CONTINENTAL BIRDLIFE

A JOURNAL OF NORTH AMERICAN FIELD ORNITHOLOGY

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3

JUNE 1979

CONTINENTAL BIRDLIFE

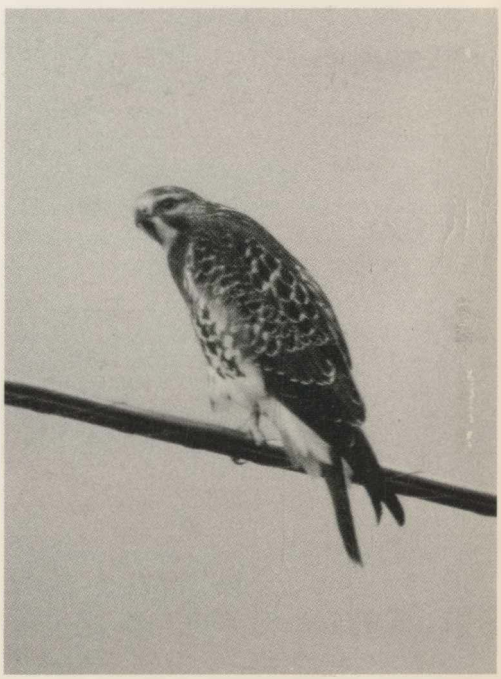
VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3, JUNE 1979

CONTENTS

Snap Judgment 3

This slim bird of prey was photographed somewhere north of the Mexican border. To what species does it belong?

The answer, a discussion of the key points in the identification, and the name of the photographer will appear in the August 1979 issue of *Continental Birdlife*.



CONTINENTAL BIRDLIFE

A Bimonthly Journal of North American Field Ornithology

Subscriptions are $9.00 annually in the United States, $10.50 annually in Canada and elsewhere. All subscriptions are by calendar year. Make checks or money orders payable to CONTINENTAL BIRDLIFE, INC.

Address all communications to:

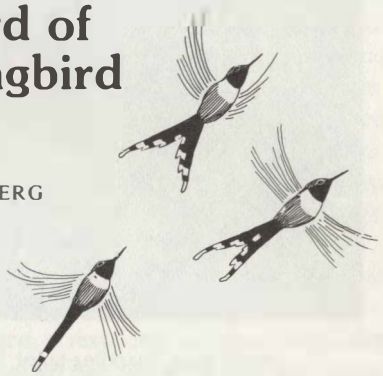
Continental Birdlife
Post Office Box 43294
Tucson
Arizona 85733

Drawings: Sparkling-tailed Hummingbirds on page 57 by Kenneth V. Rosenberg; all others in this issue by Kenn Kaufman.

Cover photograph: This gracefully poised Louisiana Heron *Hydranassa tricolor* was photographed in the Everglades of Florida in December 1970 by David Schaffer.

CONTINENTAL BIRDLIFE
VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3, JUNE 1979

First Documented Record of Sparkling-tailed Hummingbird from Sinaloa, Mexico



KENNETH V. ROSENBERG AND GARY H. ROSENBERG

New distributional data on a spectacular sprite . . . with notes on behavior and habitat

On 4 January 1979, three male Sparkling-tailed Hummingbirds *Tilmatura dupontii* were discovered near the village of La Guayanera along the Durango Highway (Mexico Route 40) in Sinaloa, Mexico. Photographs were obtained, for apparently the first documentation of this species' occurrence in Sinaloa. The *Distributional Check-list of the Birds of Mexico* (Friedmann *et al.* 1950) lists the known range of *T. dupontii* as "... Jalisco, Colima, Michoacan ... Guerrero, Chiapas (common, June-August, ...), Mexico ... Distrito Federal, Morelos, and Veracruz." Our record extends the western sector of this range at least 400-500km to the north, although other recent sight records, to be summarized later, suggest a more continuous distribution in this region. The following account is based upon the authors' field notes taken immediately following this observation.

At approximately 700-800 meters elevation, well within the oak woodland zone, a rocky streambed crossed Route 40 near kilometer-post 238 and dropped down a rather steep barranca to the northwest. The stream bottom was filled in places with lush riparian growth, resembling tropical deciduous forest, with the predominant tree being the gumbo limbo *Bursera simaruba*. The stream had intermittent pools of water on this date, but was not flowing. Above the stream were steep, very dry slopes of oak woodland. The hummingbirds were found in a clearing in the oaks on the steep south-facing slope, where several dead trees and snags rose out of a dense understory of *Acacia* spp., *Rubus* sp., and various vines.

At about 1100 MST we heard an unfamiliar high squeaky song coming from the clearing above us. It was superficially similar to that of Anna's Hummingbird *Calypte anna* but seemed higher-pitched. By scanning exposed twigs with 10X binoculars, we spotted a tiny hummingbird perched near the top of the tallest dead tree. The general appearance of this bird as viewed from the front was similar to that of a male Black-chinned Hummingbird *Archilochus alexandri,* with a blackish throat, and dull but dark green back and flanks separated from the throat by a very white band across the upper breast. Then the bird flew out a short distance, wheeled in mid-air spreading its deeply forked, zebra-striped tail, and thus revealed its true identity as the perfectly named Sparkling-tail.

We spent most of the next two hours attempting to photograph this bird and

Adult male Sparkling-tailed Hummingbird *Tilmatura dupontii* near La Guayanera, Sinaloa, 4 January 1979. Photo by Kenneth V. Rosenberg.

observing its behavior from as close as 25m. In addition to the superficial description above, the following field marks were noted. The bill was very short and straight. Two white bars on the lower back region actually appeared to be tufts of feathers similar to those on the Olive-sided Flycatcher *Nuttallornis borealis;* these were not always visible from a great distance. The tail seemed as long as the rest of the body and head combined. It was usually held tightly closed and appeared black with four white bands, including the white tip (most field guides picture only three bands). When the tail was spread widely, the white appeared as a row of spots along the inside margin of the fork, flashing "on and off" as the tail was opened and closed. Only once did the bird reveal the iridescence of its gorget, which appeared a deep blue.

The bird sang during much of the time we observed it. The song can best be described as a very high, thin, but musical squeaking in a continuous stream, rising and falling slightly and lasting for many seconds at a time. It was vaguely reminiscent of the whisper song of a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *Polioptila caerulea.*

Perhaps because of the mid-day heat (about 25°C) our bird was relatively inactive. It usually sat upright on its exposed perch, with tail held vertically downward. Occasionally it would jerk its tail up and down and sometimes spread it widely. This was usually accompanied by lifting and vibrating the wings. Several times this developed into a "helicopter-like" maneuver, in which the bird made its body horizontal with its tail completely spread, raised itself slightly off the perch, and quickly turned 180 degrees before settling down again. The bird was not seen to feed at all during the time of observation, although it did move occasionally to another perch on a dead twig of an oak at the edge of the clearing about 25m away.

The most thrilling observations came when our bird was joined by a second male and aggression followed. The other bird initially seemed to be attracted to our squeaky imitation of the hummingbird's song. It hovered momentarily above the first bird with its tail spread, and then a chase ensued which took them both high into the sky before one, evidently the intruder, was driven off. This happened several more times, and once the two were joined by yet a third male. The three rose up like twittering, sparkling darts into the blue Mexican sky and vanished.

The other bird species present at this locality indicated a unique pocket of habitat which attracted a mixture of highland and lowland birds as well as some low-density species near the peripheries of their ranges. The most abundant species along the barranca was Berylline Hummingbird *Amazilia beryllina,* with nearly 100 individuals estimated on a 2km hike. No interactions were noted between this species and the Sparkling-tails. A few White-eared Hummingbirds *Hylocharis leucotis* (typical of higher elevations) and Violet-crowned Hummingbirds *Amazilia violiceps* (typical of lower elevations) were also noted. Species which we thought to be below their usual habitat zone included Mountain Trogon *Trogon mexicanus* and Red-headed Tanager *Piranga erythrocephala.* Those thought to be at a higher elevation than usual included West Mexican Chachalaca *Ortalis poliocephala,* Magpie-Jay *Calocitta formosa,* and perhaps Streak-backed Oriole *Icterus sclateri.* In addition, we noted Least Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium minutissimum* and Gray-crowned Woodpecker *Piculus auricularis,* uncommon species not often encountered in this region.

The presence of such a seemingly unusual species combination may have special significance with regard to the discovery of Sparkling-tailed Hummingbirds. W.J. Schaldach (1963) describes, from Colima and Jalisco, a restricted habitat comprised of dry barrancas with permanent water that cut through oak woodland on mountain slopes and join with the tropical deciduous forest zone below. The vegetation is characterized as containing both lowland and montane plant species. The newly discovered location in Sinaloa seems to be a good example of such a situation. Schaldach notes that many of the bird species in these barrancas are characteristic of vegetation zones above and below them, and he stresses the importance of this restricted habitat to several species — incuding the Sparkling-tailed Hummingbird. He later states *(op. cit.,* p. 47) that this species ". . . was found only in watered arroyos at the upper margin of the Tropical Deciduous Forest and in the lower edge of the Oak Woodland . . ."

It seems then that the Sinaloa Sparkling-tails were in suitable habitat, characteristic of where they occur within their range farther south. The aggressive displays between males described above are clearly examples of territorial behavior,

Adult male Sparkling-tailed Hummingbird *Tilmatura dupontii* in profile, showing short bill and long tail; this bird usually perched with tail hanging down vertically. Notice the white spot (half-hidden in shadow) on the lower flanks. This white spot was actually on the rear flank feathers, and depending on the arrangement of the feathers sometimes appeared above the wing (i.e., on lower back) and sometimes below. Photo by Kenneth V. Rosenberg.

Two views of adult male Sparkling-tailed Hummingbirds *Tilmatura dupontii;* although not in the sharpest focus, these are included for their documentary value. At left, two males, one perched and the other hovering with tail fully spread: a territorial chase is about to begin. At right, a bird in the midst of the "helicopter-like" reversal of position described in the text. Photos by Kenneth V. Rosenberg.

and it is highly probable that at least three male Sparkling-tailed Hummingbirds were defending territories at this spot in January 1979. Territoriality is a characteristic behavior of hummingbirds in winter and during migration, when both males and females may defend local food sources. These observations, therefore, should not be considered evidence of breeding, as would the presence of "singing males" of most bird species. However, the possibility must be considered that this discovery represents a true extension of the breeding range of *Tilmatura dupontii*. It is also possible that this species occurs in a narrow belt of suitable habitat along the west slope of the Sierra Madre Occidental north from its previously known range to the Durango Highway, and perhaps farther. This hypothesis is further supported by a number of sight records by competent observers in the region under discussion.

We know of three sight records from the Durango Highway, all involving female-plumaged birds and all from sites quite near that of our record. On 20 October 1973, a single individual was studied by Billy Clow *et al.* near the town of Panuco. This location is within 5km of La Guayanera but slightly lower in elevation (just below oak woodland). Clow was adjacent to a "steep wooded canyon" which appears to have been the same drainage as that described in this report. In early May 1975, Charles McMoran *et al.* identified two female-plumaged birds near Panuco.

