

THE SCIENTIFIC NAME OF THE WESTERN SANDPIPER —WHO WAS MAURI?

By T. S. PALMER

From time to time, for nearly a hundred years, ornithologists have recognized two forms of Semipalmated Sandpiper and have separated the western one as a distinct species. We now know that these two forms, differing mainly in length of the bill and in some minor degree in color, breed in the far north, the eastern form from Newfoundland along the Arctic coast to Plover Bay, northeastern Siberia, and the western species breeding only in Alaska from Camden Bay and Point Barrow to Saint Michael and Hooper Bay. Both occur in migration along the south Atlantic coast and in the West Indies, but the eastern form (*Ereunetes pusillus*) goes much farther south in South America, even to Patagonia, while the western form occurs mainly on the west coast and occasionally goes as far as Machala, Ecuador. Both are abundant, well-known birds and have been observed for many years, but how they reach their breeding grounds from their winter quarters is still unknown.

Bonaparte in 1838 named the Western Sandpiper *mauri* (corrected in 1856 to *maurii*), but in neither case published a description; Lichtenstein about the middle of the century labeled a specimen in the Berlin Museum *cabanisi* but published no description; Gundlach in 1856 described five specimens from Cuba but did not give them a distinctive specific name; Cabanis in editing Gundlach's paper revived Bonaparte's name and added a formal description thus establishing *mauri*; and Lawrence in 1864 described a bird from California calling it *occidentalis*. For many years Lawrence's name remained in general use and was the one adopted by the American Ornithologists' Union in the first and second editions of the Check-List of North American Birds.

In 1904, Dubois (*Synopsis Avium*, p. 949) called attention to the prior claim of *mauri* and Dr. J. A. Allen in a note in *The Auk* (1906, pp. 97-98) advocated this name. As a result, in 1910, in the third edition of the Check-List of North American Birds the designation of the Western Sandpiper was changed from *Ereunetes occidentalis* Lawrence, with California as its type locality, to *E. mauri* Cabanis, with Cuba as its type locality, and immediately preceding it appeared the eastern Semipalmated Sandpiper, *E. pusillus* (Linnaeus), with Santo Domingo as its type locality. It is true that Santo Domingo is east of Cuba, that Cabanis described a bird from the latter island as *mauri*, and that the statement in the Check-List is literally true, but this is so condensed that it effectively conceals an interesting bit of ornithological history.

How did it happen that these two common birds which occupy well defined areas in the Arctic as their breeding grounds should be described from specimens collected in the Tropics on the adjacent islands of Santo Domingo and Cuba and should have been named by Swedish and German ornithologists?

As already stated, Cabanis adopted Bonaparte's name but neither he nor the original author explained its application. To ascertain its origin it is necessary to examine more closely the background of its publication. Bonaparte first named the species in his Comparative List of Birds of Rome and Philadelphia, published early in 1838 during a visit to London. For some years previous, Bonaparte, then at the height of his fame, had been living in Rome engaged in the publication of his great work "Iconografia della Fauna Italica." In the first volume appears a list of associates, including Prof. Ernesto Mauri of Rome, and in the preface, a reference to the assistance in botany rendered by Mauri. In volume 3, pt. I, may be found a de-

scription of a new species of fish (*Smaris maurii*) dedicated to the memory of "my dear professor of practical botany." Ernesto Mauri was an eminent botanist, born at Rome, January 12, 1791, and died there April 13, 1836. He was director of the botanical gardens in Rome and author of several important papers on early Roman botany. In recognition of his work a new genus of tree of the order Anacardiaceae was named *Mauria* by Kunth in 1824. Bonaparte devotes nearly a page to Mauri and his work and his reason for dedicating this new species to him. Here evidently is the key to the situation. Bonaparte and Mauri were close friends, and when the latter died during the publication of the *Iconografia*, Bonaparte naturally took occasion to express his esteem of his former associate by naming a new species in his honor, and this happened to be a fish. Shortly afterward he also named a bird for him, but as it was not an Italian species it was not included in the "Fauna Italica". The name of this bird first appeared in a tabular list where there was no opportunity for explanation and perhaps in the mind of the author no occasion to repeat the statement already given at length under *Smaris maurii*. But this great work in Italian is not generally accessible to English readers, and ornithologists seldom look for explanations of bird names in ichthyological descriptions.

Only a few months before his death, while on a visit to Berlin, Bonaparte succeeded in convincing Cabanis that his name *mauri* and Lichtenstein's *cabanisi* both applied to the long-billed sandpiper (*Journal für Ornithologie*, 1856, p. 420), and as a result the bird was described by Cabanis under the name *mauri* instead of *cabanisi*. The citation *Ereunetes mauri* Cabanis is unsatisfactory since it conforms neither with the rules nor the facts in the case. In the new edition of the Check-List the name properly appears as *maurii* and thus in the form that Bonaparte finally published it. Cabanis, however, did not originate the name but merely used the earliest available one in his description of the species. *Ereunetes maurii* (Bonaparte MS) Cabanis would express the circumstances better, as it was a manuscript name before publication and having been published as a *nomen nudum* it has no more standing than such a name. This is an illustration of one of the cases which are not adequately covered by existing rules.

Thus the little Western Sandpiper whose migration route is still obscure and which has for years borne a specific designation published in characteristic Bonaparte fashion, but the significance of which was unknown, recalls in reality the close personal friendship existing between an eminent Italian botanist and the Father of American Systematic Ornithology.

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