

DIAGNOSIS.—Resembles closely *Passerella iliaca megarhyncha* but differs in less robust bill, and slightly paler (ashier) tone of gray on upper surface; differs from *Passerella iliaca schistacea* (as represented by specimens from north-western Nevada), in thicker bill, longer claws, and paler dorsal coloration. (See figs. 54a, b, c, d.)

MATERIAL.—Nine specimens, including the type, from Mono County, California, as follows: from Mono Lake P. O., 6500 feet altitude, 4; from Walker Lake, 8000 feet, 3; from Parker Creek at 7500 and 8600 feet, 2.

REMARKS.—The Mono Fox Sparrow adds another race to the assemblage of pale-colored forms breeding in the western United States. It is not expedient to attempt at this time to determine the range of the new form beyond what is indicated by the few localities given.

*Berkeley, California, August 13, 1917.*

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**The Oldest American Ornithologist.**—For twenty-two years the record for longevity among American ornithologists has been held by the late George Newbold Lawrence, who was born October 20, 1806, and died January 17, 1895, at the age of 88 years, 2 months and 28 days. This record has now been broken by a well known Californian and one of the honorary members of the Cooper Ornithological Club. On June 12, 1917, Mr. Lyman Belding<sup>1</sup> celebrated his 88th birthday and on September 9 passed the limit reached by Lawrence.

Comparatively few ornithologists have exceeded this age. Dr. Jean Louis Cabanis, editor of the *Journal fur Ornithologie*, died only two weeks before his 90th birthday; Dr. Alfred Russell Wallace lacked two months of 91; Dr. Rudolf Amandus Philippi of Santiago, Chili, almost reached the age of 96; William Bernhard Tegetmeier, the English aviculturist, lived 96 years and two weeks; and Dr. Sven Nilsson, the eminent Swedish ornithologist, held the world's record among ornithologists, having attained the age of nearly 97. Nilsson died November 30, 1883, at the age of 96 years, 8 months and 22 days.

Belding, at the time that he made his first trip to Lower California in 1881, was several years older than Bryant, Gambel, Grayson, Heermann, Kennerly or Suckley were when they died, and when his first book on ornithology appeared, the "Land Birds of the Pacific District", he was older than Bendire, Cassin, Coues, Lesson or Wilson were when they ceased publishing. With his present strong constitution and usual good health there is reason to hope that his span of life may exceed that of any of his ornithological predecessors in other lands.—T. S. PALMER, *Washington, D. C., July 25, 1917.*

**A Portable Nest.**—Having just concluded a rather interesting observation upon a nest of the House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis*) and its owners, it occurred to me that an account of it might prove of more or less interest to readers of THE CONDOR. It happened that a pair of these well known little birds chose as a nesting place a shelf in a lean-to which was being used as a garage. The nest was built during a week's absence of the owners of the lean-to, who found it very much in the way upon their return. Not wishing to see the nest destroyed, as the birds were doing no harm, I decided to try a little experiment, and as carefully as possible I moved the nest three or four feet to one side on to a beam about fifteen inches higher than its former site, and just under the lower end of the roof. The next time I went into the shed the female flew out, exposing an egg to view.

Each day the nest was moved from one to several feet, until it had rested in every available spot in the lean-to, the birds following it wherever it was placed and laying in all six eggs. And these were all successfully hatched out. After the youngsters appeared I continued to move the nest about, the parents following it. One day, however, my partner remained all day in the "garage" working upon the car, and this proved to

<sup>1</sup>For a portrait, see THE CONDOR, II, January, 1900, p. 2.

be too much for the birds. They did not seem to mind being moved about continually, but would not tolerate the presence of a man working near them all day, finally deserting the young. I tried to save the little ones by feeding them with bread soaked in milk, but they were too young to live through my rough nursing.

Another pair of House Finches built a nest directly over the entrance to our cabin. As it was apt to be in our way my partner destroyed it. But they were persistent, and tried it again with the same result. They have already built three nests on exactly the same spot and are now working on a fourth, evidently believing in the old saying, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again". Evidently they have taken a strong dislike to my partner and myself, and seem to show their indignation by pecking at the window nearest the entrance whenever either of us is inside.—ERNEST C. MAILLIARD, *Hay Fork, Trinity County, California, June 1, 1917.*

**The Black-footed Albatross off the Coast of Washington.**—While not by any means wishing to intimate that the following notes constitute a new record for the region, the writer considers that the occurrence of albatrosses of any kind near our shores is possibly a matter of general interest. On May 27, 1917, we were so fortunate as to secure three fine specimens of the Black-footed Albatross (*Diomedea nigripes*) which were collected about eighteen miles southwest of Cape Flattery, Washington. Although not observed in abundance, these birds were frequently seen. They occasionally followed the fishing boats, generally by two's, looking for such scraps of fish as might be thrown overboard. The measurements of the birds were as follows, in inches: Male, length 34.25, extent 84.25; male, length 35.00, extent 86.00; female, length 31.50, extent 77.49. All these specimens are now in the collection of Mr. D. E. Brown, of Seattle, Washington.—E. A. KITCHIN, *Tacoma, Washington, August 1, 1917.*

**Nesting of the Wilson Phalarope near Fresno, California.**—In THE CONDOR, XVIII, page 196, I recorded the occurrence of *Steganopus tricolor* near Firebaugh and suggested the possibility that the pair encountered might have been breeding or preparing to do so. Since that time persistent inquiry and some little field work have brought to light much additional information and finally resulted in the verification of my suspicion.

On May 25, 1917, I visited a large, overflowed pasture about twelve miles southwest of Fresno and noted several pairs of phalaropes all of which were in the rich breeding plumage and apparently mated. Sometimes, before the birds were seen, I was aware of their presence by their characteristic notes which sound like subdued, grunting quacks, but from the fact that both birds were together I concluded that they had not yet commenced to nest.

The next opportunity to visit this pasture came on June 18, and again I was soon attracted by the Cinnamon Teal-like quacking of a phalarope. This time, however, the bird was alone, and from its large size and bright plumage I assumed it was the female and that her mate was probably occupying a nest nearby. Accordingly I approached slowly, hoping that this bird might give some slight clue as to its whereabouts, and was much pleased to see that, after a short flight, she flew across a small island of about a quarter of an acre in extent and came back to the exact place from which she took flight. Repeating this experiment several times brought exactly the same results.

The island mentioned was covered, for the most part, with a thick growth of Bermuda grass, so, after blocking it off into several imaginary sections, I began a systematic search and in less than fifteen minutes a phalarope fluttered from its nest and with all the feigned injury of a brooding dove limped away to join its mate. Immediately I concealed myself as best I could and remained quiet. After numerous slow flights around the island the pair finally settled down at the water's edge and the smaller and less brilliantly plumaged of the two came sneaking through the grass from behind, walked directly past me at a distance of not to exceed ten feet and took its place on the nest.

It seemed desirable to make sure that the question of identification might never arise in this case so I threw a clod toward the nest, causing the sitting bird to spring into the air and fly to the water's edge some fifteen feet away where he plowed along with feathers ruffled, grunting and puffing like an angry coot. The four eggs rested in a slight depression in the ground, lined with dry grass stems. Incubation had advanced to feathered embryos. Upon dissection the brooding bird proved to be the male. Anoth-