

Sora rail at sea.—Shortly before 8:00 a.m. on March 25, 1945, a Sora (*Porzana carolina*) flew aboard our ship about 190 miles northeast of Great Abaco Island of the Bahamas. The bird showed no sign of exhaustion and escaped within a few minutes. Wind and sea were unusually calm, and the air temperature at noon was 91° F. This is still further evidence that the Sora flies over long stretches of open water during migration.—WILLIAM C. STARRETT, *Ames, Iowa*, and KEITH L. DIXON, *La Mesa, California*.

A catastrophic decrease in a starling population.—In a recent number of *L'Oiseau* (1944, vol. 14, p. 41), Georges Olivier reported a catastrophic decline in the Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) population in Normandy, France. The species had shown a continuous and rapid increase there in the years 1910 to 1939, chasing all other hole-nesting species from their nesting holes. After the severe winter of 1939–40, Starlings had almost completely disappeared. Only a few were seen in the summers of 1941 and 1942. There were some minor fluctuations in the years 1942 and 1943, but in the spring of 1944 the species was practically absent from the district of Haute-Normandie. Olivier reports (*in litt.*) that in 1945 and the spring of 1946 the species was increasing again but remained scarce in some places where it was abundant before 1940.

Nothing is stated in the notes about probable causes of the precipitous decline. Even though the severe winter of 1939–40 may have been the reason for the original decrease, it would not account for the complete lack of recovery in the subsequent four years. North American bird students should gather accurate census data on local Starling populations in case a similar change of status should occur in some section of the United States. In addition, an attempt should be made to collaborate with studies of animal parasites to determine whether any such sudden decline is due to a parasite or disease.—ERNST MAYR, *The American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, New York 24, New York*.

The Florida form of the Brown-headed Nuthatch in southwestern Georgia.—On February 25, 1943, I collected an apparently mated pair of nuthatches 12 miles north of Bainbridge, Decatur County, Georgia (26 miles north of the Florida line); the birds were in southern pines near the Flint River. They appeared distinctly lighter on the crown and back than specimens of the Brown-headed Nuthatch from more northern parts of Georgia (*Sitta pusilla pusilla*), but corresponded closely with specimens from Florida (*S. p. caniceps*). Accordingly I requested Dr. Alexander Wetmore to identify them. He considers the female typical of *Sitta pusilla caniceps* and the male as intermediate, similar to *caniceps* in color, but nearer *pusilla* in size. Wetmore (1941. *Proc. U.S. Natl. Mus.*, 90:506) points out that the northern form, *S. p. pusilla*, in addition to averaging slightly larger than *caniceps* "has the gray of the back slightly darker, and the brown of the head darker, with the paler edgings on the crown feathers, where present, distinctly darker."

Wetmore states that birds from St. Mary's, in extreme southeastern Georgia, are of the Florida race (*caniceps*); it is possible, then, that the range of this race extends completely across the southern edge of the State. The pair I collected are the only Brown-headed Nuthatches I have seen in the Bainbridge region during approximately one week of observation in each of five winters (February, 1943–December, 1946).—MAX MINOR PEET, *2030 Hill Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan*.