

more. It is possible that the other birds seen might also have been *C. dominicus*; but it must be stated that the Black-bellied Plover is a common migrant in Washington, and it seems equally possible that the others might have been *Squatarola squatarola*.

Since the above-mentioned specimen was obtained Mr. D. E. Brown, of Seattle, Washington, tells me that a Golden Plover was taken some time ago in the vicinity of that city, but I believe that it has never been put on record. Mr. Brown also tells me that a year or two ago he saw on the Tacoma Flats what he feels certain was a bird of this species, owing to the large amount of yellow on the upper parts. This was in the late spring and the bird appeared to be in full breeding plumage. It seems possible, therefore, that this plover is of more frequent occurrence in the state than has been supposed.—J. H. BOWLES, *Tacoma, Washington*.

A Note on the Food of the Northern Pileated Woodpecker.—The stomach contents of a specimen of the Northern Pileated Woodpecker (*Phloeotomus pileatus abieticola*) taken at Lakeport, Lake County, California, November 5, 1915, and sent to the University of California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, was found to be of peculiar interest. The stomach contained more than fifty carpenter ants (*Camponotus herculeaneus* subsp.) and 131 seeds of poison oak (*Rhus diversiloba*). As the seeds of poison oak are hard and without a noticeable covering of softer material it is difficult to understand what there is about them that is attractive to birds. Certain it is that the seeds are incapable of complete digestion by woodpeckers. In California poison oak is a favorite food of the Red-shafted Flicker also. Ants are commonly taken by the Flicker, California Woodpecker and by Sapsuckers.

The stomachs of two Pileated Woodpeckers taken in or near Yosemite National Park (orig. nos. 1545 and 7814, in Mus. Vert. Zool.) were filled with carpenter ants (*Camponotus herculeaneus modoc* Wheeler), many of them winged. Each stomach contained more than a hundred of these ants. In addition one stomach contained a whole fruit of manzanita (*Arctostaphylos nevadensis* Gray) and the other, four large beetle larvae (*Cerambycidae*), unidentifiable as to genus or species, which had evidently been dug out of some dead tree, as the stomach contained slivers of dead wood.

The above evidence shows that the animal food of the Pileated Woodpecker in California is largely made up of carpenter ants (*Camponotus* sp.) and to a lesser extent of wood-boring larvae. Vegetable food in the shape of poison oak seeds and the fruit of manzanita is occasionally taken.—H. C. BRYANT, *Berkeley, California*.

Occurrence of Emperor Goose in Northern California.—On November 1, 1915, Mr. S. M. Gridley, of Gridley, California, brought me an Emperor Goose for mounting. The bird was in full adult plumage, and in good physical condition. Sex identification was impossible on account of the damaged state of the internal organs. I at once appreciated the rarity of the goose and endeavored to obtain possession of the specimen, but the owner declined to part with it.

The gentleman reported that for a week prior to being killed, this goose had frequented, in the company of a flock of Cackling Geese, the territory adjacent to the tules west of the town. The bird was so tame as to lead to the supposition that it was a cripple, and only upon being closely approached did it fly.

I was further told that a similar goose had been shot last year in the same locality.—CARL S. MULLER, *Marysville, California*.

Townsend Solitaire in the San Jacinto Mountains.—In the field work conducted in the San Jacinto Mountains in 1908 by the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, and subsequently reported upon by Grinnell and Swarth (Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., vol. 10, 1913, pp. 197-406), the Townsend Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*) was not met with at any point. From the number of collectors in our party, enabling us to cover a wide extent of ground, and from the length of time we spent in the mountains, we felt justified in the conclusion that our failure to encounter this species meant that it did not breed in this southern range. It was, therefore, with the greatest interest that I recently learned from Mr. O. W. Howard that this was a mistaken idea.

Messrs. O. W. Howard and H. J. Leland spent a few days of this year (1915) in Strawberry Valley and vicinity, where they discovered two nests of the Solitaire. The first was far up a narrow canyon heading on Tahquitz Peak and opening out in the

upper part of Strawberry Valley, the nest being at an altitude of approximately 7500 feet. It was discovered on July 4, and contained four small young. The parent bird was flushed from the nest. The second discovery, on July 5, was of a deserted nest, found in Dark Canyon, on the Banning road, northwest of Strawberry Valley.