Another sighting occurred on 19 November 1978; David E. Wolf kindly sent us a transcript of his notes, from which we have excerpted the following: "Birded the side road to La Petaca (turns off to the right at Potrerillos, about 10km up the Durango Highway from the Villa Blanca Hotel)." [The Villa Blanca is about 5km by road up the highway, i.e. inland, from the site of our observation near La Guayanera; hence the straight-line distance between the point of Wolf's observation and that of ours is probably no more than 10-15km.] "This road winds for several kilometers through cut-over pine and oak hills, mostly used for farming or grazing or in various stages of regeneration. At 4800 feet we stopped at a patch of roadside flowers . . . the area was swarming with hummingbirds. This two acre colony of red sage (*Salvia* sp.) . . . was surrounded by open pines, a few small oaks and roadside thickets. Shortly after we got out of the car, Victor Emanuel glimpsed a tiny buff hummer that he guessed to be a female Sparkling-tailed . . . after several hours I located a single female-plumaged Sparkling-tailed and made the following notes: 'a *very distinct* hummer — extremely

tiny with a short bill, bright buffy underparts with buffy eye-stripe, buffy glow to forehead, green upperparts with white spot on either side of lower back. Seen perched for five minutes at the tip of a *Salvia* flower on the fringe of the flower colony (where there were fewer of the aggressive Berylline). A male Rufous Hummingbird [*Selasphorus rufus*] perched very near it seemed large in comparison.'

"There were at least one hundred hummingbirds feeding around this colony of flowers — mostly Berylline, but also White-eared, Violet-crowned, Magnificent [*Eugenes fulgens*], Rufous, and Calliope [*Stellula calliope*]. It was the only concentration of hummingbirds that we saw in two days on the Durango Highway, and it was the only colony of *Salvia* that I have ever seen. It is hard to think of a flower as colonial, but they literally covered the entire two-acre area and were all in bloom."

This instance provides a contrast to the other Durango Highway records, in that it was at a higher elevation and the Sparkling-tail was found among a concentration of other hummingbirds. Occurrences of hummingbirds outside their normal altitudinal and geographic ranges at superabundant food sources constitute a well-known phenomenon (numerous examples could be cited from certain Arizona localities where large numbers of hummingbird feeders are maintained).

On the coastal slope of Nayarit, there are several recent sight records from the vicinity of San Blas and Tepic. All are from within 7km of the coast and below 500m elevation, and all are for female-plumaged birds (Clow, pers. com.). One location near the village of La Bajada produced two birds in February 1978 (R. Stallcup) and one in January 1979 (R. Behrstock), and we have heard third-hand reports of other sightings there. Although evidently unsubstantiated by photographs or specimens, the concentration of records from this region suggests the existence of a population somewhere midway between the Sierra de Autlan in Jalisco (where the species is regular) and the Durango Highway. Perhaps there is a downslope movement of females or immatures in winter as occurs in some Mexican mountain species.

Taken singly, any of these records of female-plumaged birds may be considered an example of northward vagrancy, a phenomenon reported for many tropical species. However, when considered collectively and in light of the three males photographed in Sinaloa, the possibility of a range extension along the west slope of the Sierra Madre is again suggested. Future observers should look for Sparkling-tailed Hummingbirds elsewhere in Nayarit and southern Sinaloa, wherever watered barrancas occur near the border of oak woodland and tropical deciduous forest.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Billy Clow, Robert Behrstock, Charles McMoran, Rich Stallcup, and David Wolf for discussing their observations with us, and Kenn Kaufman for encouraging us to write this article and for reviewing the manuscript. Thanks also to Janet Witzeman for reading and commenting upon the manuscript.

LITERATURE CITED

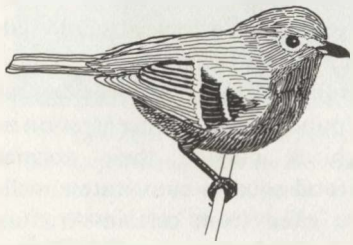
FRIEDMANN, HERBERT, LUDLOW GRISCOM, AND ROBERT T. MOORE. 1950. Distributional check-list of the birds of Mexico. Part I. *Pacific Coast Avifauna* 29:1-202.

SCHALDACH, W.J., JR. 1963. The avifauna of Colima and adjacent Jalisco, Mexico. *Proceedings of the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology* 1(1):1-100.

Authors' address: Dept. of Zoology, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85281

Field Identification of Hutton's Vireo

KENN KAUFMAN



This plain but personable little bird of the western oak woodlands is easily identified by reference to a few key characters

Observers who are enjoying their first encounters with western birds often run into some difficulties in identifying Hutton's Vireo *Vireo huttoni.* This is particularly true during the winter and migration seasons, when the vireo's entire range in the western U.S. and Canada is inundated by large numbers of Ruby-crowned Kinglets *Regulus calendula:* these two species, though unrelated, are remarkably similar in superficial appearance. Both of the standard bird identification guides covering western species (Peterson 1961, Robbins *et al.* 1966) acknowledge the similarity of these two birds; unfortunately, neither book manages to state accurately the differences between the two species, so the observer is left to puzzle these out unaided.

Actually the two species are not at all difficult to distinguish, and experienced western birders will not consider this a problem identification. This article is intended to point out the main identification criteria (and the errors in the field guides), so as to simplify the sorting-out process for newcomers to western birdwatching.

DISTRIBUTION

The breeding range of Hutton's Vireo is adequately indicated in the standard bird guides. Since this species is closely associated with the oak woodland zone, gaps in its range are created by extensive desert or grassland areas. North of Mexico there are three major populations: one ranging from southwestern British Columbia south through California (nominate *V. h. huttoni,* with separate race *V. h. insularis* on Vancouver Island), one from central Arizona and southwestern New Mexico south into northwestern Mexico (*V. h. stephensi*), and one from the Chisos Mts. of western Texas south into northeastern Mexico (*V. h. carolinae).* Other races occur in oaks in the mountains farther south, extending the total range of the species south to Guatemala.

Hutton's Vireo is a permanent resident to the extent that some individuals occur in all parts of the breeding range throughout the year. However, there is a substantial amount of wandering during the nonbreeding seasons. In Arizona, for example, a few may be regularly found wintering along rivers in the Lower Sonoran zone up to 150km from any breeding locality. The species occurs rarely in migration in such nonbreeding areas as El Paso, Texas (Oberholser and Kincaid 1974), and southern Nevada, and one

has been reported from Pershing County in northwest-central Nevada (Ryser 1976).

Because of this tendency to short-distance wandering, it would be worthwhile for observers to watch for Hutton's in areas peripheral to the normal range; stragglers might be expected in such areas as southwestern Utah and southern Texas. However, this species seems to be a poor candidate for any long-distance vagrancy.

DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN HUTTON'S VIREO AND RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET

Behavior: The bird guides describe the Hutton's Vireo as "sluggish" and, by contrast, refer to the hyperactive nature of the Ruby-crowned Kinglet, including the latter's characteristic mannerism of incessantly "twitching" or "flicking" its wings. Robbins implies, and Peterson actually states, that the vireo does not twitch its wings.

It is true that the vireo is the more slow-moving of the two species. However, the difference is not striking except when the two are together, since *huttoni* is a fairly active bird as compared to most other vireo species. And it should be emphasized that HUTTON'S VIREO DOES TWITCH ITS WINGS. I get the impression that the action is not so rapid as in the kinglet, and that the vireo may not raise its wings quite as high; certainly the vireo performs the wing-flick less often under normal circumstances. Yet when it is agitated — as when responding to "spishing" or pygmy-owl calls — a Hutton's may twitch its wings rapidly and repeatedly, in fair duplication of the Ruby-crowned Kinglet's manner. Thus, despite the average differences, it is not advisable to try to distinguish the two species on the basis of behavior alone.

Size and shape: The impression created by a bird's size and shape is difficult to convey in words, and difficult to use in field identification unless one is already familiar with the species involved. However, this aspect of the "gestalt" is useful enough in this case that I will attempt to describe it.

The most direct approach is to describe the shape of Hutton's by comparison to other vireos. Let me begin by asserting that the Solitary *V. solitarius* and Yellow-throated *V. flavifrons* represent my idea of the "average" or "archetypical" vireo shape; they are medium in size and moderately heavy in build, being obviously chunkier and larger-headed than warblers. The Red-eyed Vireo *V. olivaceus* represents a departure from this "average" in that it is more elongated, appearing more slender and not so heavy-headed. Against this background, we could picture Hutton's as representing the opposite extreme from the Red-eyed: it is foreshortened, chunky to the point of being rotund. Its head appears large for the very small size of the bird, and the neck seems to be very short. If one ignores plumage pattern, the shape of the bird recalls White-eyed Vireo *V. griseus* or Black-capped Vireo *V. atricapilla,* but Hutton's appears slightly shorter-tailed and even more "neckless" than either of those two species.

Size and shape are very helpful in distinguishing *V. huttoni* from the Ruby-crowned Kinglet; in fact, observers familiar with both species can generally separate the two on this basis alone, without bothering to look at plumage characters. While Hutton's is small, the kinglet is *tiny*. The Ruby-crown conveys an impression of insignificance (which some Arizonans have summed up by calling it the "non-bird") never received from the vireo. The kinglet's head seems proportionately small, and its body seems to taper rapidly toward the rear. Its inconsequential tail hardly extends beyond the tips of the folded wings (which appear somewhat long for the diminutive size of the body). The kinglet has incredibly thin legs and delicate feet even for the small size of the bird, while those of *V. huttoni* appear more sturdy. I have attempted

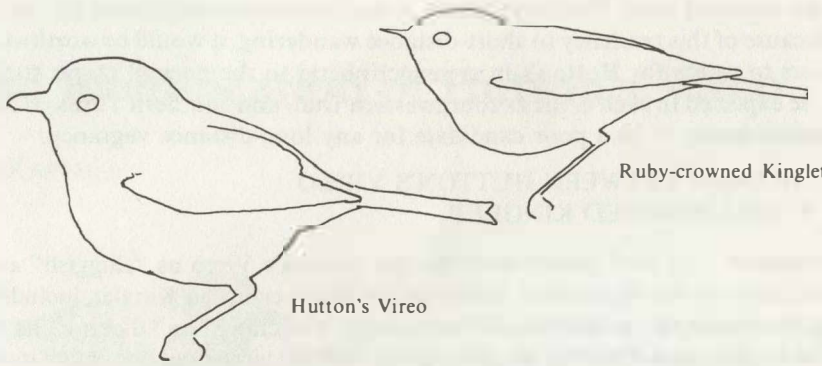


FIGURE 1. Comparative size and shape of Hutton's Vireo and Ruby-crowned Kinglet (approximately 2/3 x life size)

to sketch out the differences in shape between the vireo and kinglet in Figure 1.

