

each side the fourth from proximal upper greater secondary covert is gone. Looking at the spread wing the division between old and new feathers is picked up exactly as in young birds that have undergone partial molt. The new feathers are darker and more strongly barred than the old."

That such feather loss is not due to delayed molt is evident from an adult female House Finch (L-35255) in which the molt had been watched. On October 7, 1936, this bird was molting normally, our note on that date stating that secondaries 1-2-3-4 were new and full length, 5 was half grown and 6 was still old. The sides were alike. Yet on November 17 this bird was taken with secondary 1 short on each side, and the upper greater secondary covert above it was gone on each side. These feathers did not grow out normally and were the same on November 30. This bird was banded as an adult female on July 24, 1933.

A young bird of the year, a female House Finch (36-67371), that had molted no primaries or secondaries was taken on November 30, 1936, with the two distal upper greater primary coverts of each wing gone.

On November 28, 1939, a female House Finch was found with upper greater primary coverts 4-5-6-7-8-9 gone on each wing. There were very small quills started at this time to replace them. But these were again lost, for on February 6, 1940, this bird had only upper greater primary coverts 1-2 on each side. The white quills of the primaries exposed by the absence of the coverts were so conspicuous that the bird appeared to have a whitish spot on each wing. We have other records of this condition.

Gambel Sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) seem rather prone to such feather losses. One of these birds on February 27, 1940, lacked primaries 3-4-5-6-7-8-9 in both wings. The spring molt is in progress in Gambel Sparrows at this time of year but the primaries are not affected by it, nor is any such simultaneous loss normal in molt. This bird was released with many misgivings. The next day it was trapped again. It had survived a hard rain and when released it flew to the top of a shrub fourteen feet away and ten feet high. We wonder what may be the safety factor in a bird's wing.

We have found body tracts entirely bare or covered with very young quills. In these we have not always seen such exact symmetry as in the wings. We reported some years ago a male House Finch taken in April, 1932, with no feathers on the body (Condor, 38, 1936:102-109); head and wings were in normal condition. This bird entered our traps regularly. New feathers grew on the anterior part of the body, but the rump was unfeathered until the normal molting season. The breast feathers on renewal were brown, not red, until the next molt.

In our experience such feather loss has accounted for a yellow superciliary streak in a male House Finch with the otherwise usual red head coloring. In a bird with colored wings it might occasion a striking wing pattern if the normal color were produced only at the normal molt. In immatures of birds with a wing pattern that is not acquired at the postjuvinal molt, such loss and renewal would produce a wing part adult and part juvenal in pattern. It might also well account for the occasional bird that fails to migrate at the usual time if the loss of flight feathers were at all extensive. We have no theory as to the cause of such feather losses.

Probably the main importance of knowledge of the occasional occurrence of such feather losses lies in the recognition of it as a possible cause of abnormal plumage pattern.—HAROLD MICHENER and JOSEPHINE R. MICHENER, *Pasadena, California, May 10, 1946.*

The Elf Owl Moves West.—My own impression, based on a number of years' acquaintance, is that the Elf Owl (*Micropallas whitneyi*) thins out in population density as it nears the western limit of its area of distribution, with a sharp drop to zero at the Colorado River valley. A. J. van Rossem has taken it on the California side of the river at Pot Holes. I once met it among the marginal shrubbery at Blythe, but we have only a highly questionable record of the species any farther west in California. It is not strange, then, that some quite definite excitement was aroused when van Rossem and I were greeted shortly after sunset by the first quaver of an Elf Owl in a scrubby tree at Cottonwood Spring, May 6, 1946. This locality lies at the western end of the Eagle Mountain mass within the Joshua Tree National Monument in Riverside County, California. Seventy-two miles of pretty severe desert separate it from the Colorado River valley directly east. The meridian of 116° W. longitude lies 12 miles to the west. Published records from Lower California (Grinnell, Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., 32, 1928:118) relate to the race *M. w. sanfordi* of the Cape district.

The tree from which the first notes came was searched at once, and a pair of birds was twice seen as the male appeared to bring food to the female. At these times the cricket-like trill which may be designated as the "desire note" was given. This note had been definitely identified just two weeks earlier while I was at work in the Harquahala Mountains of Arizona.