On September 14, 1914, the present writer saw two Solitaires on the slopes of San Jacinto Peak, between Round Valley and the summit, and in September, 1915, Mr. L. E. Wyman tells me he collected three of the birds in Tahquitz Valley, and saw several more. These, of course, might all have been migrating individuals.

The breeding record of Messrs. Howard and Lelande is of especial interest as establishing the presence of the species at the extreme southern limit of the Boreal zone in California. Previous to this the Townsend Solitaire was known to breed in southern California only in the San Bernardino Mountains (Grinnell, Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., vol. 5, 1908, p. 128).—H. S. SWARTH, *Museum of History, Science and Art, Los Angeles, California*.

Auburn Canyon Wren, a Preferable Name for *Catherpes mexicanus punctulatus*.—We have no recourse against misnomers in scientific nomenclature provided they establish priority; but it is silly to perpetuate in common speech the trivialities, or whimsicalities, or downright misapprehensions, of original describers. I have no quarrel with Mr. Ridgway for having named a new race of *Catherpes punctulatus*. He had to name it something and he may have been struck at the time with an aspect of his new bird which later experience proved not to be distinctive. At any rate in his latest description (*Birds of North & Middle America, Part III, p. 659*), Mr. Ridgway does not even refer to this feature of punctateness. He merely says of *C. m. punctulatus*: "Similar in small size to *C. m. conspersus* but decidedly darker".

This darker coloration, then, is the point to emphasize, and the point which should have been brought out in nomenclature (doubtless would have been if *brunneicapillus* had been accurately descriptive or had not already been worn to a frazzle in the service of the Wrens), instead of a purely hypothetical dottedness. Now, every one who knows this jolly mountaineer of California, knows that his coat is of a rich auburn hue. To call him "Dotted" by preëminence, is to imply that his conspecific associates are *not* dotted, or not as conspicuously dotted as he, which is not at all the case. To cling to such a misconception or false emphasis merely for custom's sake is to repeat the offense and to be unscientific. I propose, then, as a designation both suitable and distinctive for the California bird the name *Auburn Canyon Wren*.

This same method of criticism may be applied to several other cases, fortunately only a residual few among Western bird-names. The name "Long-tailed Chat" for *Icteria virens longicauda* is technically correct; the bird has a longer tail than its eastern relative, *a third of an inch longer!* but no one would ever have seized upon such a trivial mark for a name, save in ignorance and sheer despair. Besides, the western bird has half a dozen other distinctive characters just as palpable. And there are only two Chats. For pity's sake and for the sake of our own good sense, let us cease to brandish this extra third of an inch on a bird's tail. Call it the Western Chat.

As another instance of the poverty of attention or laziness of invention, behold our literal translation of *Rallus levipes*, the Light-footed Rail, of course! And because of this flippant character (whose claims it would take a two-pound can of printers' ink to successfully define anyway), we are suffered to forget that the southern bird is a *Clapper Rail*. But "Light-footed Rail" does sound well. It flicks the imagination and is undeniably romantic. It almost picks the pocket of my prejudice. Light-fingered Rail would do it quite. Moreover, the name as it stands has a market value. Why, the skin of a "Light-footed Rail" sounds twice as expensive as would the skin of a Southwestern Clapper Rail with its implied taint of subspecificity. I have neither skins nor eggs myself, but I withdraw my objection in this case in favor of certain worthy friends, worthy and needy.

Remains only one sticker in the writer's dyspeptic crop, the "Ashy" Petrel, *Oceanodroma homochroa*. The bird simply *isn't* ashy. It is plumbeous black. The man of only ordinary intelligence picking up a waif Petrel on the strand out of range, has to consult his books to know whether his find is really an "Ashy" Petrel, or a Black Petrel (*O. melania*). No amount of nomenclatorial abuse heaped upon this bird will ever make its plumage recognizably cinereous. Why not call it, then, after the worthy man who discovered it, "Coues" Petrel?—WILLIAM LEON DAWSON, *Santa Barbara, California*.