

**The Red-spotted Bluethroats of northwestern Alaska.**—Recently, through the coöperation of the Colorado Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, the Chicago Natural History Museum (Bishop coll.), and the Chicago Academy of Sciences I have been able to study a more comprehensive series of Alaskan bluethroats than has been the good fortune of earlier investigators. The birds forwarded by these institutions, when added to the material already in the combined collection of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the U. S. National Museum, included 16 Alaskan examples, while for comparative material I have had good series from northern Europe, China and Siberia, and wintering birds from northeastern Asia. Lack of material of a number of European and Asiatic races precluded a revision of the species, but the problem of immediate interest—the status of the North American birds—was examined and the following result obtained. In neither size nor color characters is it possible to distinguish Alaskan or, for that matter, northeastern Siberian, birds from typical *suecica* of Scandinavia. It follows therefore that *robusta* cannot be recognized and that the Alaskan birds should be called *Luscinia* (or *Cyanosylvia*) *suecica suecica*. This race apparently ranges across northern Europe and Asia, north of the other subspecies, to northwestern Alaska.

The race *robusta* was described as being darker, more intensively colored, with a larger reddish area on the forehead, and larger (wing 75–80 mm.) than the nominate form.

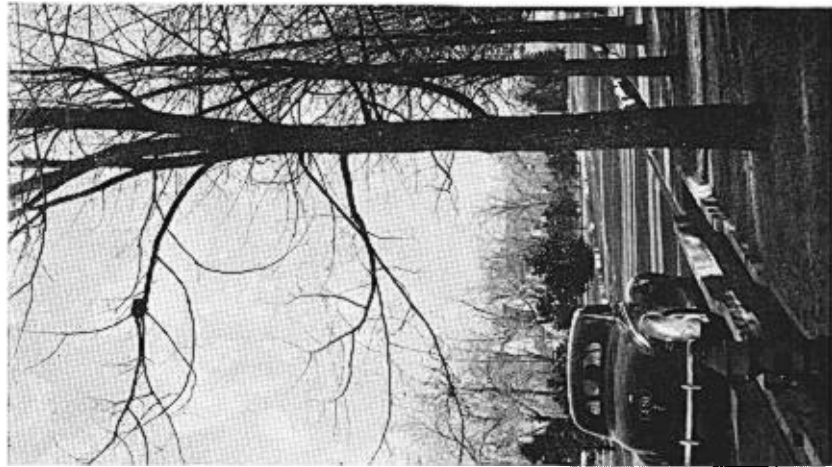
The wing length of eight Alaskan males varies from 70.1 to 74.1 mm.; that of 12 typical *suecica* from Europe and Asia 69–74 mm.; the tails of the eight Alaskan examples, 49.2–55.2 mm; of 12 Eurasian birds 53–59 mm. Eight Alaskan females have wings of 68.1–71 mm. as compared with 65–74 mm. in European and Asiatic examples.

While convinced that the material examined leaves me no choice but to conclude that *robusta* is not separable from *suecica*, I am not unmindful of the fact that European ornithologists, and especially the Russians who have far better Eurasian material available, do recognize *robusta* as a valid form. No actual topotypes of *robusta* have been available to me in this study.—HERBERT FRIEDMANN, U. S. National Museum, Washington, D. C.

**The Range of *Francolinus finschi* extended northward.**—Although described by Bocage as long ago as 1881 from a single immature male collected at Caconda in Angola, this francolin has remained a rarity; and very little has been published about its distribution or behavior. Mackworth-Praed (*Ibis*: 122, 1922) regarded it as a valid species, probably allied to *Francolinus levaillantii*, and represented by two specimens at Tring. One of these was an adult male from South Libollo, Angola, obtained by Pemberton. The other bird, however, a young female taken by Ansonge at Katenge in Benguela Province, is really not *finschi*, but the young of *F. harillaubi*.

More recently Rudyerd Boulton tells me that he collected two females of *finschi* at Namba in the Mombolo area of Angola in 1931 for the Carnegie Museum, and that Mrs. J. Bodaly sent one to Boardman Conover from Chitau, Angola, in 1932. In the British Museum, Boulton has also seen one adult with well-developed spurs from between the Cuanza and Luando rivers, collected by E. H. Buxton.

