

the width of the white band. It occurred to us that counting the white feathers in a median line would prove the point; but this proved difficult and inconclusive in the dry and distorted skin.

In character of the markings on the feathers of the breast there is no departure from the condition in *bairdi*. The upper breast is broadly and solidly black, the black band not penetrated posteriorly with white streaks to such an extent as in *aculeata* and *angustifrons*.

The group of woodpeckers here dealt with, in so far as the province of the old A. O. U. Check-list is concerned, would now seem to stand as follows:

1. *Balanosphyra formicivora bairdi* (Ridgway). California Acorn-storing Woodpecker.
2. *Balanosphyra formicivora martirensis* Grinnell and Swarth. San Pedro Martin Acorn-storing Woodpecker.
3. *Balanosphyra formicivora angustifrons* (Baird). Narrow-fronted Acorn-storing Woodpecker.
4. *Balanosphyra formicivora aculeata* (Mearns). Mearns Acorn-storing Woodpecker.

—J. GRINNELL and H. S. SWARTH, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley, March 13, 1926.*

Occurrence of Sabine Gull at Playa del Rey.—On April 22, 1926, arriving about noon at Playa del Rey with Mrs. Bates and Miss Craig, I found the tide low and extensive mud flats exposed. Few birds were then about the lagoon, but in a very short time we saw a small gull, its black feet extended in the act of descending to alight on the margin of a flat directly opposite us. Its head was apparently black, and its outspread wings were extensively black. It was recognized at sight as a Sabine Gull (*Xema sabini*). Five and six power binoculars were instantly turned upon it, and practically all field identification marks observed, though the plumbeous tone of the head and the black collar could not be distinguished at the distance the bird was from us. The yellow tip of the black bill was seen, and the slaty tone of the gray mantle was noted. The bird walked along the margin of the water, giving us a view of the folded wing, showing the white tips of the black primaries. Presently it flew across the channel, revealing the white tail, shallowly forked, and again alighted at the water margin facing us.

We then noticed a slight yellowish stain on the white breast. It walked into the shallow water, then swam about, and presently began to bathe. This process was carried on most vigorously for several minutes, particular attention being paid to the lower parts, to which the bill was applied repeatedly. Rising from the water it alighted nearer us on a flat directly in front of our place on the dunes, where it proceeded to shake and preen its plumage, again and again endeavoring to clear off with its bill a small spot of heavy oil that we now saw on its underparts. Thus the yellow stain was conveyed to the white breast. It then flew down to the lower end of the lagoon where it alighted near a large flock of resting gulls. It had held our undivided attention for nearly half an hour, and we now left it for a time.

Somewhat later a careful search of the lower area, including the beach and the pier, failed to reveal its presence, and we concluded that it had probably resumed its migratory journey, and that to that hampering spot of oil, and its need to free itself of it, we owed our fortunate chance to see this beautiful and rare visitor to our shore. Glad we are that we were at the right place at the right time. Our thoughts follow him on his long journey with the hope that the menace of that clinging burden may yet be overcome.

Subsequently, on May 20, a Sabine Gull was seen standing on Hermosa Beach, in the vicinity of the pier. In this favorable situation we approached quite near it, where the slaty hood and the black collar, not distinguished in the individual previously seen, were definitely observed. This bird, like its predecessor, was suffering from oil, but it plainly was not the one seen April 22.—FRANCES B. SCHNEIDER, *Los Angeles, California, May 24, 1926.*

Juvenal House Wren Reveals Ancestral Trait not Apparent in Adults.—On June 3, 1923, five nestlings of the Western House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon parkmani*) were banded at Altadena, California. On June 19, these juvenals, just out of the nest and

July, 1926

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

accompanied by a parent, were discovered in nearby ground shrubbery. Here one of them, standing on a slanting rock and obviously concerned over my too close approach, bobbed its body in the same manner as do Canyon Wrens and Rock Wrens.

As this performance was repeated two more times while I was observing this youngster, the conclusion seems warranted that it was a manifestation of an inherited instinct or ancestral trait, which seems to become inoperative in mature birds of this species, while still surviving in the adults of *Catherpes* and *Salpinctes*. At any rate I have never noticed such a performance by adults of *Troglodytes*, although it seems probable that an occasional grown-up may retain a habit which most of them live down.

This trait may, of course, be rare among juvenals of this species, and they may be, only now, tardily beginning to manifest an inherent wren group tendency, already well developed in the two other groups before mentioned.—J. EUGENE LAW, *Altadena, California, March 25, 1926.*

The White-throated Swift in western Yolo County, California.—The White-throated Swift (*Aëronautes melanoleucus*) has been reported along the Sierra-Cascade range north to Mount Shasta (Merriam, N. Amer. Fauna, no. 16, 1899, p. 117) and in the inner coast ranges to Mount Diablo (Cohen, Condor, v, 1903, p. 119). Its presence in more northern portions of the inner coast ranges might therefore be expected, since these hills resemble, ecologically, the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada. On May 21 and 30, 1925, I saw and heard White-throated Swifts over Putah Cañon, on the Yolo-Solano County boundary, about five miles west of Winters; six birds were observed on the former date. The cañon wall at that point has basaltic outcrops which would afford suitable nesting places, while abundant forage is available in the air over the stream. Search for nesting locations has, however, thus far been unfruitful.—TRACY I. STORER, *Zoological Laboratory, University Farm, Davis, California, April 8, 1926.*

An Unsuspected Relationship.*—The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius varius*) does not get his living from grubs, borers and other insects, thus being a benefit to man, but from the green bark and sap of healthy, thrifty trees. Thus he has always been condemned as a pest that must be destroyed. He is not protected by game laws and is condemned to be shot. Father had us shooting them for injuring his fruit and other trees. I studied a long time before I found out why such a harmful creature was ever created.

Years ago the nurseryman and orchardist used to girdle their fruit trees to make them bear fruit. A tree too thrifty and growing fast bears sparingly; but by checking its growth, that is, stunting the trees without injuring them too much, by girdling them or cutting a ring of the bark around several branches, those branches set to forming fruit buds more than leaf buds. By being familiar with this method I traced up the benefits of the sapsucker. He girdles the fruit and seed bearing trees that a multitude of birds depend on for food at certain seasons and which build their nests near such trees to provide handy food for their young. So this busy little sapsucker is really providing for them all. Poor persecuted little blessing! That's what I now think of him.

Much of this lesson I learned by gathering seed. I learned long ago that it was not the fast growing and thrifty trees that bore the seed, but those stunted ones, or trees in which the growth had been checked in some way. By looking closer I found that most of them had a girdle of holes. Many species of birds depend on black cherry, mountain ash, choke-cherry, viburnum and other trees of berry bearing variety. By observing closely I noticed that all trees of the above mentioned kinds had some branches drilled or girdled, thus keeping some bearing wood at work each year. Any one ought to see that it is a very serious matter to remove one link from nature's chain; and killing off the sapsucker would be serious.—CHARLES DOUGLAS, SR., *Waukegan, Ill., May 1, 1926.*

The Magpie Nesting in Kansas.—On May 28, 1925, I found a nest of the Magpie (*Pica pica hudsonia*) along the Arkansas River and two miles east of the Colorado-Kansas line in Hamilton County, Kansas. The nest was fifteen feet from the ground in a leaning willow which was growing at the edge of the flood-plain of the river. The

* Transmitted by Professor W. C. Allee, University of Chicago.