

Recent Literature in Field Ornithology

ALTHOUGH LAST YEAR'S subscribers will be familiar with this column, new readers may want a word of explanation. This column is a brief overview of titles from the technical literature: titles which, in our arbitrary judgment, are likely to be of interest to many field observers.

Ornithological and biological journals are published in awesome numbers today. Material of potential interest to the field birder appears in widely scattered places, often interspersed among highly technical, theoretical, mathematical papers. "Keeping up with the literature" is difficult enough even for professionals in academic institutions; for most amateur ornithologists, it has been largely impossible. This column is meant to provide a first step, by giving the field observer at least some idea of what is being published elsewhere.

We are pleased to hear that many readers find this column an interesting place to browse: the titles are informative in themselves. In scanning the citations below, for example, you will notice references to first records of Hermit Thrush and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in the British Isles (a reminder that our "trash birds" can be exciting vagrants elsewhere), yet another species new-to-science from Peru (L.S.U. scores again), and a study of American Robin foraging behavior as affected by grass length and lawn mowing (proof that the commonest birds, in the most mundane settings, still merit study). In many cases, for many readers, the title alone will tell enough of the story.

Occasionally, however, you may spot a title of a paper that you want to read in full . . . and from a technical journal you've never seen. What to do? Last year we offered these suggestions:

- (1) The person who lives near a major university will find that a serious amateur can almost always make arrangements to use the university's library facilities. Even those readers who are not so conveniently located might keep this tactic in mind; we know of several birders living in remote areas who set aside one or two weekends a year to visit a major library and "get caught up."
- (2) Although few public libraries (except the largest ones) subscribe to scientific journals, many of them can provide a service called "interlibrary loan" — one facet of which allows one (for a fee, and with some delay) to obtain photocopies of papers

published in practically any journal. Ask a professional librarian for more information about this service.

(3) If you notice that a particular journal carries items relating to your own interests especially often, you may wish to subscribe to that journal.

This year we are introducing an innovation: for each issue we are choosing a few recent papers that seem particularly relevant to the interests of the field observer, and giving these papers expanded treatment, extracting and discussing some of the important points. In this month's selections, for example, you will read about another potential taxonomic "split" in North America (one that will surprise many birders), about new field marks for a rare Atlantic coast pelagic species, and about a Siberian shorebird that may sometimes be overlooked in North America. We hope that this new feature will make the "Recent Literature" column more informative and interesting.

Britton, David. 1980. **Identification of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers.** *British Birds* 73 (8): 333-345.

The Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* is one of those species which has been badly treated in the North American bird guides. Although virtually all records south of Alaska have been of fall juveniles, the western Peterson guide illustrates only a winter-plumaged adult, while *Birds of North America* illustrates an adult in breeding plumage (labelled "winter"!). Despite the misguided guides, West Coast observers have little difficulty in identifying the distinctive rusty-capped, buffy-orange-chested juvenile Sharp-taileds.

For North American readers, the most significant point to be inferred from the *British Birds* article is that we may be missing adult Sharp-taileds in early fall. Consider this: the Sharp-tailed is quite rare in the British Isles, with only 15 accepted records up to 1978, but nine of those records have been of adults in late summer—early fall, still showing much of the remains of breeding plumage. Consider also that the Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos* is a rather scarce transient there, so that presumably most individuals found are closely observed. Despite this (and despite the known competence of so many British birders) there have been cases in which summer adult Sharp-taileds were initially passed off as Pectorals—once even when Pectorals were present for direct comparison! Clearly such birds would be even more easily overlooked in North America, where many observers would not look twice at an "obvious" Pectoral.

Although we urge interested observers to consult the *British Birds* paper (which includes a number of photos and drawings), here is a brief digest of important points. The breast of a summer adult Sharp-tailed is as heavily marked as

that of a Pectoral, but the dark markings are mostly in the form of scallops or chevrons; the breast-pattern fades into the white of the belly without the sharp demarcation of the Pectoral, and scattered dark chevrons extend down the flanks. Molting adult Sharp-taileds in fall have a "messy" look to the breast as the dark markings are lost, unlike Pectorals which have dark chest markings in all plumages. Other characters suggesting adult Sharp-taileds are a conspicuous broad white supercilium; dark streaks on the undertail-coverts; dull greenish legs; and chestnut cap contrasting with a dull gray-brown back. The Sharp-tailed also tends to have a flatter-crowned appearance, shorter and straighter bill, and softer more musical call-note as compared to Pectoral.

— K. K.

Brown, R.G.B. 1980. **Flight characteristics of Madeiran Petrel.** *British Birds* 73 (6): 263-264.

