

between Fingal and Palm Springs I have never seen a shrike of any kind, though the country seems suitable, and I have looked for them carefully the many times I have passed that way.

North of the San Bernardino, San Gabriel and Sierra Madre mountains, the first forming also the north side of San Gorgonio Pass, stretches the Mohave Desert, connecting east of the mountains with the low land of the Coachella Valley, and on the west through Antelope Valley and passes with the San Joaquin Valley. At Bakersfield, Kern County, in the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley, on March 25, 1921, I collected two breeding male shrikes only a few miles apart, one a fairly typical example of the White-rumped (no. 34285) and the other of the California (no. 34299). One hundred and fifty miles southeast, but still in the western portion of the Mohave Desert, and just north of the San Bernardino Mountains, at Hesperia and Victorville, I collected two breeding adults of the White-rumped on April 8, 1919, and March 26, 1923 (nos. 31924, 34291), and five breeding birds of the California on March 7, 8 and 9, 1921, and March 28, 1923 (nos. 34295-7, 34307-8). Fifty miles farther northeast, but still in the Mohave, at Newberry Springs, I found two males of the California on December 7 and 11, 1917 (nos. 30502-3).

But the final and conclusive evidence that both races breed in the same region was obtained in 1924, when in country of the same character and elevation and much the same vegetation I collected a female California Shrike (no. 37066) with a set of seven fresh eggs on April 13, and a female White-rumped (no. 37065) with set of six fresh eggs on April 15, the nests being not seven miles apart, and both birds quite characteristic of their respective races.

Of course I have not been able to examine all the shrikes in this very extensive region, but my specimens indicate that in the 200 miles from the Mexican border north to the San Bernardino Mountains there is an intermediate district not occupied by either race in the breeding season; that for about 150 miles through the Mohave Desert and Antelope Valley from Victorville to Bakersfield both subspecies breed side by side; and that, if there is a place where one melts insensibly into the other, it must be farther north, in the San Joaquin Valley.—LOUIS B. BISHOP, *Pasadena, California, May 19, 1926.*

**The Whistling Note of the Wilson Snipe.**—On September 18, 1926, while hunting Jacksnipe (*Gallinago delicata*) on a meadow near Crane Lake, Dane County, Wisconsin, I heard one of these birds give a whistling note which seems to be worth recording. My notes written at the time are as follows:

"It was about sunset and dead calm. It had just ceased raining and the sky was overcast. My two boys and I had located a few snipe in a muddy hay stubble. I was standing in the middle of the stubble when I heard a series of whistling notes overhead. I immediately associated the sound with some sort of waterfowl, and looking up saw a snipe high in the air. His location corresponded with the direction from which the whistle had come. I kept my eye on him as he made a half turn around the meadow, and when he was directly overhead and not over eighty yards high I again heard the same whistle, this time definitely identifying it as emanating from the snipe. I noticed that the notes did not synchronize with the bird's wing beats. He spiraled down and alighted about 40 yards away, where I soon afterward flushed and missed him.

"The whistle was alike both times, and consisted of six or seven mellow whistling notes, all run together, each of the same low pitch, and each occupying the same time. The sound reminded me of one of the loon's calls, heard at a distance.

"I do not see how this whistle could have been other than vocal, because the intervals of a snipe's wing beats are irregular, like a dove's, whereas these notes were very uniform in interval. I did not see any dive which could have produced a whistle in the tail feathers, although his overhead position might have prevented me from seeing this. My son, who was standing a hundred yards to one side, thought the snipe dove at the time the sound was heard."

I believe that this is the same note as the one described by Forbush as "like the strong wing beats of some powerful waterfowl in flight". This is a convincing description of the sound I heard.

