

## Latest Rumors . . .

... Wherein we mention some of the notable bird records that have come to our attention recently. The column's title is chosen intentionally; we cannot claim that this summary is complete — nor, perhaps, even completely accurate, since we have not checked out most of these reports personally. We sincerely hope that we'll never see this column quoted as a source of information. For more carefully-screened reports, see the appropriate regional publications, or the regional reports in *American Birds*.

Interesting birds converged upon Florida from all directions this winter. In Everglades National Park, a **Thick-billed Vireo** *Vireo crassirostris* was seen by the fortunate, and there were persistent rumors of another West Indian stray, the Black-faced Grassquit *Tiaris bicolor*. In the same area (but arriving from the opposite direction) were several Lesser Nighthawks — up to five or six individuals; this southwestern species may be a regular stray in the Southeast (perhaps overlooked at times?). The European contribution to the Floridian winter included numbers of Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus*, now regular, and also a **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* found in February at Merritt Island. But most unique of the lot was a **White-collared Swift** *Streptoprocne zonaris* found dying on the fifth floor of a condominium in extreme northwestern Florida in January. This big swift is common in parts of Mexico and the West Indies, so it seemed only a matter of time before the U.S. got a record; at least one sighting had already been reported in Texas. — In more northern climes, New York birders had a special treat (albeit an elusive one) with a **white-phased Gyrfalcon** on Long Island, and Ontario hosted a wintering **Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*. — An odd immature gull detected at Anchorage, Alaska, was identified for some time as a Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris* from Asia, but subsequently doubts were raised: it may have been instead the Siberian race of the Mew Gull. — California had a parallel occurrence with a female hummingbird: it was first identified as a Ruby-throated (which would have been a first state record), but closer examination suggested it was a Black-chinned X Anna's hybrid. We mention these two cases of uncertainty not to cast aspersions upon anyone, but rather to applaud the efforts of the Californians and Alaskans in tackling these difficult identifications.

### BIRD ARTISTS WANTED

Additional artists are needed to contribute to an "advanced field guide" now being prepared by Wings Inc. in collaboration with *Continental Birdlife*. Basic requirements for artists include a high degree of technical competence, familiarity with birds in the field, and a willingness to work closely with the authors. For further information on art requirements and on fees offered, contact Kenn Kaufman, Editor, *Continental Birdlife*, P.O. Box 43294, Tucson, Arizona 85733.