

skins of mammals. The main difference in the treatment of mammals is that the stick must be made to extend beyond the nose, to provide the secondary support which, in the case of birds, is furnished by the beak. This is accomplished by thrusting the stick through the skin of the animal—entering just below the left hind leg and emerging just

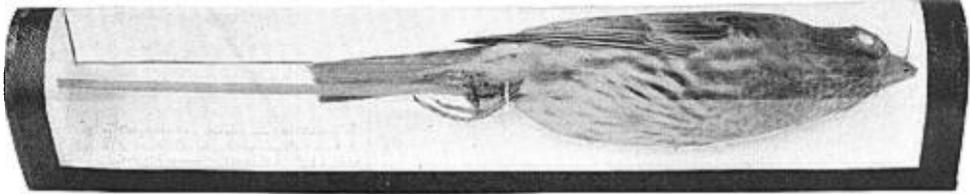


Fig. 33. THE SPECIMEN CONTAINER, OF WOOD AND CELLULOID.

above the left front leg—and tying the two legs to the stick. As in the case of birds, the mammal is placed with one side toward the wooden bottom of the cylinder.—WILLIAM S. WRIGHT, *Natural History Museum, Balboa Park, San Diego, California, September 21, 1926.*

The Derby Flycatcher near Los Angeles.—On September 4, 1926, a phone message from Inglewood announced that a “yellow-bellied kingfisher” had been killed at a cemetery there. Investigation disclosed the fact that a Derby Flycatcher (*Pitangus sulphuratus derbianus*) had been taken while apparently trying to catch fish in the goldfish pond where Belted Kingfishers had caused much trouble. Its actions, kingfisher-like appearance, and swoops toward the water, from a perch in the tules, were its undoing.

The bird was a female, in full molt. Dissection showed an empty stomach. Dr. H. C. Oberholser, who identified it, suggested that it had probably worked northward from Sinaloa, Mexico, its nearest normal habitat. This appears to be the first record of the species for the United States outside of extreme southern Texas.

The fish-catching habit of *Pitangus* is noted by Hudson, as also by Grayson who says he has “often seen them plunge into the water after large insects and small fish.”—L. E. WYMAN, *Los Angeles Museum, Los Angeles, November 9, 1926.*

Sabine Gull off San Diego County.—Frank Stephens, in his “Annotated List of the Birds of San Diego County” (Transactions, San Diego Society of Natural History, III, no. 2, 1919) does not include the Sabine Gull (*Xema sabini*), although he mentions other pelagic species, such as the Pacific Kittiwake, which are known to occur off the coast of the county. Dr. E. W. Nelson writes (Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences, XVI, 1921, p. 13): “We were much interested, when a few miles off the mouth of San Diego Harbor (May 15, 1905), to see a number of Sabine Gulls scattered about feeding on the tide lines formed by the currents in the smooth sea. This was, I believe, the first record of these beautiful birds at San Diego.”

However, no Sabine Gulls found their way into the collection of the San Diego Society of Natural History until August 28, 1925, when Laurence M. Huey collected thirteen specimens. Since then there have been added six specimens collected by J. W. Sefton, Jr.—five taken on July 29, 1926, and one on September 13, 1926. All were taken on the ocean within a few miles of Point Loma. Of the 1925 birds, three were in immature plumage and six were adults in various stages of transition from dark to light heads. The remainder and all the 1926 birds were dark-headed. It is safe to assume that the Sabine Gull migrates regularly through Southern California waters.—CLINTON G. ABBOTT, *Natural History Museum, Balboa Park, San Diego, California, September 21, 1926.*

Account of the Discovery of a Rare Bird in Costa Rica.—The Puff-bird (*Micromonacha lanceolata austinsmithi*) was named by Dwight and Griscom (Amer. Museum Novitates, no. 142, 1924, p. 2), from a single bird taken by me at Carrillo, Costa Rica. In view of the fact that I have made subsequent trips to the vicinity of Carrillo, and failed again to meet with this species, also that none of the various collectors visiting that region in the years past have secured it, leads to the supposition that it may be very limited in number of individuals.