Forbush says, furthermore (*Birds of Massachusetts*, vol. I, 1925, p. 394), that this is the note that accompanies the nuptial song flight. He quotes Thoreau to the effect that it is most common in April. "European ornithologists", Forbush says, "believe

that the common snipe of Europe produces its so-called bleating by means of the two outer tail feathers which stand out clearly from the others during the downward plunge." Forbush himself possibly doubts whether the "bleat" is produced by the plumage. So do I, if it is the same note as I heard. It is hard to see how the plumage can produce any sound which is timed differently from the wing beats or independently of changes in the velocity or direction of the flight. For the tail to produce such a sound, one would have to assume an independent muscular impulse transmitted to the tail feathers.

However, since I have never before seen the song-flight, I am hardly competent to challenge the accepted theory as to its origin. Even if it be produced by the plumage, this instance of its occurrence in September seems worth recording. I believe that the snipe which I heard was not a migrant. The number of birds at Crane Lake remained stationary (about a dozen) from September 18 to October 9. On October 9 there was a noticeable accession of migrants, both at Crane Lake and at a number of nearby marshes.—ALDO LEOPOLD, *Forest Products Laboratory, Madison, Wisconsin, October 11, 1926.*

**Rapid Decomposition in some Species of the Genus *Saltator*.**—*Saltator* is a genus of finches occurring in tropical America. It is made up of quite an array of medium sized to very large forms. Within Costa Rica the genus is represented by at least five distinct species. It is brought to notice here because all these species seem prone to unusually quick decay after being killed, seemingly more rapid than in the case of any other land bird of approximately the same size with which I am acquainted. Temperature does not appear to be the controlling factor in this, for I have observed that *Saltator grandis* of the central tableland, and well within the temperate zone, can "ripen up" wonderfully within three or four hours after death; when species such as Solitary Sandpiper, Wilson Snipe, Texas Kingfisher and Parauque, killed within the same hour, will be wholly inoffensive. And it is well not to omit the fact that all these species of *Saltator* feed largely on fruit, at times on nothing else, occasionally gorging to the extent of the bill and portions of the head becoming discolored by the fruit juice.—AUSTIN SMITH, *San José, Costa Rica, September 6, 1926.*

**The Blue Jay at Boulder, Colorado.**—The Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata cristata*, or *C. c. bromia*, if Dr. Oberholser's new name for the northern form is to be accepted) is a rather rare visitor to the western edge of the plains in Colorado. It is now added to the Boulder County list upon acceptable evidence. Clint O. Dumm reports having seen one on October 11, 1925, under excellent conditions for observation, positively identified by both himself and a man recently from the eastern states who knew the Blue Jay well. Mr. Dumm has himself long been familiar with our common Long-crested Jay (*C. stelleri diademata*), so often miscalled Blue Jay by non-critical observers. Furthermore, I have just received from School Superintendent William V. Casey, of Boulder, an excellent colored sketch, which he says was made from memory, of a Blue Jay in a flock of four that visited his home "about two years ago". He adds: "We fed them during the snowy weather, and they grew so tame that they did not fly away in alarm when I passed under the branch where they perched, eight or ten feet above my head." His description accompanying the sketch leaves no doubt that they were Blue Jays.—JUNIUS HENDERSON, *University of Colorado, Boulder, October 16, 1926.*

**Notes on the Black Oystercatcher.**—At Point Lobos, Monterey County, California, Black Oystercatchers (*Haematopus bachmani*) have been observed procuring food for their young as late in the season as the date of this writing (November 3). Four of these birds, two adults and two full-grown young, apparently constituting a family, were seen on repeated occasions among a group of flat rocks exposed at ebb-tide and partially covered by weeds. On each occasion one adult was observed to be followed by one or two immatures.

When the old bird comes upon a limpet fastened to the rock, the crustacean is dislodged with considerable effort. By inserting the flat vertical surface of the bill underneath, the Oystercatcher loosens the animal by repeated jabs and steady prying, backed by its whole body and braced feet. The bivalve is then seized and carried to a suitable position, usually at some higher place on the rock. At this moment the immature bird comes close to the adult and waits patiently while the body of the limpet is