Bill: Although *huttoni's* bill is small, it is of the typical thick vireo shape, and thus is quite different from the short flat bill of the Ruby-crowned Kinglet (see Figure 1). The kinglet's bill may appear to be angled slightly above the horizontal (or above the horizontal axis of the head), an impression never received from the vireo. Additionally, the vireo's bill is pale at the base (not always easy to see at a distance), while that of the kinglet is all black.

Eye-ring: Robbins (1966) suggests that *huttoni* differs from the Ruby-crown "by having spectacles rather than an eye ring." However, I have not found this to be a usable field mark. Both the vireo and the kinglet often have a pale area on the lores which connects with the broken eye-ring to create the impression of "spectacles;" this tends to be more conspicuously developed on the vireo, but it is not diagnostic. The shape of the eye-ring itself is worth remembering, however, as it quickly distinguishes Hutton's from other vireos: no other vireo species north of Mexico displays a conspicuous eye-ring which is so conspicuously broken just above the eye.

Wing-pattern: For observers unfamiliar with Hutton's Vireo, the wing-pattern is the most reliable point to check in separating this species from the Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

Both species possess two white wing-bars, and pale (yellowish-white) edgings to the blackish flight feathers. In Hutton's Vireo, the pale feather-edgings extend as far forward as the posterior wing-bar, so that the blackish ground color of the flight feathers is largely obscured and the entire area behind the wing-bars appears only moderately dark. The area *between* the two wing-bars, by contrast, shows less pale edging, and as a result this area catches the eye as the darkest part of the wing — darker than the color of the back. The two wing-bars on *huttoni's* wing are both well developed, and are about equally conspicuous.

On the Ruby-crowned Kinglet's wing, the pale edgings to the flight feathers end abruptly a short distance behind the posterior wing-bar — leaving a broad black bar immediately behind, and parallel to, the white wing-bar; this catches the eye as the darkest area of the wing. The area between the wing-bars is not as dark, and does not contrast with the color of the back. The posterior wing-bar is always conspicuous, but the anterior one usually is not: thus at first glance the kinglet often appears to have only one wing-bar, an impression never gained from Hutton's Vireo. All of these points are indicated in Figure 2.

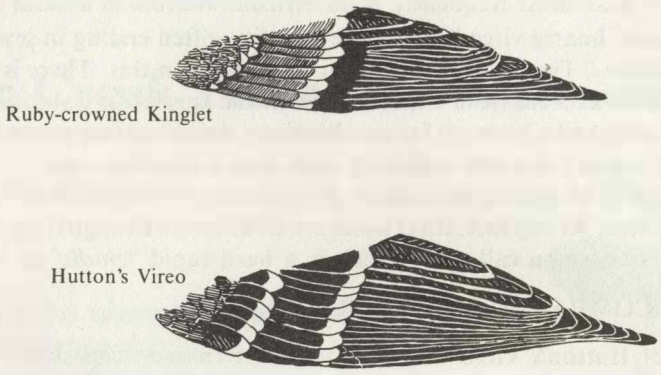


FIGURE 2. Wing-patterns of Hutton's Vireo and Ruby-crowned Kinglet (approximately life size)

Peterson (1961; plate 49) has succeeded in illustrating the wing-patterns of both species rather accurately, although in the field the Ruby-crowned Kinglet will usually display a less conspicuous anterior wing-bar and a less blackish area between the wing-bars than shown. Singer (in Robbins *et al.* 1966) has also depicted the wing of Hutton's Vireo with fair accuracy (p. 247). His illustrations of the wing of the Ruby-crown on the gnatcatcher/kinglet plate (p. 237) are not too bad, although the black bar is not emphasized enough (particularly on the female bird), and the areas between and before the white wing-bars as shown are much too dark. However, on p. 247, adjacent to the Hutton's Vireo drawing, there is an illustration of a "Ruby-crowned Kinglet for comparison," and the wing on this bird is totally wrong: it is shown with very black areas between and before the wing-bars, and no black bar behind them (except for grossly large black primary coverts on the lower edge of the wing). The birder who uses the Robbins guide would do well to take some indelible ink and blot out the kinglet drawing on p. 247 entirely, so as to avoid confusion in the field.

Voice: The song of Hutton's Vireo could be described as the most characterless of all North American vireos'. It is almost always a monotonous series of identical, nasal, hoarse, slurred notes, with all of those in any one series either ascending or descending: "*zuwee . . . zuwee . . . zuwee . . .*" or "*zeeoo . . . zeeoo . . . zeeoo . . .*" with the accent on the higher-pitched note in either case. The song usually sounds half-hearted and does not carry very far, and the hoarse or burry quality of the notes is thus noticeable only at close range (at greater distance the notes sound only nasal or whining). On a very few occasions I have tracked down Hutton's which were using both ascending and descending notes in the same series, thus approximating the song-pattern of some other vireos such as Red-eyed or Solitary. However, in at least one of these cases the bird soon reverted to the typical series of identical notes; and in all cases the song retained the insipid and whining quality characteristic of Hutton's. The song of the Ruby-crowned Kinglet (which need not be described in detail here) is an explosive medley which is much more colorful and three times as loud. Both the vireo and the kinglet sing mainly during the breeding season, but the vireo may be heard singing occasionally at any time of year and the kinglet often delivers mild renditions during late winter and early spring.

Outside of the breeding season it is much more helpful to be aware of the call-notes. The note I hear most frequently from Arizona *huttoni* is a nasal ascending *"cheee,"* with typical hoarse vireo "scold-note" quality, often ending in several rapid notes: *"cheee-dididee."* There are many minor variations on this. There is probably geographic variation as well: from experience with the species in California, Ralph Hoffman (1927), who had a keen ear for vocalizations, described two common calls as "a *tschuk tschuk* uttered in a low inquiring tone, and a low *whit whit*" — elements which do not seem to be among the standard repertoire of the species in Arizona or northwestern Mexico. At any rate, these notes are all different enough from the Ruby-crowned Kinglet's common call-note, which is a hard rapid *"chidit"* or *"chididit."*

HUTTON'S AS COMPARED TO OTHER VIREOS

Confusion of Hutton's Vireo with other western vireo species should not be a major problem. It seems that while other vireos are sometimes misidentified as Hutton's, the reverse rarely occurs.

The very gray Rocky Mountain race of the Solitary Vireo, *V.s. plumbeus,* occasionally misleads visiting eastern birders because it looks so different from the eastern races, but its larger size, obvious "spectacles," and strongly contrasting white throat should quickly separate it from Hutton's. The Gray Vireo *V. vicinior* is most unlikely to be confused with Hutton's; although the *plumbeus* Solitary is sometimes misidentified as the Gray, the genuine Gray Vireo is so utterly distinctive (with its absent-minded facial expression, almost unmarked wings, and expressively flopped tail) that when seen it is almost impossible to mistake for anything else.

Bell's Vireo *V. bellii* can cause identification problems here, partly because it has been misrepresented in some field guides. It can be easily distinguished from Hutton's by its fainter wing-bars (particularly the anterior one), by its paler throat and chest, and especially by its peculiar face-pattern which combines a faint eye-ring with a short superciliary line (the latter is well illustrated in Peterson's (1961) western guide, but rather poorly elsewhere). The illustration of Bell's in *Birds of North America* (Robbins *et al.* 1966) is particularly likely to mislead in the West: not only because the bird is shown with unrealistically bold "spectacles," but also because the bird illustrated appears to be of the (relatively) brightly-colored eastern race; western Bell's are much grayer.

LITERATURE CITED

HOFFMANN, RALPH. 1927. *Birds of the Pacific States.* Boston, Houghton Mifflin.

OBERHOLSER, HARRY C., AND EDGAR B. KINCAID, JR., 1974. *The Bird Life of Texas.* Austin, University of Texas Press.

PETERSON, ROGER TORY. 1961. *A Field Guide to Western Birds.* Boston, Houghton Mifflin.

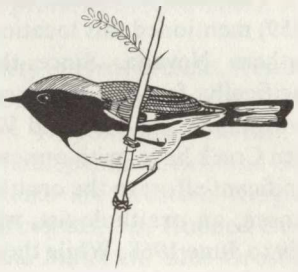
ROBBINS, CHANDLER S., BERTEL BRUUN, AND HERBERT S. ZIM. 1966. *Birds of North America: A Guide to Field Identification.* New York, Golden Press.

RYSER, FRED. 1976. *Check-list of the Birds of Nevada.* Reno, Nevada, private publication.

Localities

Corn Creek, Nevada — A Desert Oasis

M. VINCENT MOWBRAY



Western observers have learned that "lost" migrants, far from their normal routes, often turn up at "oases" in the aridlands. Here is a profile of an oasis that is one of Nevada's finest

Corn Creek, a field station of the Desert National Wildlife Range, is located 6.5km east of U.S. Highway 95 approximately 35km northwest of Las Vegas, Nevada. According to archeologists Corn Creek was used as a camping place by Indians for thousands of years. About 1900 a family of squatters settled there, and in 1916 they sold Corn Creek to a George Richardson from Utah. The Richardson family established a small ranch with a fruit and nut orchard, and constructed a pond at the junction of the flow from the three permanent springs on the property. They remained at Corn Creek until 1936, selling their produce for a living. The new owner ultimately sold Corn Creek to the Federal Government in 1939 for inclusion in the Desert Game Range which, in 1966, became the Desert National Wildlife Range.

Located at an elevation of approximately 900m in the valley between the Sheep Mountains and Spring Mountains, Corn Creek is a 14 hectare oasis surrounded by a large and arid expanse of shad-scale, creosote bush and Joshuatree desert. The nearest similar oases are 25km to the south and 32km to the north. At Corn Creek there are several dwellings with lawns, an assortment of elm, cottonwood, locust, Russian olive and mesquite trees, the remnants of the old fruit and nut orchard and a number of fruiting mulberry trees. About 5½ hectares of the area is used as a pasture. The entire area is irrigated by water from the three springs which now flows through a series of three ponds. The upper and middle ponds are surrounded by willows, phragmytes and cattails while the third pond is still fairly open.

For some years a small number of Desert Bighorn Sheep were kept at Corn Creek for research purposes and for public viewing. Several years ago the research was terminated and the remaining sheep were given to zoos. In 1971 it was determined that the ponds at Corn Creek could provide an appropriate habitat for the Pahrump Killifish *Empetrichthys latos,* an endangered species of fish then found only in the Manse Spring in the Pahrump Valley northwest of Las Vegas. On 21 August 1971, 35 of the fish were released in the upper pond at Corn Creek. The fish have thrived, and at the present time it is estimated that there are more than 1200 fish, which have spread to all three ponds. The Manse Spring subsequently dried up so the killifish at Corn Creek are the principal remnant of this species.

