

In his "Distributional List of the Birds of Arizona" (Pacific Coast Avifauna no. 10, 1914) Swarth denies this species a place in the regular list, although admitting it to the hypothetical list (p. 83) because of the published statement of Visher (Auk, xxvii, 1910, p. 280) that it was "tolerably common on a pond near Tucson early in September." As Mr. Swarth rightly says of this record: "In the absence of specimens it may be questioned."

Specimen evidence, however, is available in the collections made by Dr. E. A. Mearns in connection with the Mexican Boundary Survey, and which are now in the U. S. National Museum. It is a matter for regret that publication of the ornithological results of this Survey has been so long delayed. The field catalogue of Dr. Mearns contains the records of a series of 19 specimens of this species, collected at the San Bernardino Ranch near Monument no. 77, in southeastern Arizona, between August 2 and 29, 1892. I have located and examined 17 of these specimens in the National Museum collection. The distribution by date and sex is as follows: August 2, two females (one marked as immature); August 18, one male, two females; August 19, two males; August 21, six males, one female, one, sex undetermined; August 27, one male, two females; August 29, one male. During the same season in 1893 Dr. Mearns again worked at this station, but the Yellow-legs was not recorded in his catalogue.

Curiously enough, these specimens were overlooked by Prof. W. W. Cooke, when he prepared his supplementary list of Arizona birds, which appeared in the *Auk* for July, 1914 (pp. 403-404). Although more than thirty-four years have elapsed since the collection of this material, it would seem reasonable to assume that in eastern Arizona (or possibly only in the southeastern part) the Yellow-legs may be a fairly regular migrant, particularly in the fall.—FREDERICK C. LINCOLN, *Biological Survey, Washington, D. C., February 14, 1927.*

Western Bluebird Nesting in the City of San Diego.—A nest of the Western Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana occidentalis*) found during the past summer in Balboa Park, San Diego, is of interest, both as the southernmost nesting record on the sea-coast for this bird, and also on account of the unusual nesting site. Probably because they could find no suitable natural cavity in the trees of San Diego's well-pruned park, and because, for lack of suitable tenants, bird boxes are scarce, the birds occupied an empty Cliff Swallow's nest. In fact, they were obliging enough to select one under the eaves of the Natural History Museum, between the two windows of the Director's office. But so secretive were they in their affairs that their presence was not suspected until there were well grown and noisy young in the nest. This was on July 10, 1926; two days later the young were out of the nest.

Other evidence that Western Bluebirds have nested in Balboa Park is offered by a specimen in the spotted juvenile plumage that was found dead by the writer on the West Driveway, July 29, 1922; and by the observation of Carroll DeWilton Scott, a member of the San Diego Society of Natural History, who, on June 3, 1926, saw both parents feeding well-fledged young on the lawn at Eighth and Date streets.

It cannot be said that the above mentioned nest is the first Western Bluebird's nest to be found in the city of San Diego, for Laurence M. Huey, now a member of the Natural History Museum staff, has in his collection a set of four eggs of this species, taken from a woodpecker hole in a sycamore limb in Rose Canyon on June 4, 1915. The locality is about four miles from the ocean and, although completely rural, is within the corporate limits of the city.—CLINTON G. ABBOTT, *Natural History Museum, Balboa Park, San Diego, California, September 21, 1926.*

The Lewis Woodpecker Apparently Nesting at Gustine, Merced County, California.—On April 23, 1926, I found a pair of Lewis Woodpeckers (*Asyndesmus lewisi*) entering a hole about forty feet up in a cottonwood at Gustine. On July 30, 1924, I saw an immature bird in the same region. The elevation of Gustine is only 104 feet above the sea, and there are neither oaks nor pines in the region where the birds apparently breed.—RALPH HOFFMANN, *Carpinteria, California, January 1, 1927.*

The Rock Wren of San Nicolas Island Not a Recognizable Subspecies.—In the *Auk* (xv, 1898, p. 237), I named a supposedly new race of Rock Wren, *Salpinctes obsoletus pulverius*, with type from San Nicolas Island, California. This island is situated more

distantly from the mainland than any other of the Santa Barbara group of islands, and it was natural to expect that any non-migratory land bird found there would show results of this sequestration, especially inasmuch as certain other birds on islands closer to the mainland do so plainly.