The male bird moved about more or less but the female appeared to remain in one closely restricted part of the tree repeating the "station call," a single soft whistle which I have learned to associate with a stationed female. The typical querulous note of the species was heard frequently, and

on two occasions the male gave a note that was entirely new to both of us. It was like the Pigmy Owl's metronomic whistle rendered at much higher pitch and frequency but was more softly pronounced and in much shorter phrases.

The Elf Owls appeared to be especially interested in certain woodpecker holes which we discovered the following morning. Eggs had not been laid, however, since the female showed greatly enlarged ova but no corpus luteum. There was an incipient brood patch visible. We were confident that actual egg laying would have occurred within a week at most and that the nest hole had probably been selected.

The birds were not mere wanderers in the region. Dr. R. B. Cowles and party from the Los Angeles campus of the University of California had heard them at the same spot nine days earlier but had been unable to identify them beyond the order Strigiformes. Did selection of mates occur before their arrival at this far western point and the pair then start their westward pioneering together? It seems hardly probable that several birds came to the same outpost at the same time and that the selection of mate then took place. On the other hand, despite the extremely inhospitable aspect of the intervening area, there may be "stepping stones" for diffusion in the form of arborescent growth tucked away in canyons of the clinker-like masses of low mountains that lie well separated in the desert, like an archipelago stretching eastward to the Colorado. A thorough search of these "islands" at the right season might place on record still other breeding pairs of the Elf Owl.—LOYE MILLER, *University of California, Los Angeles, California, May 25, 1946.*

Wintering Mountain Bluebirds on the Santa Barbara Coast.—While stationed at the Marine Corps Air Station, Goleta, Santa Barbara County, California, I was surprised to find the Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*) wintering along the seashore. On December 18, 1945, while observing a flock of Western Bluebirds (*Sialia mexicana*), I noted a bird of striking blue color. Upon closer examination it was found to be a Mountain Bluebird. Further observation showed that there was a mixed flock of Mountain and Western bluebirds here, numbering about 25 birds. The two species were about equally represented. They were usually seen perched on and foraging from some telephone wires on a bluff about one hundred yards from the coast, although on several occasions they were observed on the sand within a few feet of the ocean. These two species were seen together nearly every day until my transfer from this station on January 19, 1946.—GEORGE S. MANSFIELD, *Atascadero, California, June 15, 1946.*

The Orange-crowned Warbler in Oregon.—Recently Carl Richardson of Prospect, Oregon, sent me several birds collected in southern Oregon with a request that I identify them for him. His number 226 proved to be an adult female *Vermivora c. celata*, taken on May 5, 1944, eight miles southwest of Prospect, Jackson County, Oregon. The identification of this specimen has been verified by Dr. John W. Aldrich of the Fish and Wildlife Service. To the best of my knowledge this warbler has not previously been reported as collected in Oregon.—STANLEY G. JEWETT, *Portland, Oregon, March 6, 1946.*

A Record of the Myrtle Warbler for Box Elder County, Utah.—On May 7, 1946, at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, Brigham, Utah, a male Myrtle Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*) was first observed by Lloyd F. Gunther and John B. Van den Akker. On various occasions for the following five weeks it was also observed in the same vicinity. This record is of interest in that this warbler has not been previously listed as occurring in this section of the state. The only other known record is that reported by Cottam (Wilson Bull., 54, 1942:254), who reports a specimen taken on October 9, 1870, barely in Utah, in the Uinta Mountains in the extreme northeastern corner of the state.—LLOYD F. GUNTHER and JOHN B. VAN DEN AKKER, *Bear River Refuge, Brigham, Utah, June 28, 1946.*

Phainopeplas at Atascadero, California.—I spent June 22 and 23, 1946, on an 11-acre tract at Atascadero, San Luis Obispo County, California, the elevation of which is about 850 feet. Live-oak trees grow to immense proportions there. In addition to live oaks, there are a few fruit-bearing trees and shrubs, such as mulberries, elderberries, blackberries, and cascara. Near the house, between two mulberry trees which were loaded with ripe and ripening fruit, there was an almost constant traffic of Phainopeplas (*Phainopepla nitens lepida*), a bird which my sister who had lived there for twenty-five years had not seen in previous years, nor had I on my previous visits to Atascadero. I found two nests in her yard near the house, both in live oaks, one twenty-five feet, the other fifteen feet above the ground; the latter contained three eggs near hatching.—EMERSON A. STONER, *Benicia, California, June 29, 1946.*