Early ornithological activity in southern Nevada, as reflected by the writings of Van Rossem (1936) and Linsdale (1936 and 1951), centered about locations such as Ash Meadows, Indian Springs, Lake Mead, the Spring Mountains and Hidden Forest in the Sheep Mountains. Despite the fact that the road to Hidden Forest passed close to Corn Creek no observations at Corn Creek are mentioned in the earliest literature. Hardy (1949) provided the first vagrant record at Corn Creek by reporting the sighting of a Common Ground-Dove *Columbina passerina;* Gullion, Pulich and Evenden (1959) mentioned this location briefly while discussing a number of bird records from southern Nevada. Since the Desert National Wildlife Range was established specifically for the preservation of the Desert Bighorn Sheep in their natural environment, the Fish and Wildlife Service personnel who have resided or worked at Corn Creek have, with one exception, generally not had the opportunity to devote any significant effort to the ornithology of the area. The one exception was Dr. Charles G. Hansen, an ornithologist, who resided at Corn Creek during the period December 1959 to June 1968. While there Dr. Hansen did a considerable amount of banding and was able to make numerous observations on the birds of Corn Creek. The vagrants he recorded (some of which were reported in Banks and Hansen 1970) included a Purple Gallinule *Porphyrula martinica* which was killed by a Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii* shortly after arriving; a Black-throated Blue Warbler *Dendroica caerulescens* found in a parked car; and others such as Flammulated Owl *Otus flammeolus,* Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Muscivora forficata,* Brown Thrasher *Toxostoma rufum,* Hooded Warbler *Wilsonia citrina,* Connecticut Warbler *Oporornis agilis,* and Orchard Oriole *Icterus spurius.*

Since 1967 several Las Vegas birders have made frequent trips to Corn Creek and have added over 40 species to the list for the area including a dozen which, at the time, were new to the Nevada state list as well. These observations have, for the most part, been reported in *American Birds.* However, some of our more memorable experiences at Corn Creek are worth retelling:

A Wood Stork *Mycteria americana,* one of the few ever recorded in Nevada, made a remarkable sight as it perched on top of a tall willow in early July.

In the late fall and early winter of 1972 a massive invasion of Corvids moved into the lowlands of the Southwest, and Corn Creek was visited by numbers of Steller's Jays *Cyanocitta stelleri,* Scrub Jays *Aphelocoma coerulescens,* Black-billed Magpies *Pica pica,* Pinyon Jays *Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus,* and Clark's Nutcrackers *Nucifraga columbiana;* Mountain Chickadees *Parus gambeli* and Red-breasted Nuthatches *Sitta canadensis* joined in the invasion and were recorded at Corn Creek also.

The fall of 1974 was the most spectacular season in history for eastern vagrants in some areas of the West, including southern Nevada. During October of that year 21 species of vireos and warblers were recorded at Corn Creek alone; these included Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons,* Black-throated Blue Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler *Dendroica fusca,* Chestnut-sided Warbler *D. pensylvanica,* Blackpoll Warbler *D. striata,* Palm Warbler *D. palmarum,* and Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus.*

Although we might have expected that Nevada's first Cape May Warbler *Dendroica tigrina* would have been an immature arriving in fall, the first state record was actually provided by an adult male that appeared

at Corn Creek in late *July* of 1977.

As of this writing, the most recent addition to the Nevada state list was Mississippi Kite *Ictinia mississippiensis:* on 15 May 1979, *two* individuals visited Corn Creek, and were photographed for documentation.

The Corn Creek bird list presently stands at 280 — not at all bad for an area of 14 hectares — and includes 60 species of water birds, 16 of raptors, 18 of flycatchers, 38 of vireos and warblers, and 47 of fringillids.

Outside the migration season there is not a great variety of birds present. Resident species include Gambel's Quail *Lophortyx gambelii,* Common Gallinule *Gallinula chloropus,* Verdin *Auriparus flaviceps,* Bewick's Wren *Thryomanes bewickii,* Le Conte's Thrasher *Toxostoma lecontei,* Phainopepla *Phainopepla nitens,* and Sage Sparrow *Amphispiza belli.* Among the summer residents are Western Kingbird *Tyrannus verticalis,* Ash-throated Flycatcher *Myiarchus cinerascens,* Hooded Oriole *Icterus cucullatus,* Northern (Bullock's) Oriole *I. galbula bullockii,* Blue Grosbeak *Guiraca caerulea,* Black-throated Sparrow *Amphispiza bilineata,* and Brewer's Sparrow *Spizella breweri.*

Corn Creek is at its most interesting during the migration seasons: April-May and particularly September-October. The species of migrants that stop there regularly are too numerous to list here. The great concentrating power of this oasis is illustrated by the fact that the following species, which are rare in Nevada as a whole, could almost be considered regular at Corn Creek: Hutton's Vireo *Vireo huttoni,* Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia,* Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina,* Northern Waterthrush *Seiurus noveboracensis,* Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus,* Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea,* and Swamp Sparrow *Melospiza georgiana.*

Birders are welcome at Corn Creek (be sure to register). For the best results cover the ponds, orchard, pasture and the surrounding desert, as well as the spring located about 200 meters to the north, several times. When there is fruit on any of the trees, especially the mulberry trees, check them closely as many species present will be feeding there. On a May morning it is not unusual to observe 55 species in less than two hours. Some portions of Corn Creek are posted as "closed" and should not be entered without first obtaining permission from Fish and Wildlife Service personnel.

I wish to thank Bob Yoder, Manager of the Desert National Wildlife Range, and his staff for allowing me access to the records for Corn Creek and for providing related information.

LITERATURE CITED

BANKS, RICHARD C., AND CHARLES G. HANSEN, 1970. Bird records from southern Nevada. *Condor* 72:109-110.

GULLION, GORDON W., WARREN M. PULICH, AND FRED G. EVENDEN, 1959. Notes on the occurrence of birds in southern Nevada. *Condor* 61: 278--297.

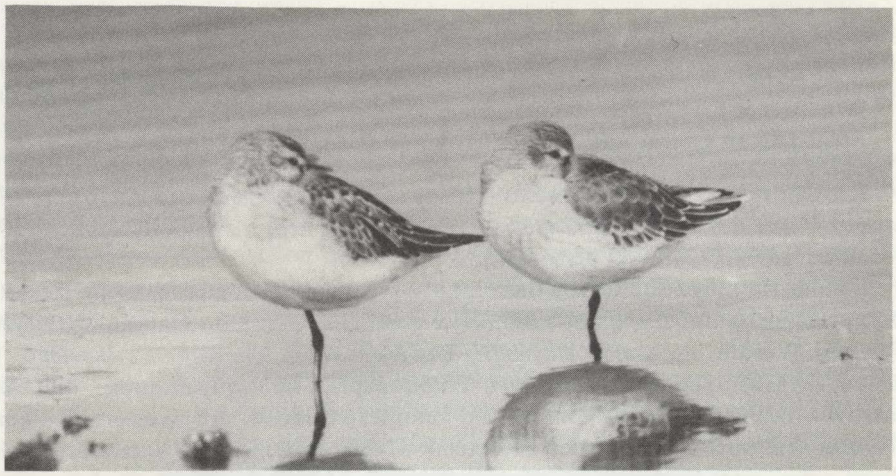
HARDY, ROSS, 1949. Ground Dove and Black-chinned Sparrow in southern Nevada. *Condor* 51:272-273.

LINSDALE, JEAN M., 1936. The Birds of Nevada. *Pacific Coast Avifauna* No. 23, pp. 1-145.

_____. 1951. A list of the birds of Nevada. *Condor* 53:228-249.

VAN ROSSEM, A.J., 1936. Birds of the Charleston Mountains, Nevada. *Pacific Coast Avifauna* No. 24, pp. 1-65.

Author's address: 4316 Fortune Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89107



Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* and Dunlin *C. alpina*. Photographed 1 October 1978 at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Queens Co., New York, by Thomas H. Davis.

When this photograph first appeared on the back cover of the April issue, the problem was stated approximately thus: during an October shorebirding trip, your companion spots a Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* — always a sought-after rarity — standing next to one of the omnipresent Dunlins *C. alpina*. But by the time you look through your friend's telescope, both birds are asleep, with heads tucked under wings. Can you tell which is the Curlew Sandpiper?

Answer to Snap Judgment 2

THOMAS H. DAVIS

The Curlew Sandpiper is standing on the left, as discerned most quickly by structural rather than plumage characters. Although the Curlew's body size is hardly larger than the Dunlin's, it possesses proportionately longer legs, and thus stands 'taller' as this shot illustrates.

In a table below wing, bill, and tarsus measurements are given for Curlew Sandpiper, Dunlin, and Red Knot *Calidris canutus*. Red Knot is included since Curlews often occur in association with this species on the Atlantic coast of North America, especially in August. At this season adult Curlew Sandpipers are often 'lost' among flocks of knots since they may be equivalently colored below and stand as tall, even though knots are larger, 'chunkier' birds with straight bills.

	Sex	Wing	Bill	Tarsus
CURLEW SANDPIPER	M	125-136 (131.0)	33-39 (36.0)	27-32 (29.3)
"	F	125-136 (131.1)	35-42 (39.4)	29-31 (29.7)
DUNLIN (N. ALASKA)	M	116.5-126 (121.8)	30.1-39.8 (33.8)	
"	F	121-129 (125.1)	30.8-41.2 (36.6)	M 25.5-27.5
" (CANADA)	M	115-127 (119.7)	33.0-41.4 (36.3)	F 26.5-27.5
"	F	117.5-128 (121.9)	35.6-42.4 (39.0)	
RED KNOT	M	160-176 (167.9)	29-36 (32.6)	29-33 (31.7)
"	F	167-177 (170.5)	31-37 (34.2)	

(All measurements in millimeters, sample averages in parentheses. Taken from Prater *et al.* 1977, *Guide to the Identification and Ageing of Holarctic Waders.* Tring, Hertfordshire: British Trust for Ornithology.)

Note the differences indicated by these measurements: although the Red Knot is considerably larger in body size (as suggested by wing measurement), it has a slightly shorter bill and only slightly longer tarsus than the Curlew Sandpiper.

Most Curlew Sandpipers occurring on the Atlantic seaboard later than August are juveniles. That the bird in the photograph is a juvenile is indicated by the prominent pale edgings to the wing-coverts. A subtle plumage difference between Curlew Sandpiper and Dunlin showing in my shot is the Curlew's thinner, more sharply defined white eyeline.

Author's address: 9446 - 85 Rd., Woodhaven, NY 11421

News and Notices

DARK NEWS FOR DUSKY SEASIDES — We were alarmed to learn in 1977 that only 30 singing male Dusky Seaside Sparrows *Ammospiza maritima nigrescens* could be found in the very small range of this distinctive form in n.e. Florida; in 1978, only 24 could be located. This year the situation has deteriorated still further: only *twelve* males were singing on territory this spring. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has approved a recovery plan to try to bring the Dusky Seaside back from the brink of extinction, with intensive habitat management and perhaps captive breeding programs.

