

old stock had been sold from the cattle ranges of Avery Island and adjacent prairies, there were very few animals that died during the winter. Therefore, the food of the Black Vulture, *Coragyps atratus* (Meyer) was scarce.

I maintain, at Avery Island, two deer parks of about thirty acres each, and a thirty-five acre breeding ground for nutria (*Myocastor bonariensis*). I fed both the deer and nutria chopped sweet potatoes during the past winter. The feed was usually put into the feeding troughs in the early morning. The man in charge of the feeding reported that a number of Black Vultures came to each of the feeding places every morning and ate up quite a quantity of the chopped-up sweet potatoes. This feeding habit of the vultures was so unusual that it was difficult for me to believe, so I spent several mornings watching the troughs. I found that the vultures gathered at the feeding places before the food was put out and, as soon as it was spread in the troughs for both the nutria and the deer, the vultures would alight on the troughs and rapidly eat a large portion of it. I did not pay much attention to this depredation by the vultures until the man in charge of the feeding advised me that the vultures were coming in such numbers each morning that the deer and nutria were getting only a small portion of the food put out for them. I then had the feeding time changed from morning to after sundown, and this change in time, to a large extent, overcame the trouble. E. A. McILHENNY, *Avery Island, Louisiana.*

A change of breeding season by Australian gulls.—In the year 1922, the National Zoological Park added to its collection of birds several specimens of the Australian Silver Gull (*Larus novae-hollandiae*). These birds nested in November for two seasons, then adapted their breeding time to our spring and early summer. This northern-hemisphere nesting behavior of the birds continued regularly until this year, 1943. The descendants of the original stock have now reverted to the first nesting season in the park, which corresponds to the dates in their normal range in the southern hemisphere. During a snowstorm in December, the eggs in two nests hatched and it became necessary to remove the birds and hand-feed them in the heated bird house.

Just what caused these birds to change their breeding season again after a continuous period of about twenty-two years of spring reproduction to the original winter courtship and nest-building, is a question that I am unable to answer.—MALCOLM DAVIS, *National Zoological Park, Washington, D. C.*

Catesby's tropic-bird.—Of the tropic-birds included in the A. O. U. Check-List (1931), one, the Red-tailed (*Phaëthon rubricauda rothschildi*), is recorded as accidental near Guadalupe Island, Lower California. Two chiefly white-tailed species are recorded from Atlantic Coast waters, one the Red-billed (*Phaëthon aethereus*), as a breeder in the Lesser Antilles, casual in Jamaica and Bermuda, and accidental off Newfoundland, and the other, the Yellow-billed (*Phaëthon lepturus catesbyi*), as a breeder in Bermuda and West Indies and accidental in Florida, South Carolina, New York, and off Nova Scotia. There has been more or less confusion of the last two forms, for one reason because the color of the bill is not distinctive [Plath, Ibis, (10) 2: 554, 1914; Wetmore, Proc. N. Y. Acad. Sci., 9 (3): 278, 1927], although it has long been indicated as diagnostic in the vernacular names.

In this discussion the forms will be referred to in accordance with their most obvious visual characters, as the barred-backed (Red-billed) and white-backed (Yellow-billed) species. Linnaeus (Syst. Nat., ed. 10, 1: 134, 1758) applied the name *aethereus* to the former but his citations included apparently all of the tropic

birds recorded from the world at that time. His references number eight, and of these we may ignore half, namely those to Aldrovandus, Edwards, Sloane, and Kalm as, for lack of description or other reason, the birds referred to are not specifically identifiable. All of the others describe the back of the bird as white with transverse wavy black lines. There are only two known species of tropic-birds having this character: *aethereus* L., and *indicus* Hume. The latter species need not be further considered here. Peters ('Birds of the World,' 1: 78, 1931) places *indicus* as one of four subspecies of *aethereus*. Linnaeus's first reference is to Catesby—"Car. 3, p. 14, t. 14"—and his description of the critical character is: "alba supra lineis nigricantibus undulata tota." This is close to a literal translation of Catesby's words: "White, except the back which is variegated with curved lines of black."

How it was ever concluded that Catesby's tropic-bird was the white-backed species is, therefore, a mystery. Typical of the confusion is Coues's treatment (Key N. A. birds, ed. 5: 972, 1903), in which he calls the barred-backed species, Catesby's Tropic Bird, yet in his account of the white-backed species says: "This is the original Tropic Bird of Catesby, 1743, pl. 14." The reason for this conclusion in disregard of the principal fact involved probably was the assumption that Catesby's bird was from the Bermudas where the white-backed species is a common breeder. But Catesby does not say that the material from which his description was made was of Bermudan origin. He merely says, as of a past occurrence, that he had shot tropic birds (of which apparently he thought there was only a single species) "there at the time of their breeding. . . . They breed also on some little islands at the east end of Porto-Rico" (Carolina, 2, Appendix: 14, 1743).