'Madeiran Petrel' is the British name for the bird we call Harcourt's or Band-rumped Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma castro*. This species occurs, sometimes, off our Atlantic coast (as well as inland after hurricanes, and probably once off California), but its status there has been clouded by an assumption of difficulty in distinguishing it from Leach's Storm-Petrel *O. leucorhoa*.

This note points out flight characteristics which may be the key to identifying the Band-rumped at sea. Atlantic coast birders are, of course, already accustomed to identifying storm-petrels by flight. Wilson's Storm-Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* exhibits a relatively level flight, skimming the water with fluttery shallow wingbeats, sometimes veering irregularly from side to side. Leach's has a "nighthawk-like" flight, with erratic vertical and lateral bounds, the wings raised high above the back in a "tern-like" posture before each deep downstroke; when Leach's glides

it holds the carpal joints higher than the rest of the wing, giving a head-on silhouette resembling a flattened letter 'M'. These characteristic flight styles identify the birds even at great distances; only at closer range may the observer note such things as the longer, more angled wings, less blackish look and less conspicuous white rump of Leach's. ("Field guide" characters such as tail shape and foot color of Wilson's & Leach's are so difficult to see as to be virtually worthless for field identification.)

The task for eastern birders, then, is to fit the Band-rumped into this scheme of comparative flight-styles and shapes. In this note, Dr. Brown suggests that under pelagic viewing conditions the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel might be confused with Wilson's rather than Leach's, because (like Wilson's) it is relatively short-winged, conspicuously white-rumped, and lacks Leach's erratically bounding flight style. However, the Band-rumped that Dr. Brown watched (off Senegal and off Ecuador) had a unique manner of flight: they consistently flew in "regular horizontal zigzags: banked to the left for half a dozen beats, banked to the right for half a dozen beats, and so on." This behavior ought to be obvious with a long enough view, if observers were alerted to watch for it. For the time being, of course, the Band-rumped should not be identified in North American waters on this basis alone, but it would certainly indicate that an individual storm-petrel deserved close observation and photographic documentation. —K. K.

Johnson, Ned K. 1980. **Character variation and evolution of sibling species in the *Empidonax difficilis-flavescens* complex (Aves: Tyrannidae).** *University of California Publications in Zoology* 112: 1-151 + x. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press.

Dr. Ned Johnson, who has already done much research on *Empidonax* flycatchers, here zeroes in on the Western Flycatcher *E. difficilis* and its southern counterpart, the Yellowish Flycatcher *E. flavescens* of S. Mexico and Central America. Some past workers have considered the Western and Yellowish conspecific. However, Johnson disagrees; he found significant differences in all their vocalizations, differences which

would probably prevent their hybridizing even if their breeding ranges came in contact (which they don't).

Johnson also devotes much discussion to another taxonomic question closer to home: the exact status of the two major populations of Western Flycatchers in the United States. Although the point is not mentioned in the standard field guides, these two forms may be easily identified by the call-notes of the males. Those of the Pacific coastal population, the race *E. d. difficilis*, utter a single slurred rising note, "pseet!" Those of the interior and Rocky Mountain race, *E. d. hellmayri*, have a distinctly two-syllabled "pit-peeet!" These two forms also differ in details of the dawn song, and in measurements.

Vocal differences are obviously important as species distinctions in some *Empidonax*. This situation naturally raises the question whether the interior and coastal forms might represent distinct species. But since their differences seem minor (at least to our perceptions), this question can't be tested unless the two forms are in contact during the breeding season, so that their interactions can be assessed. Johnson identified one region — Siskiyou County, California — where contact between the two forms could be confirmed. Here it appeared that "pure" coastal and interior birds were nesting in the same localities, a situation suggesting that they were not interbreeding; however, the extreme similarity of the forms involved made it particularly difficult to detect intermediate birds. Although Johnson does not formally propose "splitting" the two, he does keep the question open. The situation has potential. Further field studies in the area of contact are needed.

Clearly, however, birders should familiarize themselves with the position-notes of the males of the two forms, and make separate entries for them in daily field notes when possible.

Those with a particular interest in taxonomy and subspecies will want to read this paper to see how a super-authority deals with subtle geographic variation in these confusing birds. There is also a fascinating discussion of the processes by which so many very similar species of *Empidonax* could have evolved in North America. — K. K.