SPLITTING THE KINGBIRD — The lead article in the April 1979 *Auk* was written from a museum man's viewpoint, but the conclusion it reached will be of exceptional interest to most birders: the author, M.A. Traylor Jr., has gathered evidence to prove rather conclusively that the "Tropical Kingbird" in fact comprises two species. Both of these species occur in the United States. The one which will probably be known as Couch's Kingbird *Tyrannus couchii* is a year-round resident in southern Texas, while the other, probably to retain the name of Tropical Kingbird *T. melancholicus,* is a summer resident in southern Arizona and occurs in small numbers on the California coast in autumn. The two have different vocalizations (on this basis, their specific distinctness has been suspected for some time), but in appearance they are very similar. Thus, a vagrant "Tropical Kingbird" could pose a real identification problem — and both forms are known to be prone to vagrancy.

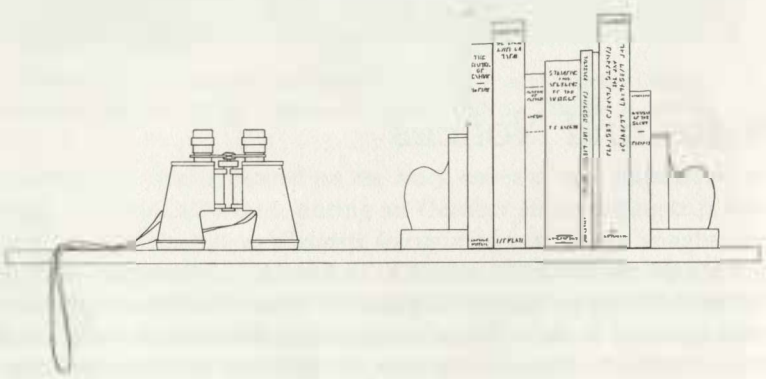
We have an article in preparation to deal with this field problem, and would appreciate hearing from anyone who has innovative field characters (especially behavioral ones) to suggest. In the meantime, it *may* be safe to assume that autumn birds on the California coast are *T. melancholicus* — but any vagrant "Tropicals" elsewhere should be studied with extreme care; ideally they should be photographed in color from several angles, with shots obtained to show the proportions of the bill and shape of the tail.

BUENAS NOTICIAS FROM CHIAPAS — North American birders only recently became aware that a population of the Resplendent Quetzal *Pharomachrus mocinno* still existed in the Lagos de Montebello National Park in Chiapas, Mexico. Still more recent (and, perhaps, even more encouraging) news is that the cloud forest area which the birds inhabit has been set aside as a biological reserve, mainly to protect quetzals and orchids. We visited the area in April 1979, and found Resplendent Quetzals to be present in good numbers; the wardens patrolling the area were polite but firm in warning us not to disturb the birds; local people with whom we spoke seemed proud of the quetzals' protected status. All of this, of course, is indicative of a giant step in the right direction.

Reviews

Edited by

ELAINE COOK



A Field Guide to the Seabirds of Britain and the World. — G.S. Tuck, illustrated by Hermann Heinzel. 1978. London: William Collins, Sons & Co. Ltd. xxviii + 292 pp., 48 color plates, line drawings, maps. £5.25.

Publisher's address:
William Collins, Sons & Co. Ltd.
14 St. James's Place
London SW1A 1PS England

We need a good identification guide to the seabirds of the world. Most field ornithologists, I'm sure, would agree. There are several reasons why (despite widespread demand) such a work has not been forthcoming. One is that seabird taxonomy is in an unsettled state; some forms are still practically unknown, and there is much disagreement as to which allopatric forms represent full species. Another reason is that important information on seabirds has been published in a number of different languages. Yet another reason — perhaps the most telling one — is that matters of flight action and silhouette are often crucial in identifying seabirds; these points can be learned only through field experience, which can be gained only through a great deal of expensive ocean travel.

That is the crux of the problem: it is not enough for an author and illustrator to simply decide to produce a seabird field guide; good intentions alone will not pull it off. And this book proves it.

A Field Guide to the Seabirds of Britain and the World covers, in brief fashion, the penguins, albatrosses, petrels and shearwaters, storm-petrels, diving-petrels,

tropicbirds, pelicans, gannets and boobies, cormorants, frigatebirds, phalaropes, sheathbills, jaegers and skuas, gulls and terns, skimmers, and alcids. The author adopted an "all-or-nothing" policy as regards bird families; that is, since a couple of pelican species are to be found regularly out at sea, all pelican species are included in the book. This may avoid a confusing incompleteness but it also necessarily takes in far too many complex identification problems for a book of less than 300 pages. We would have been better served by a volume of this size treating just the Procellariiformes, perhaps, or just the gulls.

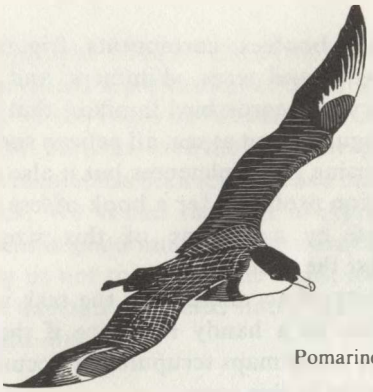
Despite the basic impossibility of accomplishing the task within the available space, we might yet embrace this as a handy reference if the illustrations were excellent, the text illuminating, the range maps scrupulously accurate. Unfortunately, none of these claims could be made in this case.

The illustrations are by Hermann Heinzel, a European artist whose past work has shown some promise. This promise seems not to have been fulfilled in the present volume. Many species among the families covered are — need I say it? — *difficult to identify;* illustrations of them, to be useful, should seize upon and faithfully portray every possible detail of silhouette and plumage pattern. The plates in this book do not begin to approach this ideal. They must have been done in far too much haste. There are occasional flashes of excellence (again indicating Heinzel's potential), but taken as a whole the illustrations are extremely disappointing.

I looked critically at the illustrations of all of the included species with which I am familiar: almost none seems to capture the "jizz" or general impression of the bird, and many are inaccurate in plumage details or grossly out of proportion. Several of the gulls are depicted with bills that are far too thick; some of the shearwaters on plates 8 and 9 are given double-length necks; the differences in silhouette among the *Sterna* terns on plate 42 are not given enough emphasis, and the useful underwing patterns of these birds are not pictured at all. A labelling error (probably not the artist's fault) on plate 36 has bird no. 3c masquerading as an immature Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia,* although it was clearly intended to be an immature Franklin's *L. pipixcan* (despite the fact that the tail-pattern is shown inaccurately!). Perhaps what disturbed me most was the eerie feeling that I had seen some of the illustrations before. The immature Short-tailed Albatross *Diomedea albatrus* (plate 3, figure 1b) and the flying adult Ross' Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (plate 39, figure 2d) are both uncannily similar to earlier and better paintings of the same birds by Don Eckelberry (in Pough 1957, *Audubon Western Bird Guide,* Doubleday & Co., Garden City, N.Y.; and in Pough 1951, *Audubon Water Bird Guide,* ibid.; respectively).

The text is equally disappointing. To begin with, its coverage is quite incomplete. Despite the stated intention to deal with all field-recognizable subspecies, some obvious ones are omitted. No mention is made of the fact that the Snow Petrel *Pagodroma nivea* has a localized large, heavy-billed form, *P.n. confusa,* which might conceivably prove to be a distinct species (see references in Watson 1975, *Birds of the Antarctic and Sub-Antarctic,* American Geophysical Union, Washington, D.C.). Another case closer to home which this book fails to mention involves Xantus' Murrelet *Endomychura hypoleuca* and its two very well-marked races, *E.h. hypoleuca* and *E.h. scrippsi;* again, there is a chance that these two might be specifically distinct. The treatment of the skuas *Catharacta* here, with no mention of the highly distinctive Chilean Skua *C. chilensis,* borders on the ridiculous.

The English nomenclature adopted here is sometimes more curious than the taxonomy. You will not find the name "Olivaceous Cormorant" nor the alternative



Pomarine Jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus*

"Neotropic Cormorant" listed anywhere in the book (not even in the index!); instead, *Phalacrocorax olivaceus* is treated to the name of "Bigua Cormorant" — not the preferred name, as far as I know, in any part of the bird's range. The species *Larus belcheri,* known to its friends as the Band-tailed or Belcher's gull, is called "Simeon Gull" in this book (which, incidentally, provides no separate description for the Atlantic form, which may well be a different species). No source is given for the taxonomy and nomenclature followed.

The comments on field identification in the text are probably best ignored. The text tells us, for example (p. 111), that Common and Arctic terns (*Sterna hirundo, S. paradisaea*) are "almost impossible to distinguish at sea" — which will be news to those experienced observers who do the almost-impossible on every pelagic trip. Immature Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers (*Stercorarius pomarinus, S. parasiticus*) are matter-of-factly stated to be indistinguishable at sea. Most of the points offered on storm-petrel identification are worthless for field use.

The range maps provided are tiny (with ten world-maps to the page), hence errors have to be major to be noticeable. Here are a few of the major errors that I noticed. The maps do not show Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes,* Buller's (New Zealand) Shearwater *P. bulleri,* or Short-tailed Shearwater *P. tenuirostris* ranging anywhere near the Pacific coast of North America. Audubon's Shearwater *P. lherminieri* is not shown occurring off the Pacific coast of southern Mexico, although it has recently proven to be regular there. The Northern Gannet *Sula bassana* is not indicated to occur in the Gulf of Mexico (or even as far south as Florida), but the Brown Booby *S. leucogaster* is shown as *breeding* all along the Gulf coast of the United States! Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* is shown wintering to halfway down the west coast of South America (it is accidental even as far south as Panama); the Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* is not mapped as occurring in the New World at all, but the Little Gull *L. minutus* is indicated to have a Nearctic breeding range occupying the entire Great Lakes region. In all of these cases the correct information should have been easily obtainable, and I shudder to think what errors may lurk in the range maps for species and geographic areas which are less well known.

Since I hate to write a review which is 100% negative, I should mention that the 25-page section on the seabirds of the British Isles, written by John Parslow, seems to be very well-done and interesting. However, I doubt that this in itself will be considered worth the price of the whole book.

To return to my original premise: we need a good identification guide to the seabirds of the world. Unfortunately, I doubt that we will see one any time soon. The ornithologists who really do know something about seabirds (and there are several)

will also realize how complex the problem is, how much work would be involved in producing such a guide; no doubt most of them will feel (and rightly so) that their time is better spent on their own research. For the time being, field observers who go to sea will have to struggle along on information gleaned from a great variety of sources. The field guide reviewed here would be best left at home; under field conditions, it would probably prove to be much more confusing than helpful. — *K.K.*

A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela — Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee and William H. Phelps, Jr. Notes accompanying plates by Guy Tudor. Illustrations by Guy Tudor, H. Wayne Trimm, John Gwynne, Kathleen D. Phelps, and Michel Kleinbaum. 1978. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. xxii plus 424 pages, 40 color and 13 halftone plates, line drawings, map. Hardbound $50,00, paperbound $19.95.