The characters that I thought I saw in the San Nicolas Rock Wren justifying my naming it as new were, as compared with mainland birds, larger bill and feet, and paler, more "dusty", coloration. But the birds I had from the island were all taken in May, and the adults were badly faded and abraded; furthermore the plumage (and I have part of my original series before me now) proves to have been adventitiously stained, probably by the clayey earth of the gully-walls within the cracks of which the birds lived (see Grinnell, *Pasadena Acad. Sci.*, Publ. No. 1, 1897, p. 10). The difference in color between those San Nicolas wrens and mainland birds was, and is, striking; but I now believe it to be entirely extrinsic.

As to size of bill and feet, there probably is some slight difference; but most of what I claimed for the bill proves to be non-intrinsic. Apparent length of culmen, as well as thickness at base, is, in many kinds of birds, now well known to increase with wear: the feathers about the base of the bill, especially those on the forehead, shorten, even retreat in a sense, thus "exposing" more of the bill for measurement by the calipers.

My suspicions as to the tenability of "*pulverius*" began long ago and have been getting stronger of late years; but their climax was capped as a result of studies I have been making lately of Rock Wrens from Lower California. In doing this, I examined all the material, in several large museums, from throughout the range of *Salpinctes obsoletus*. And in the John E. Thayer collection, on October 7, last, I came across a series of Rock Wrens from San Nicolas Island, taken several years after I was there, in the fall soon after completion of the one annual molt. Close scrutiny of these failed to disclose a single tangible distinguishing character.

Historically, *S. o. pulverius*, after its publication in the *Auk*, was quickly adopted in current literature. Ridgway gave it full place in his "Part III". It was "accepted" by the A. O. U. Committee, after some hesitancy, it is true, in the 1910 edition of its Check-list; and so on. The first author to question its validity was Willett (*Pacific Coast Avif.* No. 7, 1912, p. 101). Howell, in his review of the island bird-life (*Pacific Coast Avif.* No. 12, 1917, p. 96) accepted it, but with pronounced reservation, following Swarth (*Condor*, xvi, 1914, p. 213) who had found no ground at all for the color characters claimed for it, but still saw a little bill difference, enough to justify him in continuing the name. Any difference there may be in this latter regard is so slight and unstable (as shown by Swarth's measurements), especially when the range of bill-length in a large series of continental birds is considered, that I am unable now to see any practical value in it. I am thus compelled to accede, in this instance, to the justness of Dawson's animadversions (*Birds of Calif.*, 1923, p. 683)!

This case is not alone in illustrating how difficult it is to quash a "subspecies", once it gets into printed lists. To summarize, the name *Salpinctes obsoletus pulverius* was based on characters of an adventitious nature, not phylogenetic ones. I counsel that the A. O. U. Committee drop the name from their manuscript under compilation for the new official Check-list. Another bird name goes into synonymy, the necropolis for mistakes in systematics.—J. GRINNELL, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley, March 13, 1927.*

A Woodpecker Destructive to Cacao Fruit.—The name *Celeus castaneus* is applied to a very elegant woodpecker, in color a prevailing chocolate brown, with a flowing buff-brown crest, and of medium size. It inhabits a considerable part of the Caribbean lowlands of Central America. If the scant records published pertaining to it can serve as indication, it could have been nowhere common in Costa Rica subsequent to the extended cultivation of cacao. Today even, it is rarely met where there is no cultivation of this tree. But wherever plantations are now existing, it is to be found in abundance, and it is an acknowledged nuisance.

This is a very quiet species, not at all shy, and if surprised when feeding on the fruit which, by the way, grows on the trunk and larger limbs only, it will quickly ascend to the leafy terminal branches. Preferring the fruit when yet quite green, it finds no trouble in drilling the soft covering. Usually, only a few of the many seeds are extracted, and from these the mucilaginous covering only is eaten. Thereafter,