IDENTIFICATION AND RELATED TOPICS

- Caldwell, Patrick J. 1980. Primary shaft measurements in relation to age of Sharp-tailed Grouse. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 44 (1): 202-204.
- Foxall, Roger A. 1979. Presumed hybrids of the Herring Gull and the Great Black-backed Gull — a new problem of identification. *Am. Birds* 33 (6): 838.
- Grant, P. J. 1980. Field identification of west Palearctic gulls. Part 3. Audouin's, Herring, Lesser Black-backed, Great Black-backed and Great Black-headed gulls. *Br. Birds* 73 (3): 113-158.
— Another fine installment in this landmark series.
- Josephson, Bertie. 1980. Aging and sexing Snowy Owls. *J. Field Ornithol.* 51 (2): 149-160.
- Norman, D. M., and V. R. Tucker. 1979. Abnormally plumaged Great Skuas off Cornwall. *Br. Birds* 72 (10): 476.
- Tucker, V. R. 1980. Autumn Roseate Terns without tail streamers. *Br. Birds* 73 (6): 264.

TAXONOMY AND NEW FORMS

- Graves, Gary R. 1980. A new species of metaltail hummingbird from northern Peru. *Wilson Bull.* 92 (1): 1-7.
— *Metallura odomae*, the Neblina Metaltail.
- Pratt, H. Douglas. 1979. A new subspecies of the 'Elepaio *Chasiempis sandwichensis* from the Island of Hawaii. *Bull. B. O. C.* 99 (3): 105-108.

HYBRIDS AND HYBRIDIZATION

- Bolen, Eric G. 1979. Blue-winged X Cinnamon Teal hybrid from Oklahoma. *Wilson Bull.* 91 (3): 367-370.
- Craven, Scott R., and Ronald L. Westemeier. 1979. Probable Canada Goose X White-fronted Goose hybrids. *Wilson Bull.* 91 (4): 628-629.
- Gill, Frank B. 1980. Historical aspects of hybridization between Blue-winged and Golden-winged warblers. *Auk* 97 (1): 1-18.
- Wells, Shirley, and Luis F. Baptista. 1979. Displays and morphology of an Anna X Allen hummingbird hybrid. *Wilson Bull.* 91 (4): 524-532.
- Weseloh, D.V., and Linda McKeane Weseloh. 1979. Probable hybrids of Cinnamon X Blue-winged Teal from southern Alberta. *Can. Field-Nat.* 93 (3): 316-317.

RARA AVES

- Hilty, Steven L., Theodore A. Parker, III, and James Silliman. 1979. Observations on Plush-capped Finches in the Andes with a description of the juvenal and immature plumages. *Wilson Bull.* 91 (1): 145-148.
- Sykes, Paul W., Jr. 1979. Status of the Everglade Kite in Florida — 1968-1978. *Wilson Bull.* 91 (4): 495-511.
- Wilbur, Sanford R. 1980. Estimating the size and trend of the California Condor population, 1965-1978. *Calif. Fish Game* 66 (1): 40-48.

DISTRIBUTION — NORTH AMERICA

- Batey, Katherine M., Harry H. Batey, and Irven O. Buss. 1980. First Boreal Owl fledglings for Washington state. *Murrelet* 61 (2): 80.
- Blem, Charles R., William H. N. Gutzke, and Claire Filemyr. 1980. First breeding record of the Double-crested Cormorant in Virginia. *Wilson Bull.* 92 (1): 127-128.
- Brueggeman, John J. 1980. Coastal occurrence of birds at Point Barrow, Alaska, in spring. *Murrelet* 61 (1): 31-34.
- Brunton, Daniel F., Sidney Andrews, and David G. Paton. 1979. Nesting of the Calliope Hummingbird in Kananaskis Provincial Park, Alberta. *Can. Field-Nat.* 93 (4): 449-451.
- Bruun, Bertel. 1980. The Greenland Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe leucorrhoea*) in North America. *Am. Birds* 34 (3): 310-312.
- Duncan, Lucy R. 1979. A Band-tailed Pigeon recovery in Florida. *N. Am. Bird Bander* 4 (4): 168.
- Dziedosz, Victoria M. 1980. Specimen record of the Wood Sandpiper for the contiguous United States. *Am. Birds* 34 (3): 231.
— Taken 10 October 1907 at Gaines, Orleans Co., New York; passed off as a Solitary Sandpiper until recently.
- Eckert, Kim R. 1980. Mute Swan influx in the Duluth area. *Loon* 52 (3): 116-117.
— Minnesota occurrences may reflect expansion in the Great Lakes region.
- Griese, Herman J., Ronald A. Ryder, and Clait E. Braun. 1980. Spatial and temporal distribution of rails in Colorado. *Wilson Bull.* 92 (1): 96-102.
- Henderson, Philip. 1979. A Dotterel on Southeast Farallon Island, California. *West. Birds* 10 (2): 92-94.
— First California record, 12-20 September 1974.
- Hohn, E. Otto, and David J. Mussell. 1980. Northern Phalarope breeding in Alberta. *Can. Field-Nat.* 94 (2): 189-190.
— First confirmed breeding for the province,