Publisher's address:
Princeton University Press
41 William St.
Princeton, NJ 08540

During the early 1970's the birdwatcher going to the Bird Continent carried only Meyer de Schauensee's *Guide to the Birds of South America* (since it was the only work available), used its few illustrations and its terse descriptions ("Similar to number 44, only browner") as well as could be expected, and let most of the nondescript birds go unidentified. The arrival of this new guide is certain to change that situation. Although the book covers only Venezuelan birds, the species that occur within Venezuela's boundaries make up more than 40% of all those known from the entire continent; and this book covers these species so well that it will be useful as supplementary material in practically any area between Panama and Tierra del Fuego.

A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela is another fine feather for the cap of its senior author, R. Meyer de Schauensee, who (through his several books) has probably done more than any other person to open up South America for the amateur birdwatcher. William H. Phelps, Jr., is also to be congratulated; it must be remembered that he and his father personally discovered much of what is known of the Venezuelan avifauna. But inevitably, many birders will view this volume as Guy Tudor's masterpiece: because it is largely the quality of Tudor's work which makes this book so far superior to any previous bird guide for the Neotropics.

Those readers who were not familiar with the name of Guy Tudor previously are in for a shock when they open this volume. Thirty-seven of the 53 plates are by Tudor, and they are incredibly well-done; as field-guide plates go, they can be compared only to R.T. Peterson's recent work or to the classic plates by Eckelberry in Pough's trio of bird guides. Unlike some other illustrators, who have their forte in one particular group of birds, Tudor seems equally at home with everything from ibises to hummingbirds, from flying eagles to flycatchers. His treatment of plumage (with sharply defined remiges and rectrices, and perfectly textured body feathering) is perhaps the most realistic we've seen, and he handles the facial expressions of birds — a very difficult point to capture — with nearly as much sensitivity as George M. Sutton.

It appears that Tudor has purposely tackled the most difficult groups himself, i.e. those for which identification may rest partly upon shape (birds of prey in flight) or upon subtleties of dull plumage color (flycatchers, antbirds, etc.). The other plates (nine by Trimm, five by Gwynne, two by Mrs. Phelps) deal mainly with more

distinctive families, and they are quite good in their own right. Excellent pen-and-ink drawings by Michel Kleinbaum are scattered through the text, illustrating more than 80 additional species, mostly waterbirds.

The other part of Guy Tudor's contribution is equally significant: he wrote the facing-page commentary for all of the plates. These notes are often more direct and useful than the relatively few comments on identification in the text proper, and they are marvels of concise presentation of criteria for field determinations: clearly the work of a person who has been there, who has dealt with these problems in the field. — *E.C., K.K.*

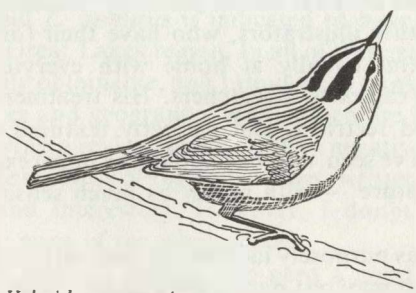
The Warblers of America (Second Edition) — Ludlow Griscom, Alexander Sprunt, Jr., and other ornithologists of note. Revised and updated by Edgar M. Reilly, Jr. Illustrated by John Henry Dick. 1979. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc. xix + 302 pp., 35 color plates, line drawings, maps. $19.95.

Publisher's address:
Doubleday & Company, Inc.
501 Franklin Avenue
Garden City, NY 11530

The first-edition *The Warblers of America* (1957) — with its authoritative text edited by Griscom and Sprunt, and its fine illustrations by J.H. Dick — was an excellent book; it could have been termed a mini-classic. This "revised and updated" version is very poor. These two statements may sound potentially contradictory, so they require some explanation.

We do not want to sound too critical of any of the persons involved: no doubt there were good intentions all around. But the approach adopted for this edition was most unfortunate. Perhaps because of a desire to retain as much as possible from the first edition, the revision was carried out in a half-hearted way, with many of the new comments placed in brackets and sandwiched into the original text. The effect is choppy and erratic, and the resulting product is a mishmash of new and archaic information; it certainly cannot be relied upon as an up-to-date reference work on the Parulidae.

A few examples will serve to illustrate the unreliable and incomplete nature of this revised edition. The Ground-Chat *Geothlypis poliocephala* is still blithely stated to be resident in southern Texas, even though there has hardly been a valid record there in decades. There is no mention of the fascinating recent history of Kirtland's Warbler



Worm-eating Warbler *Helmitheros vermivorus*

Dendroica kirtlandii and its man-assisted struggle against cowbird parasitism, nor of the occurrences of the Rufous-capped Warbler *Basileuterus rufifrons* in the southwestern U.S. The "lumping" of the Myrtle and Audubon's subspecies groups of the Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* has been dealt with by simply dropping the account of Audubon's (except for the fine-print technical data at the end of the species chapter); the original Myrtle account is left to fill in for the entire species, thus managing to imply that wintering Yellow-rumpeds are common only in the southeastern sector of the continent. The Prairie Warbler *D. discolor* chapter says nothing of Val Nolan's exhaustive research on this species. No mention is made of the occurrences of "eastern vagrant" warblers in the West, despite the spectacular dimensions that this phenomenon has achieved recently in terms of number of individuals detected, number of birder-hours spent looking for them, and number of theories proposed to account for their appearances.

In an introductory chapter on classification in the first edition, Ludlow Griscom stated that "For the purposes of this volume . . . the classification and names of the new A.O.U. Check-list are followed throughout." That statement appears unaltered (on p. 10) in this revised edition — however, A.O.U. taxonomy is *not* followed here; rather (as stated on p. xi), this edition follows the order and names proposed by Lowery and Monroe in the Peters *Birds of the World* checklist. This arrangement will be unfamiliar to the majority of readers. To compound the confusion, Griscom's "Suggested Reclassification of the Warbler Genera" is faithfully reprinted (pp. 289-290) from the first edition, without even a footnote to point out that most of Griscom's proposed changes in this case are not accepted by taxonomists working today!

Many other examples could be cited to show how clumsily this revision was handled. In accordance with the new taxonomy the Painted Redstart is placed in the genus *Myioborus,* leaving *Setophaga* as a monotypic genus containing only the American Redstart *S. ruticilla;* yet a footnote on p. 139 still refers to the Painted as one of "the two *Setophaga,*" thus distinct from "the tropical Redstarts in the genus *Myioborus*." Skutch's fine "Introduction to the Warbler Family" has obviously been rewritten — it cites papers published as recently as 1974 — but it is not *stated* to have been rewritten; a footnote matter-of-factly informs us that it was reprinted from an original publication in 1954. The "Preface to the Revised Edition" contains a garbled account of what has happened to the taxonomy of the genus *Parula.* And so on.

A few positive things may be said about this new edition. The chapters on warblers of the West Indies and of Central America have been rewritten by their original authors (James Bond and Alexander Skutch, respectively) and thus are informative and up-to-date. The two chapters that attempt to interpret warbler songs in words (one by Griscom and one by W.W.H. Gunn and D.J. Borror), reprinted unaltered, are still interesting. Many of the plates by J.H. Dick are very attractive (although — despite two decades of advancement in color printing technology — the reproduction of these is no better than it was in the first edition). Some of the short essays by Sprunt, Griscom, and others, while perhaps not strictly applicable to the present-day situation, are still fine bits of nature writing.

All in all, however, the net result of revision has been to turn this volume from a gold mine into a mine-field, a trap for the unwary. Readers who dip into this volume for facts will have no way of knowing whether they are getting current, out-of-date, or completely incorrect information. For this reason, we can recommend this book only as first-rate evidence of how difficult it is for an outsider to "revise and update" what was once a good bird book. — *K.K., E.C.*

Recent Literature

The general aims and potential uses of this column were discussed at some length in the preceding issue. In response to some queries received, we must regretfully point out that we are not in a position to supply copies of any of the papers cited here. For ideas on how to obtain these (or any other) scientific papers, see the April 1979 issue of *Continental Birdlife* or talk to any professional librarian.

IDENTIFICATION AND RELATED TOPICS

Appleton, G.F., and C.D.T. Minton. 1978. **The Primary moult of the Lapwing.** *Bird Study* 25(4): 253-256.

Bradley, Richard Alan. 1977. **Geographic variation in the song of Belding's Savannah Sparrow *(Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi).*** *Bull. Fla. State Mus., Biol. Sci.* 22(2); 57-100.

Cudworth, John. 1979. **Desert Warbler in Humberside.** *Br. Birds* 72(3): 123-124.
— With detailed description of *Sylvia nana.*

Grant, P.J. 1979. **Field identification of west Palearctic gulls. Part 2. Common, Mediterranean, Ring-billed, Laughing and Franklin's Gulls.** *Br. Birds* 72(4): 142-182.
— Highly recommended.

Harris, M.P., C. Morley, and G.H. Green. 1978. **Hybridization of Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls in Britain.** *Bird Study* 25(3): 161-166.
— With two black-and-white photos.

Helleiner, Christopher W. 1979. **Xanthochroism in the Evening Grosbeak.** *Can. Field-Nat.* 93(1): 66-67.

Kent, P.W. 1979. **Siberian Thrush in Hampshire.** *Br. Birds* 72(3): 121-122.
— With description of *Zoothera sibirica* (a potential stray to Alaska).

Kitson, Alan R. 1979. **Identification of Olive-backed Pipit, Blyth's Pipit and Pallas's Reed Bunting.** *Br. Birds* 72(3): 94-100.
— *Anthus hodgsoni, A. godlewskii,* and *Emberiza pallasi.* First and last species already recorded in Alaska; second is possible there.

Kitson, Alan R. 1979. **Separation of adult pale-phase Arctic and Long-tailed Skuas.** *Br. Birds* 72(3): 120-121.
— Parasitic and Long-tailed Jaegers. Comment on the dark lower belly of the Long-tailed.

Kramer, Howard G., and Nicholas S. Thompson. 1979. **Geographic variation in the bell calls of the Blue Jay *(Cyanocitta cristata.)*** *Auk* 96(2): 423-425.
— From nine sites within 50km of Worcester, Mass.

Lago, Paul K. 1979. **Notes on wing length and sex ratio in Evening Grosbeaks.** *Inland Bird Banding* 51(1): 11-13.

Lowe, A.R. 1979. **Siberian Rubythroat: new to Britian and Ireland.** *Br. Birds* 72(3): 89-94.
— Two black-and-white photographs; description. (This is *Luscinia calliope,* which strays to Alaska.)

Monaghan, P., and N. Duncan. 1979. **Plumage variation of known-age Herring Gulls.** *Br. Birds* 72(3): 100-103.
— Three banded individuals known to be four years old had plumage characters typical of 3-, 4- and 5-year olds. A valuable cautionary tale.

Rauste, Visa, and Vesa Salonen. 1978. **Mongoliankirvinen *Anthus godlewskii* tavattu Suomessa. *[Anthus godlewskii* recorded in Finland.]** *Ornis Fenn.* 55(2): 84-85.
— With black-and-white photograph of Blyth's Pipit. Paper in Finnish, with English summary.