Those appear to have been all that were known until Dr. R. Malbrant of Brazzaville published a note on a "yellow-footed francolin" from the vicinity of Stanley Pool on the Congo River, in the *Bulletin de la Société de Botanique et de Zoologie Congolaises*, Léopoldville: 3 (4), 6, 1940. Dr. Malbrant subsequently sent three skins of this bird to the American Museum of Natural History, and they prove to be



WEBB.—ROBINS' NESTS ON TREE BRANCHES OVERHANGING ROADS. (Photographs by H. L. Standley.)

*finschi*. The range has thus been extended some 660 miles to the northward, into an area where the bird was certainly most unexpected.

Careful comparison of two adult males and an adult female from the vicinity of Brazzaville with the male in the Rothschild Collection from the South Libollo country fails to reveal any difference which I can regard even as subspecific. The female scarcely differs from the males in color or size, except that her tarsus is about 3 mm. shorter and lacks a spur. The wing-length of Brazzaville males is 170 and 181 mm.; that of the female, 173.

If *finschi* is to be regarded as a race of some earlier-known species, I believe that it must be allied with *Francoelinus shelleyi*, and not *levaillantii*. The latter species is represented in Angola by two races, and *F. levaillantii benguellensis* has been collected by Boulton in the Mombolo area, where he also found *finschi*. In general form *finschi* is very similar to the large-billed *F. s. shelleyi*, but differs strikingly in the lack of any black lines encircling the light throat or running from behind the eye down the side of the neck. It is also without black barring on the middle of the under surface. Yet there is fine gray barring on the outer webs of the flank-feathers which suggests alliance with *shelleyi*. When we notice how the black lines around throat and neck have broken up in *F. shelleyi whytei* of Nyasaland and the southeastern Congo to a merely speckled condition, it seems not unlikely that *finschi* may exhibit a still greater divergence from the nominate race. As for the black barring of median under parts in *F. s. shelleyi*, this has been diluted to brown or rufous-brown barring in *F. shelleyi elgonensis* of Kenya Colony, and thus may have been lost by *finschi*.

Doctor Malbrant wrote in 1940 that this "yellow-footed francolin" is widely distributed in the region of Stanley Pool, though less numerous there than *Pternistis afer cranchii*. It frequents grassy savannas, and is very difficult to hunt without dogs. When pursued it may seek refuge near wooded spots, but unless wounded it will not really enter the woods. This brief account of its habits agrees well with what we know of *F. shelleyi whytei* in the Upper Katanga.—JAMES P. CHAPIN, *American Museum of Natural History, New York 24, N. Y.*

**Robins' nests on tree branches overhanging roads** (Plate 10).—A proclivity of Robins to build nests on branches of trees overhanging the streets has been noticed for some years in Colorado Springs. An opportunity came last fall and winter to take a census of such nests. A gentle chinook had hastened the falling of leaves. In general, in this city, Robins prefer to nest in spruce trees, so plentiful in certain sections. Then Robins' nests are not often seen on other trees. Maples, ash, box elders, some cottonwoods and elms are the principal trees bordering our streets and in park areas. Here and in other Colorado towns, Robins seem to avoid building nests on cottonwood trees.

Coasting at 10 M. P. H. or less, up and down, in different directions and in different lights, I made a count of over 500 Robins' nests. The tabulated result shows that 345 were noted on tree branches overhanging streets, alleys and driveways, 107 on branches bending inwards over sidewalks, and 54 in vertical forks. Many of the latter branches inclined to the streets when other vertical forks could have been selected. These nests are quite conspicuous although those built squat on heavy limbs are sometimes overlooked. Great attention was given to noting nests on inside tree branches in order to arrive at a careful count. Lower branches from fifteen to thirty feet above the streets are usually selected by the birds. In the foothill region, west of the city, roads have been cut through scrub oak patches, and where these grow on high banks, nests have been noted on branches inclining over the roads.