

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

removed by similar prying from the shell. When the body is freed, it is placed upon the rock. The young bird then immediately grabs it. Sometimes, however, the morsel is taken directly from the bill of the adult.

This process was repeated indefinitely at the rate of about two limpets per minute.—LAIDLAW WILLIAMS, *Carmel, California, November 9, 1926.*

Curious Perching Behavior of English Sparrow.—The concrete sections of the Oakland-Alameda Estuary tubes are being constructed in the dry dock at Hunter's Point in San Francisco. These are circular in cross section and are covered with a layer of waterproofing, and then sheathed with planks.

While walking along beside one of these sections I saw a male English Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) alight on the side of the tube, clinging there with his claws and bracing himself with his tail in a manner very similar to a Woodpecker. His tail was spread out like a fan beneath him, and he was pecking into a crack between two boards. I could not find out what he was after, though I am sure there was no food there, as the boards had only been in place a few days and were in a position on the horizontal diameter of the tube, where it would be almost impossible for food to lodge.—ERNEST D. CLABAUGH, *Berkeley, California, October 17, 1926.*

Western Mockingbird in Contra Costa County.—Whenever one who has lived in the East is told that there is a "Catbird" at some accessible place in northern California, there is at once renewed an interest in a noisy old friend and a faint hope is raised that he may actually find one of these rare birds. In such a frame of mind I went looking about for a "Catbird" among some Valley Oak trees about three-quarters of a mile east of Walnut Creek in the afternoon of November 21, 1926—to find the usual thing, a Western Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos leucopterus*). But considering that even this species is not at all common in the Bay region, its presence may be worth recording, although only a sight identification. I did not hear this bird utter a sound, but my friend's account of its vocal activities fortified my opinion, based on sight. He had seen the same bird in the same locality repeatedly and had heard its mimetic utterances. The bird had no dark rufous coloration under the tail and *did* have the white markings of our Western Mockingbird, which it certainly was.—CLAUDE GIGNOUX, *73 The Tunnel Road, Berkeley, California, November 22, 1926.*

Designation of a Pacific Coast Subspecies of Chipping Sparrow.—For many years, since at least as long ago as 1901 (see Ridgway, *Birds N. and Mid. Amer.*, pt. I, p. 316), systematic students have known that the Chipping Sparrow of the United States as a species is represented by three north-south racial sections, the eastern *Spizella passerina passerina*, the Rocky Mountain *S. p. arizonae*, and an unnamed Pacific Coast race—just as with many another moderately plastic bird. Apparently following the lead of Ridgway, who remarks (*loc. cit.*) "I hesitate to separate them" (that is, the Pacific Coast and Rocky Mountain forms, to both of which together he applies the name *arizonae*), no one to this day has ventured to name the westernmost race. I see no good reason for delaying longer; therefore:

Spizella passerina stridula, new subspecies. Pacific Chipping Sparrow.

Type locality and type.—Pasadena, Los Angeles County, California; male, probably more than one year old, because of its solidly chestnut crown; no. 35320, Mus. Vert. Zool.; collected March 28, 1896, by J. Grinnell; orig. no. 765.

Diagnosis.—Resembles *Spizella passerina arizonae* Coues, of Arizona and the Rocky Mountain region generally, but wing and tail averaging slightly shorter, and general tone of light areas not so pale: hind neck and rump darker gray, ground-color of dorsum clay color rather than cinnamon-buff [of Ridgway's Color Standards, 1912], and whole lower surface not so white save on throat, but more pervaded with gray of a faintly buffy tone; resembles *Spizella passerina passerina* (Bechstein), of the eastern United States, closely in dimensions and tone of under surface, but tone of coloration lighter, as follows: hind neck and rump less deeply gray, dorsum and occiput more narrowly black streaked, ground-color of dorsum clay color rather than dull tawny, and edgings on closed wing decidedly paler.

Measurements.—Average of 10 winter and early spring males of *stridula*, from the Pacific slope of Los Angeles County, California: wing 70.4 mm., tail 59.0; of 10