Scott, R.E. 1979. **Unusual Yellow-browed Warbler in Sussex.** *Br. Birds* 72(3): 124-125.
— With comments on racial characters; detailed description of *Phylloscopus inornatus* (a potential stray to Alaska).

Wassink, A. 1978. **Some additional field characters of the Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis*.** *Ardea* 66(3): 123-124.

Wilkinson, Peter J. 1979. **Siberian Thrush in Norfolk.** *Br. Birds* 72(3): 122-123.
— With description of *Zoothera sibirica*.

TAXONOMY AND NEW FORMS

Baker, Allan J., and Abdul Moeed. 1979. **Evolution in the introduced New Zealand populations of the common myna, *Acridotheres tristis* (Aves: Sturnidae).** *Can. J. Zool.* 57(3): 570-584.

Browning, M. Ralph. 1978. **An Evaluation of the new species and subspecies proposed in Oberholser's *Bird Life of Texas*.** *Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash.* 91(1): 85-122.
— Oberholser described a new genus and species of hummingbird, *Phasmornis mystica*, and 36 other new subspecies. Only three of the new subspecies are, in the author's judgment, taxonomically distinct.

Grant, P.R. 1978. **Recent evolution of *Zosterops lateralis* on Norfolk Island, Australia.** *Can. J. Zool.* 56(7): 1624-1626.

Schodde, Richard, and I.J. Mason. 1979. **Revision of the Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* (Rafinesque) in Australia, with description of a new subspecies.** *Emu* 79(2): 49-53.

Short, Lester L., and Kenneth C. Parkes. 1979. **The Status of *Agelaius forbesi* Sclater.** *Auk* 96(1): 179-183.
— This Brazilian blackbird, long known from only two specimens, was once theorized to be merely a hybrid. Its true status is here explained by two of our leading taxonomists. A fascinating story.

Stevenson, Henry M. 1978. **The Populations of Boat-tailed Grackles in the southeastern United States.** *Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash.* 91(1): 27-51.
— Discusses four subspecies — includes a description of the new *Q. m. alabamensis*, a pale-eyed Gulf Coast race.

RARA AVES

Boeke, Jef D. 1978. **A Food source of the Marvellous Spatuletail *Loddigesia mirabilis*.** *Ibis* 120(4): 551.

Nechaev, V.A. 1978. **[A Contribution to the biology and behavior of *Tringa guttifer* on the Sakhalin Island.]** *Zool. Zh.* 57(5): 727-737.
— In Russian, with English summary. Nordmann's (Spotted) Greenshank.

van Riper, Charles, III, and J. Michael Scott. 1979. **Observations on distribution, diet, and breeding of the Hawaiian Thrush.** *Condor* 81(1): 65-71.

DISTRIBUTION — NORTH AMERICA

Campbell, R. Wayne, Harry R. Carter, and Spencer G. Sealy. 1979. **Nesting of Horned Puffins in British Columbia.** *Can. Field-Nat.* 93(1): 84-86.
— Southward range extension.

Dekker, Dick, Robert Lister, Terry W. Thormin, D.V. Weseloh and Linda M. Weseloh. 1979. **Black-necked Stilts nesting near Edmonton, Alberta.** *Can. Field-Nat.* 93(1): 68-69.
— First authenticated breeding record for Canada.

Fitzner, R.E., D.F. Martin, and R.E. Frieze. 1979. **First breeding record for the Great Egret *(Casmerodius albus)* in Washington.** *Murrelet* 60(1): 33-34.

Frisch, T., and W.C. Morgan. 1979. **Ivory Gull colonies in southeastern Ellesmere island, Arctic Canada.** *Can. Field-nat.* 93(2): 173-174.
— Discovery of five new colonies in the summer of 1977.

Mosher, James A., Clayton M. White, Joseph R. Murphy, and M. Alan Jenkins. 1978. **Raptors of the Uinta National Forest, Utah.** *Great Basin Nat.* 38(4): 438-446.

Richardson, W. John. 1979. **Southeastward shorebird migration over Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in autumn: a radar study.** *Can. J. Zool.* 57(1): 107-124.

Stelfox, Harry A., and Gregg J. Brewster. 1979. **Colonial-nesting Herring Gulls and Common Terns in northeastern Saskatchewan.** *Can Field-Nat.* 93(2): 132-138.

Stepney, Philip H.R. 1979. **Brewer's Blackbird breeding in the Northwest Territories.** *Can. Field-Nat.* 93(1): 76-77.
— A considerable northward range expansion.

DISTRIBUTION — OTHER AREAS

Atkinson, N.K., M. Davies and A.J. Prater. 1978. **The Winter distribution of Purple Sandpipers in Britain.** *Bird Study* 25(4): 223-228.

Bainbridge, Ian P., and C.D.T. Minton. 1978. **The Migration and mortality of the Curlew in Britain and Ireland.** *Bird Study* 25(1): 39-50. — (Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata.)*

Branson, N.J.B.A., E.D. Ponting, and C.D.T. Minton. 1978. **Turnstone migrations in Britain and Europe.** *Bird Study* 25(3): 181-187.

Brothers, N.P. 1979. **Further notes on the birds of Maatsuyker Island, Tasmania.** *Emu* 79(2): 89-91.

Bull, John. 1978. **Palearctic waders and larids in the southern Caribbean.** *Ardea* 66(3): 121-123.
— First records of Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus phaeopus,* Greenshank *Tringa nebularia,* and Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* for the area.

Cumming, Ian G. 1979. **Lapland Buntings breeding in Scotland.** *Br. Birds* 72(2): 53-59.
— First breeding record of Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus* for Scotland, with a discussion of other recent colonizers.

Hurlbert, Stuart H., and James O. Keith. 1979. **Distribution and spatial patterning of flamingos in the Andean altiplano.** *Auk* 96(2): 328-342.
— Mostly statistical analysis of spatial patterning, but includes some solid data on distribution and some good references.

Leck, Charles F. 1979. **Avian extinctions in an isolated tropical wet-forest preserve, Ecuador.** *Auk* 96(2): 343-352.
— Rio Palenque, Ecuador; includes an annotated list of species. (The main message here of course, is conservation-oriented; tropical forest *must* be preserved in large blocks, since small reserves cannot support a high species diversity.)

Meeth, P., and K. Meeth. 1978. **Note on birds seen in the estuary of the Rio Magdalena, Barranquilla, Colombia.** *Ardea* 66(3): 118-120.

Meeth, P., and K. Meeth. 1978. **Zone-tailed Hawks *Buteo albonotatus* in Colombia.** *Ardea* 66(3): 121. — Sightings; one pair; near Barranquilla; not a first record.

Osborne, David R., and Steven R. Beissinger. 1979. **The Paint-billed Crake in Guyana.** *Auk* 96(2): 425.

Prater, A.J., and M. Davies. 1978. **Wintering Sanderlings in Britain.** *Bird Study* 25(1): 33-38.

ECOLOGY AND BEHAVIOR (LIFE HISTORY INFORMATION)

Ade, Brian. 1979. **Some observations on the breeding of Crowned Plovers (1977).** *Bokmakierie* 31(1): 9-16.

Baptista, Luis F., and Margaret Matsui. 1979. **The Source of the dive-noise of the Anna's Hummingbird.** *Condor* 81(1): 87-89.
— Vocal noise, not produced by outer rectrices.

Bayer, Range. 1979. **Bald Eagle-Great Blue Heron interactions.** *Murrelet* 60(1): 31-33.

Black, H.L., G. Howard, and R. Stjernstedt. 1979. **Observations on the feeding behavior of the Bat Hawk *(Macheiramphus alcinus).*** *Biotropica* 11(1): 18-21.

Burtt, Edward H., Jr., and Jack P. Hailman. 1978. **Head-scratching among North American Wood-Warblers *(Parulidae).*** *Ibis* 120(2): 153-170.

Cruz, Alexander. 1977. **Ecology and behavior of the Jamaican Woodpecker.** *Bull. Fla. State Mus., Biol. Sci.* 22(4): 149-204.

Dick, J.A., and M.B. Fenton. 1979. **Tool-using by a Black Eagle?** *Bokmakierie* 31(1):17.
— An adult apparently attempting to drop sticks on an observer near the nest; in Rhodesia.

Elliot, R.D., and R.I.G. Morrison. 1979. **The Incubation period of the Yellow Rail.** *Auk* 96(2): 422-423.
— Plus or minus 18 days.

Ellis, David H., and Wayne H. Whaley. 1979. **Two winter breeding records for the Harris' Hawk.** *Auk* 96(2): 413.

Gass, Clifton Lee. 1979. **Territory regulation, tenure, and migration in Rufous Hummingbirds.** *Can. J. Zool.* 57(4): 914-923.

Henny, Charles J., and T. Earl Kaiser. 1979. **Organochlorine and mercury residues in Swainson's Hawk eggs from the Pacific Northwest.** *Murrelet* 60(1): 2-5.

Higgins, M.L. 1979. **Intensity of seed predation on *Brosimum utile* by Mealy Parrots *(Amazona farinosa).*** *Biotropica* 11(1): 80.

Lassey, P.A., and D.I.M. Wallace. 1979. **Habitat preference of migrant Dusky Warbler.** *Br. Birds* 72(2): 82.

Lein, M. Ross, and G.A. Webber. 1979. **Habitat selection by wintering Snowy Owls *(Nyctea scandiaca).*** *Can. Field-Nat.* 93(2): 176-178.

Miller, Edward H. 1979. **Functions of display flights by males of the Least Sandpiper, *Calidris minutilla* (Vieill.), on Sable Island, Nova Scotia.** *Can. J. Zool.* 57(4): 876-893.

Nazarov, Yu. N., M.E. Kachalova, and V.A. Sharmankin. 1978. **The Schrenk's Warbler *(Acrocephalus bistrigiceps)* in the Far East Marine Territory.** *Zool. Zh.* 57(6): 941-944. — In Russian, English summary. Discusses breeding density and timing; also food habits.

Prevost, Yves. 1979. **Osprey-Bald Eagle interactions at a common foraging site.** *Auk* 96(2): 413-414.

Schwan, Tom G., and Nance Hikes. 1979. **Fiscal Shrike predation on the Bat *Pipistrellus kuhli* in Kenya.** *Biotropica* 11(1): 21.

Sullivan, M.G. 1979. **Blue Grouse brood hen — Black Bear confrontation.** *Can. Field-Nat.* 93(2): 200.

Summers, K.R., and R.H. Drent. 1979. **Breeding biology and twinning experiments of Rhinoceros Auklets on Cleland Island, British Columbia.** *Murrelet* 60(1): 16-22.

Sutherland, John B., and Ronald L. Crawford. 1979. **Gray Jay feeding on slime mold.** *Murrelet* 60(1): 28.

Walter, Hartmut. 1979. **Eleanora's Falcon.** *Nat. Hist.* 88(4): 85-93. — Popular article, with color photographs.

