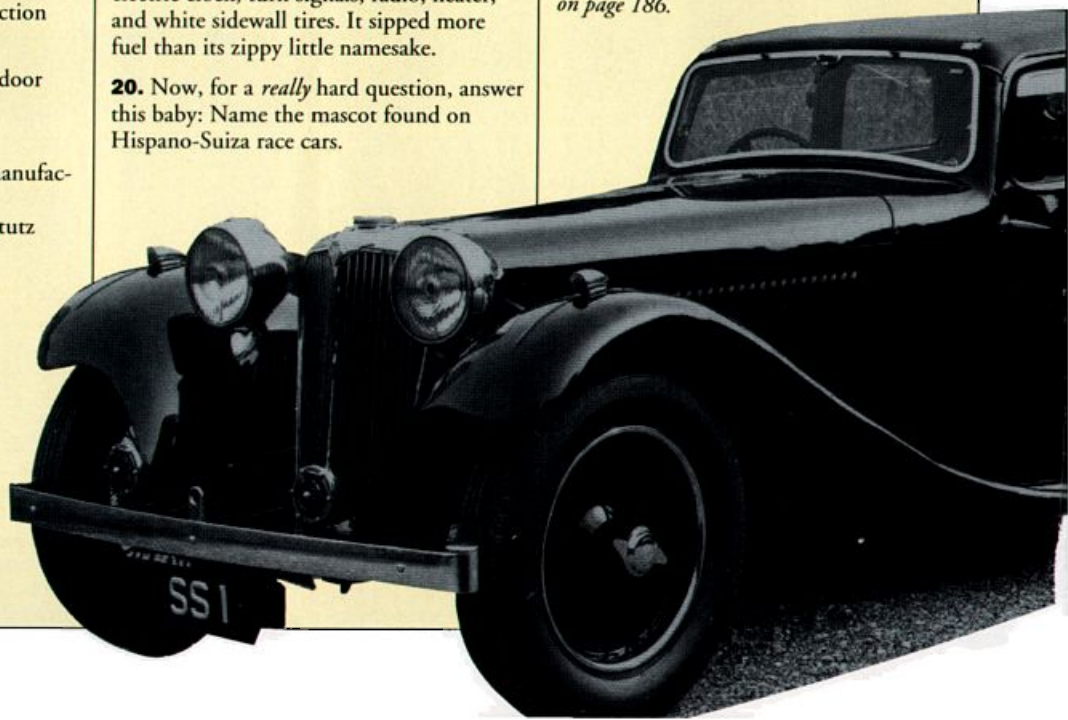
Write or mail your answers on a piece of paper and mail before September 16, 1991 to: *American Birds Quiz*, 950 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022.

The twenty-five (or so) entrants with the most correct answers will win goodies. Check the next issue of *American Birds* for another quiz, and the answers to this one.

Until October, may the driving force of birding be with you...

Try your hand at submitting a twenty-question bird quiz. If we publish your submission, you'll win a prize!

Answers to last issue's quiz can be found on page 186.



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