

seen with both male and female in attendance on the young brood. But after a lifetime spent among wild ducks I have yet to see the first indication of any solicitude for the young on the part of the male of any species.

In the case of the Buffle-head the males have totally disappeared (apparently all leave the country entirely) before the first broods of young are seen.—ALLAN BROOKS, *Okanagan Landing, British Columbia, November 25, 1921.*

**The Black Vulture in Colorado.**—On October 8 or 9, 1921, two young schoolboys, Richard Harvey and a boy named Baer, captured alive, on the foothills near Boulder, an adult male Black Vulture (*Coragyps urubu urubu*), breaking its wing. They tied it in a neighbor's yard to keep it alive until the University of Colorado Museum preparator returned from a short trip, but the neighbor turned it loose just out of town. A few days later two other boys, Elvin Watson and James Mitchell, found it dead in a ditch and brought it to the Museum, where its skin is now preserved. So far as I know there is no published record of this species for Colorado, and it is particularly interesting to find the first one for the state so far north. In 1900 Professor W. W. Cooke, in his Second Appendix to *The Birds of Colorado* (page 204), stated that the Black Vulture "has been taken in Western Kansas and probably will some time be found as a rare summer visitant in Southeastern Colorado"; but Boulder is 270 miles northwest of the southeastern corner of the state.—JUNIUS HENDERSON, *University of Colorado, Boulder, October 25, 1921.*

**A Winter Record of the Kern Red-wing.**—An adult male Red-winged Blackbird (cf. C 590, collection of D. R. Dickey) taken by van Rossem near Corona, Riverside County, on December 8, 1915, is strictly comparable with breeding specimens from Walker Basin, Kern County, and indicates a possible winter range for the race *Agelaius phoeniceus aciculatus*. The bill measurements are as follows: Culmen from base 25.9 millimeters (plus about 1 mm. broken off); bill from nostril 17.5 (broken as above); gonys 16.0; width at base 9.5; depth at base 9.5. This specimen was submitted to Mr. Joseph Mailliard, who concurs with us in our determination of its status.

During a recent trip in Kern County, two days (August 31 to September 1, 1921) were spent at Walker Basin, but not one red-wing was seen. Neither were any in evidence along the Kern River between Onyx and Isabella, where the types of *aciculatus* were taken. This would argue a departure from the breeding grounds immediately after the nesting season. Just what the winter range of this form is will probably not be ascertained for some time. The total number of individuals probably does not anywhere nearly reach a thousand. Such a number would form a very small proportion of the swarms of red-wings wintering in the lowlands and the taking of one would be very much a matter of luck.—D. R. DICKEY and A. J. VAN ROSSEM, *Pasadena, California, November 26, 1921.*

**Bird Fatalities Resulting from a Shipwreck.**—During the night of October 25, 1918, the Canadian Pacific Steamer "Princess Sophia" was wrecked with total loss of life, on Vanderbilt Reef, Lynn Canal, Alaska, some forty miles north of Juneau. Quantities of heavy fuel oil escaping covered the water for miles about, finally settling on the beaches. It is the writer's theory that the great loss of life, some 343 persons, was largely occasioned by the escaping oil.

When patrolling the shores of Admiralty Island and adjacent waters in a small steamer on October 28, looking for bodies from the wreck, a Murre (*Uria troille californica*) was seen swimming towards the vessel, occasionally assisting its feet with its wings. On coming close it was seen that its breast was heavily saturated with oil, and the wings and other parts to only a lesser degree. The bird came to within a few feet of the boat, which was then drifting, frequently raising itself on the water, shaking itself, and flapping its wings in efforts to get rid of the oil, and occasionally preening its feathers with its beak. The bird seemed not only devoid of fear but actually to wish companionship or a stable place to rest. Threatening movements only caused it to dive a few feet away, barely under the surface of the water, which gave excellent opportunity to observe the use of the wings in assisting the feet in the diving. It was finally killed

with an oar, and on examination its plumage was found to be saturated with crude oil, particularly on the breast and wings. No injuries were in evidence and its plight was apparently due entirely to the oil.

Numerous other Murres were noted at no great distances, all more or less covered with the oil, which covered the surface of the water from a mere film to a heavy scum. The men who were patrolling the beaches for bodies of the wreck victims reported that there were many of "the same kind of birds" (Murres) dead and dying on the beaches, and frequently the searchers were startled by a bird still alive suddenly struggling and flopping about at their feet. Also, many gulls were observed to have stained breasts, but none were seen to be helpless. On October 30, when about 120 miles south of the scene of the disaster (near Cape Fanshaw), on a passenger steamer, the writer observed one gull with oil-stained breast join the ship for a distance. On January 1, 1919, at Wrangell, nearly two hundred miles south of the wreck, the writer observed a Glaucous-winged Gull (*Larus glaucescens*) walking about the streets, with a spot of discoloration about four inches in diameter on breast and sides that bore every evidence of being crude oil stain and quite possibly came from the wreck to the north in the preceding October.

The extent of the losses among the bird population due to this accident can not even be approximated, but it must have been considerable, as the wreck occurred a short distance north of waters much frequented by Murres, and prevailing winds and tides drove the oil southward for many miles. The twenty-three miles under observation on October 28 were from twenty-two to forty-five miles from the scene of the wreck with considerable shoreline intervening, so there is a good reason to believe that the fatalities to the birds that came under observation of the writer's party were but a small percentage of the total.—ERNEST P. WALKER, *Phoenix, Arizona, March 7, 1920.*

**Number of Birds Described as New from California.**—The undersigned has prepared a manuscript list of all the birds described from California. Species have been excluded where the type in all probability did not come from within the confines of the present state of California. Even so, it is found that 205 new names have been proposed for birds from California in the strict sense. But 45 of these specific or subspecific names have subsequently proven to be ill founded; in other words they are now considered as synonyms. Therefore 160 valid forms out of the total of 576 at this moment credited to the state list have been described from California—about 28 percent.

Furthermore, it is found that 51 different persons have participated in this sort of ornithological activity. As to responsibility of authors for new names: Grinnell has proposed 38, of which 6 are synonyms; Ridgway 28, with 8 synonyms; Oberholser 13, with 4 synonyms; Cassin 13, with one synonym; Vigers 11, with 4 synonyms; Baird 8, with 3 synonyms; Swarth 6, with no synonyms; Lawrence 5, with 1 synonym; Gambel 5, with 1 synonym; McGregor 5, with 1 synonym; etc. The rest of the 51 authors have named four or fewer real or supposed new forms.

It might be expected that the earlier describers, working at a time when "most everything was new" and when only "full species" were recognized, would have made the best "score", that is, the highest ratio of valid names to total names proposed. However, note that Vigers (1839) made but 63 percent, the lowest ratio among those who have proposed more than ten new names. The best score among those who have launched ten names or more was made by Cassin, 91 percent. A score of 100 percent is to be credited to Xantus, Henshaw, C. H. Townsend, Mearns, and Swarth, among those who have proposed from 3 to 6 new names. Is it to be inferred that the larger the number of names launched the greater the chances of slipping up?

There are numerous factors which enter into the game of species naming, upon which success will depend. Some of these factors are: availability of comparative material, knowledge of the literature, degree of development of the geographic sense, knowledge of plumages and of the meanings of variations, and discriminative acumen. While some of these may in more or less degree be matters of luck, yet in the long run personal qualifications like industry, concentrativeness and caution will figure largely. In systematics it is woefully easy, but forever a *discredit*, to launch synonyms. There is far less excuse for it now, with abundance of material and well indexed literature, than