MISCELLANEOUS

Grimm, Robert J. 1979. **Special report: Ornithology in the People's Republic of China (PRC).** *Condor* 81(1): 104-109. — Transcript of an interview with Cheng Tso-Hsin, Professor of Ornithology at the Institute of Zoology in Peking.

Holyoak, D.T. 1978. **Variable albinism of the flight feathers as an adaptation for recognition of individual birds in some Polynesian populations of *Acrocephalus* warblers.** *Ardea* 66(3): 112-117.

Karr, James R. 1979. **On the use of mist nets in the study of bird communities.** *Inland Bird Banding* 51(1): 1-10.

McNicholl, Martin K., and Geoffrey G. Hogan. 1979. **Wind-caused death of Great Cormorant.** *Can. Field-Nat.* 93(2): 175.

Morrison, Michael L., and Lloyd F. Kiff. 1979. **Eggshell thickness in American shorebirds before and since DDT.** *Can. Field-Nat.* 93(2): 187-190.

Oniki, Yoshika. **Is nesting success of birds low in the tropics?** *Biotropica* 11(1): 60-69.

Peakall, David B., and Lloyd F. Kiff. 1979. **Eggshell thinning and DDE residue levels among Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus:* a global perspective.** *Ibis* 121(2): 200-204.

Snow, David W. 1978. **The Nest as a factor determining clutch-size in tropical birds.** *J. Ornithol.* 119(2): 227-230.

Snow, D.W. 1978. **Relationships between the European and African avifaunas.** *Bird Study* 25(3): 134-148.

FULL TITLES, AND PLACES OF PUBLICATION, OF SERIALS REFERRED TO ABOVE

Ardea Nederlandse Ornithologische Unie, Arnhem, Holland. **Auk** American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C. **Biotropica** Association for Tropical Biology, Washington, D.C. **Bird Study** British Trust for Ornithology, Hertfordshire, England. **Bokmakierie** Southern African Ornithological Society, Houghton, South Africa. **British Birds** Macmillan Journals, Ltd., London, England. **Bulletin of the Florida State Museum, Biological Sciences** Florida State Museum, Gainesville, Florida. **Canadian Field-Naturalist** Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club, Ottawa, Ontario. **Canadian Journal of Zoology** National Research Council of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. **Condor** Cooper Ornithological Society, Los Angeles, California. **Emu** Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union, North Melbourne, Australia. **Great Basin Naturalist** Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. **Ibis** for the British Ornithologists' Union by Academic Press, London, England. **Inland Bird Banding** Inland Bird Banding Association, Wisner, Nebraska. **Journal für Ornithologie** Deutschen Ornithologen-Gesellschaft, Berlin, Germany. **Murrelet** Pacific Northwest Bird and Mammal Society, Pullman, Washington. **Natural History** American Museum of Natural History, New York, New York. **Ornis Fennica** Finnish Ornithological Society, Helsinki, Finland. **Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington** Biological Society of Washington, Washington, D.C. **Zoologicheskii Zhurnal** Moscow, U.S.S.R.

Key West Quail-Dove *Geotrygon chrysia* on Snake Bight Trail, Everglades National Park, Florida. Photographed 5 May 1979 by Mike Wihler.

He had seen the head of a single specimen at a friend's house in South Carolina; so when he arrived at Key West, Florida, in 1832, John James Audubon was naturally hoping to see the colorful bird that was later to bear the name of Key West Quail-Dove *Geotrygon chrysia*. Audubon's first encounter with the species may have been less than totally satisfying: his local guide, one Sergeant Sykes, spotted a quail-dove in the depths of a thicket and dispatched it with a single shot before the artist-naturalist had even glimpsed it. But he saw more of them later.

According to Audubon, the quail-dove was at that time a regular summer resident at Key West. He reported that by the middle of July, after the breeding season, the birds became sufficiently numerous that local sportsmen could shoot up to twenty in a day. This hunting may or may not have been wholly responsible for the demise of the local population, but it is certain that the species was gone from Key West by the turn of the century. The last individuals recorded there (one in 1889 and two in 1897) may have been either vagrants from the Antilles or the last remnants of the local breeding population.

This historical background lent special interest to the Key West Quail-Dove present from January at least into May 1979 on the Snake Bight Trail, Everglades National Park, Florida. To see the bird on North American soil was to experience a bit of the past — an experience not lessened appreciably by the fact that it was shared by thousands of birders, general naturalists, and curiosity seekers. The terrestrial quail-dove was rather out-of-place in the swampy Everglades, and thus confined most of its foraging to the dry ground at the edge of the Snake Bight Trail; it became so accustomed to humans that by late spring it could be approached to within a few meters as it fed quietly on the ground.

When Mike Wihler sought the quail-dove on 5 May 1979, it was not in evidence along its usual stretch of trail on his first pass through the area. As he began a second try, he saw the bird fly across the trail a hundred meters ahead and alight in a tree. The quail-dove maintained its uncustomary arboreal perch long enough for Wihler to approach it and obtain the photograph reproduced above. —*K. K.*

Latest Rumors

This is a brief recounting of some of the exciting bird occurrences that have come to our attention recently. We make no claims for the completeness of this summary. Although we believe that all of the records cited here are probably correct, we have not been able to check most of them out personally; readers desiring further information should consult the appropriate regional publications, or the regional reports in *American Birds*.

There seemed to be a remarkable number of birdwatchers prowling southern Florida in early May; those who journeyed out to the exotic islets of the Dry Tortugas must have numbered in the hundreds. And the Tortugas put on quite an avian show for the visitors. Brown Boobies *Sula leucogaster,* not unusual there, were present in numbers, and two **Masked Boobies** *S. dactylatra* evoked much interest, but the prize was a **Red-footed Booby** *S. sula* coming in nightly to roost with the Browns on Bush Key (the Red-foot was reported at least into June). A counterpoint to these tropical sulids was provided by an adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* present at the same time. The **Black Noddy** *Anous tenuirostris* was seen by the fortunate; among the numerous migrants at least one Connecticut Warbler *Oporornis agilis* was noted; and a White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica* seen there could have strayed in from any of several different directions. — On the mainland, the **Key West Quail-Dove** *Geotrygon chrysia* in Everglades National Park continued to add birders to its list. — At sea, a pelagic trip off northern Florida May 3 recorded a minimum of 40 to 45 **Black-capped Petrels** *Pterodroma hasitata,* tripling the previous one-day high for Florida. At least one White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* was noted from a boat off Key West; however, this may have been upstaged in a grand way, for we heard that *two* **Red-billed Tropicbirds** *P. aethereus* were recorded off North Carolina in May. — The New York City area was graced by the presence of two **Mississippi Kites** *Ictinia mississippiensis* (probably a first state record) that stayed for several days, feasting upon cicadas. Not a first for the state, but possibly more unexpected than the kites anyway, was a **White-faced Ibis** *Plegadis chihi* on western Long Island in early June. — In early May the nest of a pair of **Hook-billed Kites** *Chondrohierax uncinatus* was found at Falcon Dam, Texas, a considerable step up the Rio Grande from Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge where previous U.S. nestings have been recorded. At Big Bend National Park, western Texas, where single **Rufous-capped Warblers** *Basileuterus rufifrons* have been recorded in the past, a pair was present in May. — A surprising report came from southwestern New Mexico: a trogon that was evidently not a Coppery-tailed *T. elegans* was seen in the Animas Mountains in mid-June; the details (and geographic logic) suggested Eared Trogon *Euptilotis neoxenus.* — Arizona had very little in the way of Mexican border bird excitement in late spring-early summer; even the single White-eared Hummingbird *Hylocharis leucotis* that had appeared in March disappeared by mid-May. The most notable bird there was a misguided **Cave Swallow** *Petrochelidon fulva* that frequented the vicinity of a Cliff Swallow *P. pyrrhonota* colony at Tucson through most of May, for a first state record; local birders were also thrilled by a singing male Cerulean Warbler *Dendroica cerulea* that was photographed for a first confirmed Arizona record. — **Mississippi Kites** *Ictinia mississippiensis,* first recorded in New York this spring, also put in their first

Nevada appearance with two at Corn Creek in mid-May. — California's army of vagrant-hunters found, as usual, a remarkable array of eastern species during the late May-early June push. Among the more notable finds in the desert oasis situations of the interior were Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda,* White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus,* Yellow-throated Vireo *V. flavifrons,* Black-throated Blue Warbler *Dendroica caerulescens* (regular in fall, almost unheard-of in spring), and Common Grackle *Quiscalus quiscula* (there was another Common Grackle in northern California in late May). Good eastern birds on the coast included Cerulean Warbler *Dendroica cerulea* and Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea* near San Diego and Kentucky Warbler *Oporornis formosus* on the Farallons, while six Yellow-throated Warblers *Dendroica dominica* at various coastal points between April and early June (plus one in Arizona in April) added up to an "invasion" for this very infrequent vagrant. — A **Wilson's Plover** *Charadrius wilsonia* in southern California from late April into June was a notable straggler from the south. A pair of Little Blue Herons *Florida caerulea* south of the Salton Sea established California's first nesting record. More remarkable was the female **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** *Muscivora forficata* incubating eggs in southeastern California in June; this is hundreds of miles from any previous nesting locality, but no male was in evidence, so it may not qualify as an actual breeding occurrence. — From the northern interior of the continent, we heard that **Mountain Plovers** *Charadrius montanus* were found nesting in southeastern Alberta, for the first definite breeding record for Canada.

The spring migration in western Alaska is always a story in itself. Some of the Asiatic species not illustrated in the standard field guides have proven (with the recently-increased birding coverage) to be so regular that their appearance no longer elicits comment; thus, no one will be surprised to learn that the contingent of vagrant-hunters on Attu this spring found Common Pochard *Aythya ferina,* Smew *Mergus albellus,* White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla,* Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola,* Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta,* Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus,* and Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla.* Some species of greater excitement value that we heard about included **Bean Goose** *Anser fabalis* on Attu; **Mongolian Plovers** *Charadrius mongolus* (several) on Attu and at Gambell, St. Lawrence Island; **Ringed Plover** *C. hiaticula* at Gambell; a wealth of shorebirds including **Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus,* **Greenshank** *T. nebularia,* **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus,* **Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos,* and **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* on Attu; an unidentified *Cuculus* (either Common Cuckoo *C. canorus* or Oriental Cuckoo *C. saturatus*) at St. Paul, Pribilof Islands; **Eye-browed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus* on Attu; **Siberian Rubythroat** *Luscinia calliope* both on Attu and at St. Paul; **Pechora Pipit** *Anthus gustavi* and **Indian Tree-Pipit** *A. hodgsoni* on Attu; and **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* on Attu. But without a doubt, the prize find in Alaska this season was a **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* on Attu: apart from a single-observer sighting on Attu in 1978, there were no previous records for North America.

It seems appropriate to close this discussion of rare birds in Alaska by mentioning a most bizarre extralimital record of an Alaskan bird: a possible Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica* was reported in May in the British Isles, half a world away from the species' normal range.