

maxima for *L. thayeri* and falls within the overlap zone between *L. hyperboreus* and *L. argentatus*.

I do not recall specifically seeing any gulls in the field or in collections that match these 2 birds. Despite their resemblance to *L. thayeri* in overall coloration and shading and the fact that first-year Thayer's Gulls exhibit a rather wide range of plumage variation, I think that the larger size and different bill coloration of these 2 Ontario birds preclude the possibility that they are this form. Their soft part colors and general plumage coloration are unlike that of first-year *L. glaucescens*, a species with which they are somewhat comparable in size. I believe that these 2 birds are also hybrids, that *L. hyperboreus* was most probably the lighter parent, and a Herring Gull the darker parent.

Although populations of *L. argentatus* and *L. hyperboreus* have apparently been sympatric for some time in parts of North America and allopatric in western Europe until this century when widespread contact occurred, there is considerable hybridization in the latter area and apparently very little in the former. This may be owing to the opportunity for development of isolating mechanisms in the New World between these 2 species as Ingolfsson (1970) suggested, but also may involve some aspects of the breeding biology. Certainly more study on this whole subject is needed, particularly in western North America where the distribution of gull colonies is not well known and the 4 large gull species, though largely allopatric in breeding ranges (Jehl 1971), show cases of hybridization in the wild and in specimens where overlap occurs.

I thank John Farrand, Jr., for the loan of the specimen from the American Museum of Natural History and Henri Ouellet for the loan of the 2 specimens from the National Museum of Natural Sciences at Ottawa, Ontario, Canada—ROBERT F. ANDRLE, *Buffalo Museum of Science, Humboldt Parkway, Buffalo, New York 14211*. Accepted 1 June 1979.

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**A Paint-billed Crake in Virginia.**—On 15 December 1978, Charles and Kay James observed a strange rail wandering in a suburban area in western Henrico County near Richmond, Virginia, and after a short chase were able to capture it. The bird, which I subsequently identified as a Paint-billed Crake (*Neocrex erythrops*), was alive but obviously not in good health when I first examined it. It died overnight and I preserved the specimen by freeze-drying. Although the wings, tail and nails of the specimen were not worn and therefore showed no indications that the bird had been in captivity, I assumed the occurrence represented an artificial introduction. However, the first United States record for this species (Arnold, *Auk* 95:745–746, 1978) and the unusual occurrences of the Spotted Rail (*Pardirallus maculatus*) (Parkes et al., *Am. Birds* 32:295–299, 1978) prompted me to investigate the bird further. Richard C. Banks and Storrs Olson of the U.S. National Museum confirmed the species identification and Banks tentatively suggested that the specimen represents *N. e. olivascens*, rather than the nominate race, but very limited comparative material is available. The occurrence of *olivascens* is geographically far more probable than *N. e. erythrops* since the latter is found only in a relatively restricted area on the Pacific slope of Peru south of Lima, while the former exists at a wide variety of locations in northern South America (Blake, *Manual of Neotropical Birds*, Univ. Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1977:510–511). The specimen was donated to the collections of the U.S. National Museum (USNM 575802) and Olson believes that the skeleton contained within the dried body may be the only 1 of the genus preserved (other than a partial skeleton; see Arnold 1978).

As pointed out by Arnold (1978) and confirmed by Banks (pers. comm.), there is no importation record for this species and it apparently never occurs in zoos or animal exhibits. We canvassed local residents and pet dealers and contacted local birders through the Richmond Audubon Society chapter's newsletter, but no potential source was located.

*Neocrex erythrops* is known from widely scattered sites east of the Andes in Venezuela, Colombia, eastern Brazil, Paraguay, northwestern Argentina, Bolivia, Surinam and Ecuador (Meyer de Schauensee, *The Species of Birds of South America and their Distribution*, Livingston, Narberth, Pennsylvania, 1966:68–69; Blake 1977; Ripley, *Rails of the World*, David R. Godine, Boston, Massachusetts, 1977:228–229; Meyer de Schauensee and Phelps, *Birds of Venezuela*, Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1978:63). From the northern part of its range, the rail would have to travel more than 3200 km to reach the Richmond area. Because of the curvature of the earth and the position of the continents, this is a shorter distance than the Texas specimen must have traveled. I know of no weather conditions which might have brought the bird to Virginia, although the winter prior to the discovery of the bird was unusually warm. As Arnold (1978) suggests, the importance and credibility of extralimital records of such unusual birds depends upon repeated occurrences. Even though rails are noted for their extralimital occurrences, the recent rash of foreign rail sightings indicates that some unusual phenomenon may be at work in stimulating such wide dispersal. If the present record does represent a natural occurrence, and at this point I have no reason to believe it does not, this constitutes the second specimen for the United States.

I am grateful to Richard Banks and Storrs Olson for their assistance in identifying the specimen and for sharing information regarding the species.—CHARLES R. BLEM, *Dept. Biology, Academic Division, Virginia Commonwealth Univ., Richmond, Virginia 23284. Accepted 14 June 1979.*

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**House Sparrows kleptoparasitize digger wasps.**—Interspecific stealing of food, or kleptoparasitism, is a specialized feeding pattern for a few birds (Arnason and Grant, *Ibis* 120:38–54, 1978; Hatch, *Ibis* 117:357–365, 1975; Meinertzhagen, *Pirates and Predators*, Oliver and Boyd, London, England, 1959; Nelson, *Living Bird* 14:113–155, 1975) and an occasional source of food for many opportunistic species (Brockmann and Barnard, *Anim. Behav.* 27:487–514, 1979). I know of only 1 brief reference to birds stealing prey from digger wasps. Ristich (*Can. Entomol.* 85:374–386, 1953) observed House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) and American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) stealing the katydid prey of great golden digger wasps (*Sphex ichneumoneus*) at a large nesting aggregation on the campus of Cornell University. The birds chased wasps that were carrying prey to their nests, causing them to drop the food, which the birds then retrieved and ate. In this paper I describe observations of House Sparrows systematically stealing prey from great golden digger wasps at a nesting site in Minnesota. I also speculate on the possible origins of this behavior.

**Background.**—The great golden digger wasp is a large (2–3.5 cm), solitary species found throughout the United States. The female digs a burrow in the ground with a terminal chamber which she provisions with food for her offspring. After constructing the burrow she flies from the nesting area to open fields where she hunts any of a number of species of the smaller, locally available katydids (Orthoptera, Tettigoniidae) and occasionally a tree cricket (Gryllidae). After stinging and paralyzing the katydid, the wasp returns to her nest with the prey clasped beneath her. If the prey is small she flies directly to the nest, but if large, the wasp either walks across the ground or climbs trees and launches herself in a descending