- June 1979 in the Caribou Mts.
- King, Ben. 1980. **The second through fourth records for North America of the Pechora Pipit, *Anthus gustavi*.** *Am. Birds* 34 (3): 317-318.
— All on the Alaskan islands.
- King, Ben, Lawrence Balch, Jon Dunn, Davis W. Finch, George E. Hall, and Theodore Tobish. 1980. **First Green Sandpipers, *Tringa ochropus*, for North America.** *Am. Birds* 34 (3): 319-321.
- Kuyt, E. 1980. **Distribution and breeding biology of raptors in the Thelon River area, Northwest Territories, 1957-1969.** *Can. Field-Nat.* 94 (2): 121-130.
- Lee, David S., and John Booth, Jr. 1979. **Seasonal distribution of offshore and pelagic birds in North Carolina waters.** *Am. Birds* 33 (5): 715-721.
- Morrison, R.I.G. 1980. **First specimen record of the Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*) for North America.** *Auk* 97 (3): 627-628.
— 10 July 1979 near Moosonee, Ontario, on James Bay. First Canadian record.
- Ogden, John C., and Stephen A. Nesbitt. 1979. **Recent Wood Stork population trends in the United States.** *Wilson Bull.* 91 (4): 512-523.
- Reese, Jan G. 1980. **Demography of European Mute Swans in Chesapeake Bay.** *Auk* 97 (3): 449-464.
- Sealy, Spencer G., Donald A. Sexton, and K. Michael Collins. 1980. **Observations of a White-winged Crossbill invasion of south-eastern Manitoba.** *Wilson Bull.* 92 (1): 114-116.
- Soulen, Thomas K. 1980. **Minnesota's first Yellow-throated Warbler.** *Loon* 52(3): 111-112.
— Singing male in Ramsey County, 6-8 May 1980.
- Spitzer, Paul, and Alan Poole. 1980. **Coastal Ospreys between New York City and Boston: a decade of recovery 1969-1979.** *Am. Birds* 34 (3): 234-241.
- Webb, Bruce E., and Jeanne A. Conry. 1979. **A Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in Colorado, with notes on plumage and behavior.** *West. Birds* 10 (2): 86-91.
- DISTRIBUTION — OTHER AREAS**
- Broad, R. A. 1979. **Hermit Thrush: new to Britain and Ireland.** *Br. Birds* 72 (9): 414-417.
- Copleston, A., and K. W. Horton. 1980. **Eleonora's Falcon: new to Britain and Ireland.** *Br. Birds* 73 (8): 328-333.
- Dod, Annabelle Stockton. 1980. **First records of the Spotted Rail (*Pardirallus maculatus*) on the Island of Hispaniola.** *Auk* 97 (2): 407.
- Elkins, Norman. 1979. **Nearctic landbirds in Britain and Ireland: a meteorological analysis.** *Br. Birds* 72 (9): 417-433.
- Graham, Gary L., Gary R. Graves, Thomas S. Schulenberg, and John P. O'Neill. 1980. **Seventeen bird species new to Peru from the Pampas de Heath.** *Auk* 97 (2): 366-370.
- Hunt, David B. 1979. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: new to Britain and Ireland.** *Br. Birds* 72 (9): 410-414.
- Parker, Theodore A., III, and John P. O'Neill. 1980. **Notes on little known birds of the upper Urubamba valley, southern Peru.** *Auk* 97 (1): 167-176.
- Parker, Theodore A., III, J. V. Remsen, Jr., and J. A. Heindel. 1980. **Seven bird species new to Bolivia.** *Bull. B. O. C.* 100 (2): 160-162.
- Remsen, J.V., Jr., and Robert S. Ridgely. 1980. **Additions to the avifauna of Bolivia.** *Condor* 82 (1): 69-75.
- Ridgely, Robert S. 1980. **Notes on some rare or previously unrecorded birds in Ecuador.** *Am. Birds* 34 (3): 242-248.
- Sibley, Fred C., George F. Barrowclough, and Charles G. Sibley. 1980. **Notes on the birds of Honduras.** *Wilson Bull.* 92 (1): 125-126.
- Smith, Nigel J. H. 1980. **Further advances of House Sparrows into the Brazilian Amazon.** *Condor* 82 (1): 109-111.
- Telleria, Jose Luis. 1980. **Autumn migration of Cory's Shearwater through the Straits of Gibraltar.** *Bird Study* 27 (1): 21-26.
- Tramer, Elliot J. 1979. **First sight records of Lincoln's Sparrow for Costa Rica.** *Wilson Bull.* 91(3):469-470.
- MIGRATION AND RELATED TOPICS**
- Binford, Laurence C. 1979. **Fall migration of diurnal raptors at Pt. Diablo, California.** *West. Birds* 10 (1): 1-16.
- Griffin, Curtice R., Judith M. Southern, and L. D. Frenzel. 1980. **Origins and migratory movements of Bald Eagles wintering in Missouri.** *J. Field Ornithol.* 51 (2): 161-167.
- Hussell, David J. T. 1980. **The timing of fall migration and molt in Least Flycatchers.** *J. Field Ornithol.* 51 (1): 65-71.
- Rabøl, Jørgen. 1979. **Magnetic orientation in night-migrating passerines.** *Ornis Scand.* 10 (1): 69-75.
- Rosenfield, Robert N., and David L. Evans. 1980. **Migration incidence and sequence of age and sex classes of the Sharp-shinned Hawk.** *Loon* 52 (2): 66-69.
— Based on studies at Duluth, Minnesota.

