

dull black, mixed with a large amount of Sayal Brown, but no white. The chin is buff. The belly, instead of being plain white as in normal Wilson's Snipe, is definitely brown, heavily barred with brownish black. The only pure white on the specimen is under the wing: the under wing coverts as well as the underwing side and flank feathers are narrowly tipped with white, and the axillars are very narrowly barred with white.

There seems to be no previous record of a dark-plumaged Wilson's Snipe, but Barrett-Hamilton recorded 55 melanistic specimens of the European subspecies, *Capella gallinago gallinago*, as early as 1895. N. A. Vigors (*Trans. Linn. Soc. London*, 14, 1825:557, pl.) described the first recorded specimen as a new species, *Scolopax sabini*, but the name was later placed in the synonymy of the Common Snipe, and modern papers on snipe usually dismiss it briefly as "a melanistic variety" (e.g. A. C. Meinertzhagen, *Ibis*, 1926:486). However, the case is not so simple as that. Pycraft (*Ibis*, 1905:289-291) pointed out that there is more than one kind of "melanistic snipe." Some specimens differ from the normal only in the intensity of their pigmentation. This is largely true in the case of a "Sabine's Snipe" lent to me by the American Museum of Natural History (No. 740894. Leadenhall Market, London, Jan. 13, 1894). In general, the pattern of this bird is normal, but all of the lighter markings are buff instead of white or pale buff; also the throat and belly are nearly uniform with the rest of the plumage, instead of being white or nearly white. There is, however, one important difference in pattern: the belly, instead of being unmarked, is definitely streaked—though less so than the rest of the underparts. (It is interesting to note that Vigors' plate of "*Scolopax sabini*," although rather crudely drawn, also shows a definite pattern of dark marks on the belly.) The only place on the Leadenhall Market specimen where pure white occurs is under the wings: the axillars and under wing coverts are marked with white, though the bars are as narrow as those of the normal Wilson's Snipe.

The second kind of "Sabine's Snipe," described by Pycraft and by Witherby ("Handbook of British birds," 4, 1940:203), seems to differ from the kind described above in having the crown black and unstreaked; the scapulars and mantle without broad longitudinal streaks; the belly uniform sooty brown (not streaked or barred?); the axillars and under wing coverts uniform sooty black (with no pale markings).

Dark phase specimens ("*sabini*") occur with some regularity in the range of *C. g. gallinago*; they are more common in certain parts of the range, particularly in Ireland. However, as remarked above, the specimen figured here is apparently the first melanistic snipe to be recorded from the range of the American subspecies. It is noteworthy that Wilson's Snipe has long been described as much less variable in plumage than the Common Snipe (e.g. Seebohm, "The geographical distribution of the family Charadriidae," 1887:487).

Our dark phase Wilson's Snipe differs from the Leadenhall Market specimen of "*sabini*" in the strong black barring on the belly (perhaps an exaggeration and extension of the breast-barring that is one of the subspecific characters of *delicata*) and in the greater extent of black markings throughout the plumage.—JOSSELYN VAN TYNE, *University of Michigan Museum of Zoology, Ann Arbor, Michigan.*

**New records for northcentral Oklahoma.**—A Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) was shot by a duck hunter at Cushing Lake, Payne County, Oklahoma, on November 17, 1942. The specimen, a female in winter plumage and in good flesh, was deposited in the collection of the Zoology Department, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, by J. A. Heuston. The species has not previously been listed for the state.

On May 14, 1944, I saw two male Lark Buntings (*Calamospiza melanocorys*) in a cornfield seven miles northwest of Stillwater in Payne County. They were in full breeding plumage. Margaret M. Nice (1931, "The Birds of Oklahoma," *Okla. Biol. Surv.*, 3, No. 1) lists a number of records of the species for the western part of the state but knows of no records for central Oklahoma (letter).

I flushed an American Woodcock (*Philohela minor*) two and a half miles northwest of Stillwater on November 8, 1944, and observed another on the Lake Carl Blackwell Project seven and a half miles northwest of Stillwater on November 25, 1944. "The Birds of Oklahoma" lists several records of the species from the eastern, but none from the central, part of the state.—FREDERICK M. BAUMGARTNER, *Department of Entomology, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, Stillwater, Oklahoma.*

**Ring-billed Gulls fly-catching.**—The literature contains few references to the Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) capturing flying prey. On four evenings between September 13 and 30, 1944, we observed flocks of 18 to 82 gulls fly-catching over South Bass Island, Ottawa County, Ohio. We record here only the observations made on September 20 because the behavior of the gulls was the same on all four evenings. On September 20 a group of 70 to 80 Ring-billed Gulls fed from two hours before sunset until sunset. Throughout their feeding the gulls remained in a roughly circular flock-formation about 100 yards in diameter; all were on approximately the same plane, 15 to 30 yards from the ground. The evening was warm and humid; a faint breeze barely ruffled the water's surface, and the anemograph at the Stone Laboratory registered a wind velocity of 0-3 m.p.h. Probably because of the absence of a strong breeze, and perhaps also because of humid conditions, the flight of the gulls was awkward and labored.

Immense numbers of insects were flying about, ranging in size from large dragonflies to small gnats. We observed the gulls eat only flying ants and beetles, all less than three-quarters of an inch in length. When capturing an insect, the gulls opened their mouths to apparently the widest extent, then vigorously snapped the mandibles shut. They captured comparatively few insects from directly in front of them; usually they stretched their necks to the utmost, right or left, to capture their prey. We saw none of the gulls swoop downward to make a capture, but many would fly until almost directly below an insect, abruptly check their flight by flapping their wings and fanning their tail, rise three to eight feet, and snap at their prey. This awkward "climbing" after insects was the most spectacular part of the feeding performance and quite unlike the graceful flight of this species while capturing flying grasshoppers as described by A. C. Bent (1921, *U. S. Natl. Mus. Bull. No. 113:137*).

Only seven of the gulls were juveniles; the others were in adult or intermediate plumage. No Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) were in the flock although many were flying overhead or sitting on the waters of the bay.

Once a fishing boat passed, with several Herring Gulls following it. Immediately about 20 of the Ring-billed Gulls that were nearest the boat began moving slowly and gradually away from the feeding flock. They flew about a third of the distance to the boat, then turned about and hurriedly rejoined the flock.—MILTON B. TRAUTMAN and MARY A. TRAUTMAN, *F. T. Stone Laboratory, Ohio State University, Put-in-Bay, Ohio.*