"concealing" posture that the Screech Owl often assumes on the approach of a person, which is well described by Durfee as quoted by Bent (U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull. 170:255–256, 1938). As I was observing the owl at nearly right angles to the line along which its attention was fixed I could not see whether it had the nearly closed, oblique eye slits and stiffly erect ear tufts of the typical "concealing" position.

After a couple of minutes the sparrow flew away and the owl immediately relaxed into its original position. A group of noisy children and a dog passed within twenty feet of the owl but its only reaction was to turn its head. Soon another sparrow lit on the trellis; the owl immediately resumed the "concealing" posture. Four other sparrows joined the one on the trellis and one by one they dropped to the ground and foraged among fallen leaves, gradually approaching the owl until they were about ten feet from the spot above which it was perched. All the time the owl oriented its posture toward the nearest sparrow, shifting as first one and then another approached nearer. In about ten minutes the sparrows flew away and the owl again sank into its normal position.

If the posture described was indeed the "concealing" one, why was it assumed toward the sparrows but not toward the children? Perhaps the owl was afraid of being mobbed by the sparrows, although I have never seen them bothering any of the numerous owls noticed at the Experiment Station. Or does the Screech Owl assume this posture in the presence of prey? Darkness was approaching and in a short time the owl would probably be hunting.—WM. L. PUTMAN, *Vineland Station, Ontario, Canada.*

Correcting an Old Albatross Error.—The Peabody Museum of Salem has in its maritime department a collection of some two thousand log books covering voyages to the seven seas, and its curator, Marion Brewington, has called my attention to certain items in them. It seems to have been a fairly common procedure for whalers to mark or band sea birds, often by tying about the neck a small bottle or tin box containing a message, in the hope that it would be found by another vessel and eventually reach home port.

By far the most interesting item refers to a bird mentioned by Robert Cushman Murphy in "Oceanic Birds of South America" (vol. 1: 546, 1936) as follows: "In the Brown University Museum is a manuscript taken from a vial which was found tied to the neck of a Wandering Albatross. The bird was shot off the coast of Chile by Captain Hiram Luther on December 20, 1847, in latitude 45° 50′ S., longitude 78° 27′ W. The note reads: 'Dec. 8th, 1847. Ship 'Euphrates,' Edwards, 16 months out, 2300 barrels of oil, 150 of it sperm. I have not seen a whale for 4 months. Lat. 43° S, long. 148° 40′ W. Thick fog, with rain.' According to these figures, the albatross had travelled 3150 nautical miles (5837 kilometers) as the crow flies during the twelve-day interval between the writing of the manuscript and the shooting of the bird."

The quoted date and locality of capture—and thus the distance of this remarkable flight—appear to be incorrect. Captain Luther wrote in the log book of the CACHALOT on December 30, 1847—Latitude 43° 24′ S, Longitude 79° 5′ W: "Caught a Goney with a bottle arond his neck Containing a piece of paper rote by Capt. Edwards, Ship Euphrates of N Bedford, in Lat 43°, South, Long, 148° 40′ W, reporting her with 2300 bbls, 150 of sp oil, 16 mo."

This reveals an error of ten days in elapsed time, plus minor mistakes in both latitude and longitude. As figured at the Peabody Museum the flight covered 3050 miles (by rhumb line) in 22 days, for an average of 138.6 miles a day, instead of

3150 miles in 12 days, averaging 262.5 miles each day. The mistakes apparently occurred because Dr. Murphy copied the item from a newspaper clipping attached to the "goney" he found in the Brown University collection. The original message hung on the bird had long since disappeared (*in litt.*, David A. Jonah, Librarian, Brown University).—DOROTHY E. SNYDER, *The Peabody Museum, Salem, Mass., April 28, 1958.*

The Specific Name of the Bohemian Waxwing.—In the fifth edition (1957) of the A.O.U. "Check-list of North American Birds," the scientific name of the Bohemian Waxwing is given as *Bombycilla garrula* (Linnaeus), as it was in the fourth (1931) and third (1910) editions. Earlier editions placed the waxwings in the genus *Ampelis,* and the Bohemian Waxwing was listed as *Ampelis garrulus* (Linnaeus), although *Ampelis* is of feminine gender (Brown, "Composition of Scientific Words," p. 145, 1956). Current European literature is unanimous in giving the specific name a masculine termination, *Bombycilla garrulus* (*cf.* B.O.U. "Check-list of the Birds of Great Britain and Ireland," p. 87, 1952). The use of the feminine spelling *"garrula"* by the A.O.U. Committee in 1910 seems to have been derived from an erroneous impression that the specific name was intended by Linnaeus as an adjective, and must therefore conform in gender with the generic name (in this case, the feminine *Bombycilla*). Linnaeus described the Bohemian Waxwing in the 10th edition of the "Systema Naturae" (vol. 1, p. 95, 1758) as *Lanius Garrulus,* as correctly cited in the new A.O.U. "Check-list" (p. 460). In this edition of the "Systema" Linnaeus used a capital initial letter for his specific names which were intended as substantives in the nominative case, in apposition with the generic name. For adjectival specific names he used a lower-case initial letter. Thus, even when placed in a feminine genus, the name would continue to be spelled *garrulus;* the usage in the first two editions of the A.O.U. "Check-list" (*Ampelis garrulus*) was grammatically correct.

Few birds would be less appropriately called "garrulous" than a waxwing. Linnaeus, however, was not describing an attribute of the bird, but referring to the fact that some earlier writers had placed this species in the jay genus *Garrulus.* This whole question was thoroughly discussed many years ago by A. E. Newton, in his revision of William Yarrell's "History of British Birds" (p. 535–536, London, 1871), as follows:

"The name *Ampelis* was that under which Aldrovandus described the bird in 1599, complaining of Gesner, who had, in 1555, called it *Garrulus Bohemicus*—the Bohemian Jay or Chatterer, and justly remarking that it had nothing to do with birds of the Pie-kind, that it did not chatter nor was it known to be peculiar to Bohemia. Linnaeus, with whom all scientific nomenclature begins, kept what seemed good to him in both these names, using that of Aldrovandus for the genus [in the 12th edition of the 'Systema Naturae'] and Gesner's first word for the species—the general likeness between a Jay and a Waxwing being sufficiently obvious. . . .

"The liberty which many writers have taken with the Linnaean specific name, writing *'garrula'* for *'Garrulus,'* and thus turning a substantive which is in some degree appropriate into an adjective which is not, is also to be condemned."

American usage should thus conform to the correct spelling *Bombycilla garrulus* (Linnaeus) as used abroad, rather than the present spelling of the A.O.U. "Check-list." I am supported in this opinion by Dr. Alexander Wetmore, to whom I am grateful for help in clearing up this nomenclatorial discrepancy.—KENNETH C. PARKES, *Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, Pa.*