NESTING

- Everett, Stephen W., and Carl D. Marti. 1979. **Unusual Dipper nests found in Utah.** *N. Am. Bird Bander* 4 (2): 58-59.
- Meltofte, Hans. 1978. **A breeding association between eiders and tethered huskies in north-east Greenland.** *Wildfowl* 29: 45-54.
- Simons, Theodore R. 1980. **Discovery of a ground-nesting Marbled Murrelet.** *Condor* 82 (1): 1-9.

TECHNIQUES

- Cairns, David. 1979. **Censusing hole-nesting auks by visual counts.** *Bird-Banding* 50 (4): 358-364.
- Marti, Carl D., Phillip W. Wagner, and Kathryn W. Denne. 1979. **Nest boxes for the management of Barn Owls.** *Wildl. Soc. Bull.* 7 (3): 145-148.
- Passmore, Michael F. 1979. **Use of velcro for handling birds.** *Bird-Banding* 50 (4): 369.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Brooke, R. K. 1979. **Predation on Ostrich eggs by tool-using Crows and Egyptian Vultures.** *Ostrich* 50 (4): 257-258.
- Eiserer, Leonard J. 1980. **Effects of grass length and mowing on foraging behavior of the American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*).** *Auk* 97 (3): 576-580.
- Fontaine, Roy. 1980. **Observations on the foraging association of Double-toothed Kites and White-faced Capuchin Monkeys.** *Auk* 97 (1): 94-98.
- Loftin, Robert W., and Steve Sutton. 1979. **Ruddy Turnstones destroy Royal Tern colony.** *Wilson Bull.* 91 (1): 133-135.

FULL TITLES, AND PLACES OF PUBLICA-

TION, OF SERIALS CITED ABOVE

Note on a name change: the well-known journal **Bird-Banding**, of which volume 50 was published in 1979, is now (as of 1980) appearing as **Journal of Field Ornithology**. The sequential numbering of **Bird-Banding** is being retained, so that the 1980 volume of the "new" title was volume 51.

American Birds National Audubon Society, New York, New York. **Auk** American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C. **Bird-Banding** Northeastern Bird-banding Association, Concord, Massachusetts. **Bird Study** British Trust for Ornithology, Hertfordshire, England. **British Birds** British Birds Ltd., Bedfordshire, England. **Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club** British Ornithologists' Club, c/o British Ornithologists' Union, London, England. **California Fish and Game** California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California. **Canadian Field-Naturalist** Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club, Ottawa, Ontario. **Condor** Cooper Ornithological Society, Los Angeles, California. **Journal of Field Ornithology** Northeastern Bird-banding Association, Concord, Massachusetts. **Journal of Wildlife Management** Wildlife Society, Washington, D.C. **The Loon** Minnesota Ornithologists' Union, Minneapolis, Minnesota. **Murrelet** Pacific Northwest Bird and Mammal Society, Pullman, Washington. **North American Bird Bander** joint publication of Eastern and Western Bird Banding Associations, Cave Creek, Arizona. **Ornis Scandinavica/Scandinavian Journal of Ornithology** Scandinavian Ornithologists' Union, Copenhagen, Denmark. **Ostrich** Southern African Ornithological Society, Johannesburg, South Africa. **Western Birds** Western Field Ornithologists, California. **Wildfowl** The Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, England. **Wildlife Society Bulletin** Wildlife Society, Washington, D.C. **Wilson Bulletin** Wilson Ornithological Society, Ann Arbor, Michigan.