The type came to hand thus: The river Frio passes the ranch house, now known as Carrillo, at a distance not greater than five hundred feet. At this location, on the east bank of this turbulent stream, the flood waters have for ages past deposited boulders of all sizes up to four feet in diameter, for a distance of many hundred feet paralleling the stream. Great numbers of young trees grow among this rock litter, and the undergrowth is largely ferns and selaginellas. Hunting through this one rainy morning, I flushed a small bird from or near the ground almost at my feet. It was shot a-wing, thereby adding a genus and a species to the Costa Rican list. All forms comprising the genus appear to be rare. Possibly, semi-crepuscular habit will be found to account in part for this rarity.—AUSTIN SMITH, *San José, Costa Rica, September 6, 1926.*

Feed-table Observations from Diablo.—My free lunch table for such of the birds as choose to patronize it, is located adjacent to and immediately in front of one of the windows of my rooms at Diablo. At such times as I sit close to the window I am frequently within two feet of some of the feeding birds, and thus enjoy excellent opportunity for "close-up" observation of peculiarities in habits, character, and appearance presented by the little visitors.

Several years ago when I maintained a feed table in Piedmont, in noticing the conduct and association of a pair of California Brown Towhees that were continuous daily patrons for more than two years, I was led to think that the birds of this species paired for life. Among the frequent visitors to the feed table at Diablo there is also a pair of towhees, and their association summer and winter has tended to strengthen my conclusion as to the probability that the pairing of the towhees was more than a seasonal affair. Of course, the evidence in these two instances is only suggestive, unless it can be corroborated by testimony of other observers.

Of the patrons of the feed table at Diablo the House Finches, or Red-heads as commonly known, are the greatest in number, and their conduct through the pre-nesting and nesting periods afforded no small amount of entertainment. The male birds in many instances exhibited great consideration for their mates. It was not uncommon to see a male bird pause in its feeding to place a delicate morsel of food in the mouth of its mate, which was generally accepted with much bowing, chirping, and quivering of wings. However, in the pre-nesting period, the females at first were a little shy when the males approached them with the food and made some little pretense of avoiding them, as if they misunderstood the purpose of the attention. During the nesting period this habit was more frequently observed, and even as late as the middle of August it was noted in a pair of old birds. With birds so much alike, except as to coloration in sex, it might properly be asked how I was able to distinguish a pair of birds from the flock. In one case it was a simple matter, for the female had a very strange malformation of the upper mandible, and the male bore a white feather in the right wing. These distinguishing features had been noted first in the winter months, and the subsequent daily visits to the feed table by the pair established a familiarity that could hardly be questioned.

House Finches, like Blackbirds, Quail, Purple Finches, Bush-tits and many other species, after the nesting season gather in flocks and in such relation seek their daily food and roosting places, until the nesting time approaches again, when the flocks are broken up by the birds going off in pairs. Now the question arises as to what extent, if any, do the pairing and nesting relations of the former season or seasons figure in the breaking up of the flocks. Who knows? It would not be surprising if the pairing for life was more common than thought to be. The actions of the pair of birds described above together with the conduct of others of the flock suggested the possibility if not the probability of this. Facts more substantial and reliable in solving the problem might be obtained by trapping and banding a few pairs with distinguishing bands, keeping them under observation for two or three seasons.

Referring to the matter of the female House Finch with the malformation in her mandible, so far I have been unable to determine the exact character of the distortion. Both parts of the bill seem to be growing longitudinally, and are now extended to double the length of those ordinarily seen. The upper mandible is either shorter or so formed that the bird is unable to pick up seed in the manner common to her kind, and therefore is compelled to turn her head sidewise to the ground and pick up the seed