So far as locality is concerned, even if Catesby's bird was from the Bermudas, it might have been a straggler of the barred-backed form such as subsequently has been recorded from those islands (A. O. U. Check-List, 4th ed.: 17, 1931). His illustration (Appendix, Pl. 14), Mathews's compliment to the contrary notwithstanding, is not identifiable. It does not show a white back "variegated with curved lines of black," but it is also far from white, better described as fulvous in the copy now accessible to me. In the Edwards edition of Catesby, the figure has been altered so as to correspond more closely with the description but still does not show the back "variegated with curved lines of black." However, interest in this edition is merely academic; the original remains the decisive reference. Moreover, regardless of what a plate might show, the plain words of the description can not be ignored.

Another element—size—may be involved, as Osbeck (Iter, 291; known to me in the German translation of J. G. Georgi, 1765), one of the authors cited by Linnaeus, said his bird was the size of a duck, while Catesby compared his in that respect to a partridge. There is nothing necessarily distinctive in these references, and the color description remains the only tangible diagnostic element in these early accounts.

The evidence, therefore, seems clearly to indicate that Catesby's Tropic-bird is that described by Linnaeus as *aethereus* of which it was a partial basis. Indeed, with a first species rule, it would have been the governing criterion of the name. Thus it appears any name based solely upon Catesby's description must be a synonym of *aethereus*. That includes *Phaëthon catesbyi* Brandt which Mathews [Auk, 32 (3): 195-197, 1915] proposed to revive for the white-backed species. Brandt put a question mark after the name, showing that he was not formally pro-

posing it (Monogr. Phaëthon: 270, 1840), but ignoring that, his description is merely a translation of Catesby's, including the sentence, "Color generalis albus, dorso transversim nigro fasciolato."

In view of the record as here reviewed, it seems necessary to revert to the usage of the third edition of the A. O. U. Check-List (1910, p. 59) and use Ogilvie-Grant's name *Phaëthon americanus* (*Phaëthon americanus*, Bull. British Orn. Club, 49: xxiv, Dec., 1897) for the white-backed bird. As this form is considered a subspecies in the *lepturus* complex (Oberholser, Auk, 36: 556, 1919; Peters, Birds of the World, 1: 79, 1931), the name should be *Phaëthon lepturus americanus* Ogilvie-Grant. This author, in his revision (Cat. Birds British Mus., 26: 456, 1898), while correctly citing *Phaëthon catesbyi* Brandt as a synonym of *P. aethereus*, makes the first reference under *P. americanus*, the Tropic Bird of Catesby, thus giving further evidence of the strange confusion that has prevailed with respect to the names of the western Atlantic tropic birds. Despite this slip, Ogilvie-Grant described the white-backed species (by comparing it with *flavirostris* = *lepturus*) and gave it its only unshared name.—W. L. McATEE, *Fish and Wildlife Service, Chicago, Illinois.*

The type of *Telespiza ultima* Bryan.—In 'The Auk,' 34: 70-72, 1917, the late William A. Bryan named and described *Telespiza ultima* from Nihoa Island, Hawaii. The type series consisted of five specimens collected by Lieut. W. H. Munter, February 12, 1916. The holotype and three paratypes were skins made from formalin specimens; the fifth was left in formalin.

Among a number of Mr. Bryan's birdskins recently donated by Mrs. Bryan to the Los Angeles County Museum are the four above mentioned. The holotype is now no. 20243 and the three paratypes are nos. 20244-5-6 in our collection.—G. WILLET, *Los Angeles County Museum, Los Angeles, California.*

The correct name of the Fijian Mountain Lorikeet.—Flights of this little lory appeared in the summer of 1875 in different parts of the Fiji Islands and specimens collected by C. Pearce, A. Boyd, Th. Kleinschmidt, and A. L. Layard came into the possession of three bird taxonomists. All three described the species as new, but Finsch, learning of an earlier name for the species, withdrew his own name at the last minute (Journ. Mus. Godeffroy, 12: 3-4, 1876). The species is now known under the name *Vini aureicinctus* (Layard) [Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist., (4) 16: 344, Nov., 1875]. Actually the species had already been described four months earlier by Ramsay under the name *Trichoglossus amabilis*. Ramsay read a description of this species at a meeting of the Linnaean Society of New South Wales on July 26, 1875. However, the Proceedings of the Society, which contain the report of this meeting, were not published until February, 1876. Knowing the tardiness of this publication, Ramsay took steps to insure the priority of his description. Since at that date no frequently issued scientific journal was available in Australia, he published a complete, detailed, technical description of *amabilis* in a daily newspaper, the Sydney Morning Herald of July 28, 1875. Furthermore, in order to make sure that this publication would not be overlooked, he called attention to it in the Proc. Linn. Soc. N. S. W., 1: 74. Mr. K. A. Hindwood had the great kindness to look up the files of the Sydney Morning Herald and report to me that no. 11604 (of July 28, 1875) of this paper contains on p. 9 "a very complete technical description of both male and female [of *amabilis*], together with measurements and some general remarks. The actual descriptions of both male and female take up about 50 lines single column in the newspaper."