



Fig. 64. Young Redhead (*Nyroca americana*) with deformed legs.

The right leg, which lay above the left leg, appeared to rise directly above the spinal column and it extended over to the left side of the body. The joints were stiff and the toes could not be extended. Evidently the malformation was the result of faulty embryonic development.—JESSOP B. LOW, *Illinois State Natural History Survey, Urbana, Illinois, September 23, 1943.*

The Horned Lark and the Rock Wren of the San Benito Islands, Lower California.

—When Grinnell's "Distributional Summation of the Ornithology of Lower California" was published in 1928, only two endemic forms of land birds were known from the San Benito Islands. This group of three, small, barren islands, which lies about twenty-five miles northwest of the nearest point on the Lower California mainland, has been visited on numerous occasions by naturalists but no intensive study of the avifauna as a whole has ever been made. The chief attractions, aside from various species of sea birds which nest there in abundance, have been the nearly extinct McGregor House Finch and the San Benito Marsh Sparrow; relatively scant attention has been paid to the few other species of resident land birds.

Mr. Alfred M. Bailey, Director of the Colorado Museum of Natural History, recently forwarded for determination some specimens of the Horned Lark and the Rock Wren collected by himself on the San Benitos and at the same time suggested that certain characters, if verified by other material, might be of subspecific value. It so happens that just these characters had long ago been noted in the limited series of both species in the Dickey Collection. They are further substantiated by a few other examples in the collection of the Los Angeles Museum.

Otocoris alpestris baileyi, new subspecies

San Benito Horned Lark

Type.—Adult breeding male, no. 29797 Dickey Collection; West San Benito Island, Lower California, Mexico, February 20, 1930; collected by A. J. van Rossem.

Subspecific characters.—Size smallest of all the races of *Otocoris alpestris*. Wings and tails of males average 93.6 and 59.0 mm., respectively. Coloration very similar to the larger *Otocoris alpestris actia* Oberholser of western California and northwestern Lower California, although perhaps averaging very slightly paler. Compared with *Otocoris alpestris enertera* Oberholser of the adjacent mainland of Lower California, size smaller and coloration darker throughout.

Range.—Resident on the San Benito Islands.

Remarks.—Behle, in his "Distribution and Variation of the Horned Larks of Western North America," 1942, has previously commented on the color of a specimen from these islands, which he included in the range of *enertera*. The twelve examples (8 males and 4 females) now available show very uniform color characters, even though they were collected in February, April, and June. I have

seen no mainland specimens which could be considered as strays or vagrants of *baileyi*, and from present evidence the race seems to be resident on the islands. What race is present on Cedros Island I do not know, but thirteen specimens from Natividad Island (10 winter-taken birds in Dickey Collection and three April-taken, breeding birds, in Bishop Collection) are indistinguishable from *enertera* of the adjacent mainland.

Wing and tail measurements of 8 males of *baileyi* are 92-95 mm. (93.6), and 57-61 (59.0), respectively. Those of four females are 86-90 (88.5), and 52-55 (54.8). On the basis of this small number of females the only size difference between females of *baileyi* and *enertera* is the slightly shorter tail (4 per cent) of the former.

Salpinctes obsoletus tenuirostris, new subspecies

San Benito Rock Wren

Type.—Adult breeding male, no. 29799 Dickey Collection; West San Benito Island, Lower California, Mexico, February 20, 1930; collected by A. J. van Rossem.

Subspecific characters.—Not distinguishable in color or pattern of tail markings from *Salpinctes obsoletus obsoletus*. Bill very much longer than that of *obsoletus* but at the same time distinctly more slender in both vertical and lateral profiles.

Range.—San Benito Islands, Lower California, Mexico.

Remarks.—Eight specimens of the San Benito Rock Wren in the Dickey Collection have been undetermined, subspecifically, ever since they were collected in 1930. The comment by Mr. Bailey that his three adults collected on the islands had longer bills than anything he possessed from the Rocky Mountain region has prompted the present investigation. Additionally, there are two specimens in the Los Angeles Museum, making a total of 13 adults. Five juveniles are too young to be of value for purposes of bill measurement. However, they show no departure in color or tail pattern from *obsoletus*.

Before applying a formal name to the San Benito population of Rock Wrens it has been necessary to consider three proposed island races, *pulverius* Grinnell of San Nicholas Island, California, *proximus* Swarth of San Martín Island, Lower California, and *exsul* Ridgway of San Benedicto Island in the Revillagigedo group off western Mexico. On the basis of 15 specimens of *pulverius* in the Dickey Collection and the Los Angeles Museum there is an unstable tendency toward larger bills and heavier tarsi and feet. Additionally, all but two show some barring on the inner webs of the lateral rectrices, a rather uncommon occurrence in mainland birds. All in all, I agree with Grinnell (Condor, 29, 1927:165-166) that *pulverius* is not recognizably distinct from *obsoletus*, especially as the more yellowish coloration of the former is now known to be adventitious. I have no first hand knowledge of *proximus* other than a casual inspection of the type a number of years ago. However, Grinnell's disposition of the case (Condor, 30, 1928:155-156) would appear to be conclusive; *proximus* is therefore also a synonym of *obsoletus*. A series of 23 adults of *exsul* from the far-removed San Benedicto Island (Colorado Museum 7, Dickey Collection 11, Los Angeles Museum 5) shows that race to be easily recognizable, although the characters which distinguish it from *obsoletus* differ somewhat from those originally ascribed to it by Ridgway (Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash., 16, 1903:169), presumably on the basis of five specimens. On the basis of the present series, it is the palest of the races of *Salpinctes obsoletus*, approximating in pallor and grayness the light extreme of *obsoletus*. The bills are perhaps very slightly heavier and average about 1 mm. longer. The outstanding character is the relatively narrow, more regular, and more numerous barring on both webs of the outermost rectrices; indeed in many individuals some barring is also present on the inner webs of the next pair. I am not able to appreciate any "largeness" of tarsi or feet, nor can I endorse the supposed character of relatively longer tail. Both the wing and tail average very slightly shorter but so minutely so (as is also the case in *tenuirostris*) as to be little more than a tendency.

Measurements of adult males in millimeters

	Wing	Tail	Exposed culmen
24 <i>obsoletus</i>	67-75 (71.4)	49-58 (53.3)	16.5-20.0 (17.7)
9 <i>exsul</i>	68-71 (69.4)	49-55 (51.7)	17.9-20.2 (18.8)
10 <i>tenuirostris</i>	68-71 (69.6)	50-54 (51.9)	19.7-22.1 (20.9)

Wing and tail abrasion is rapid and I have therefore selected specimens of *obsoletus* approximately comparable to the moderately worn island birds.—A. J. VAN ROSSEM, *Dickey Collections, University of California, Los Angeles, August 18, 1943.*