

**Surf Birds and Bonaparte Gulls at San Diego.**—As the Surf Bird (*Aphriza virgata*) has the reputation of being a rare bird, it may be worthy of note that on April 17, 1932, as I was passing the jetty at the entrance to San Diego harbor in my motor-boat, I saw no less than seventeen of these birds on the rocks of the jetty. They were in two groups of ten and seven, respectively. There may have been more of the birds out of sight, but these seventeen were counted positively. A week later (April 24) I again returned to the jetty and saw five Surf Birds, two of which I secured for the San Diego Society of Natural History. Huey (Auk, 44, 1927, pp. 529-531), when he observed record-breaking numbers of Surf Birds at San Felipe, Lower California, Mexico, designated April 16 as the peak of the migration. My observation of April 17 at San Diego falls in the same general period.

On the April 17 date, I also observed at sea, a short distance from Point Loma, the largest number of Bonaparte Gulls (*Larus philadelphia*) that I have ever seen. They numbered at least 750 individuals, all of which stayed together in one flock, following each other almost like sandpipers. These Bonaparte Gulls were in addition to about one hundred which I had previously seen in San Diego harbor. All were in bright nuptial plumage. On April 24, only a few scattering Bonaparte Gulls were noted.—J. W. SEFTON, JR., *San Diego Society of Natural History, Balboa Park, San Diego, California, April 26, 1932.*

**A White Steller Jay at Big Creek, Fresno County, California.**—We were surprised on the morning of September 16, 1931, to see an abnormally plumaged Blue-fronted Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri frontalis*) which came about our house in Big Creek. The back, upper breast and crest of this bird were grayish white, the rump and belly were bluish white, and the legs and beak creamy white. When the bird came to a nearby pine branch and permitted close inspection, we could see that its eyes appeared to be black. When it flew, two long feathers in the center of the tail showed a pale blue color. For the next two months the bird was seen, always alone, around Big Creek. Next it was seen at the Power House, ten miles down the cañon.—CATHERINE E. BOWER, *Box 96, Big Creek, California, March 31, 1932.*

## EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

While Cooper Club finances can be announced as in good condition, considering the times, there has been some reduction in income. The Business Managers of the Club, Messrs. W. Lee Chambers and John McB. Robertson, it should be known to everyone, do all the routine of the Club business on their own spare time. No one connected with the Cooper Club or with its publications receives any money as compensation for the services he renders. Two ways in which Club members can make the task of our officers easy and, at the same time, save the Club expense in postage and supplies are as follows: First, payment of dues promptly—all dues for the current year are payable January 1, and close figuring is made necessary in planning how much money can be spent on our publications during the year. A second way to help is by not ordering change of address if it is only for a vacation or other short period; but instead, leave three or four cents at the Post Office and have *The Condor* forwarded to your temporary address. However, any per-

manent change of address should be made known promptly to one of the Business Managers. If notification is not given promptly, *The Condor* is returned to the business office, postage due, and then must be re-mailed when the new address is provided. In other words, postage may have to be paid three times instead of once!

Hereafter, to save postage and other "overhead" the editors of *The Condor* will not acknowledge receipt of articles submitted for publication, unless especially asked to do so. But we will continue to send proofs of all articles, short or long, to authors.

On March 10 of this year an expedition started out from the California Academy of Sciences, sponsored by Mr. Templeton Crocker of San Francisco, for the purpose of visiting and scientifically exploring various islands off the Pacific coast of Mexico, Central America, and Ecuador. Mr. Crocker furnished his private yacht, *Zaca*, and equipped it appropriately for

scientific collecting. The expedition is expected to return about August 1. Included in the party is Mr. Harry S. Swarth as Naturalist-in-Charge. Mr. Swarth is particularly interested in the land birds of the Galapagos Islands, inasmuch as he has recently published a critical study of the large collection of birds from the Galapagos, taken in 1905 and 1906, and since then contained in the Academy's museum. His technical report on this collection was published last fall (Occasional Paper No. 18, California Academy of Sciences). On the present expedition it is Mr. Swarth's aim primarily to study the habits, life histories and ecological relations of the various species of Galapagos land birds so as to be in position to contribute to a better understanding of those evolutionary processes which have resulted in the development of so many unique forms there. The classic group of Geospizids will claim his special attention.

California and other western states were visited during the month of May by Dr. Alexander Wetmore, Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and in charge of the National Museum. His two-day visit in the San Francisco Bay region was most profitable and pleasurable to the museum people who happened not to be away in the field and were therefore able to welcome him and participate in the informal conferences held.

Dr. Edward W. Nelson, formerly Chief of the Biological Survey, is spending the summer with his nephew, Mr. R. Leiland Nelson, 5009 Proctor Avenue, Oakland, California. Dr. Nelson has recently completed, for *The Auk*, an extended biographical account of the late Henry W. Henshaw. He is now taking up again his studies on Mexican birds and mammals, based on the field work prosecuted by him and Mr. Edward A. Goldman for many years.

#### PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

HARRISSON ON THE NORMAL FLIGHT SPEEDS OF BIRDS.\*—The speed at which birds fly has been a matter of much speculation so that it is valuable to have definite observations on a subject where considerable has been assumed without proper

basis. In the present paper Mr. Harrison summarizes flight records for thirty-six species of birds taken by means of speedometer readings from automobile or motorcycle when the birds observed were flying parallel with the vehicle, the speed of which was regulated to coincide with that of the bird. Observations were made in England and Wales, mostly in open country as opportunity for such studies seldom are possible in wooded or hilly sections. Effort was made in all cases to ascertain the usual speed of flight and its variation under normal conditions, instances where there was evident acceleration or retardation due to winds being rejected. The species on which records were obtained range from Rooks, Starlings, Yellow Buntings and House Martins to Tawny Owls, Ring Doves and Herring Gulls. The majority relate to passeriform birds.

In analysis of his own observations, and those of others as obtained from published records, the author considers there is some reason to believe that under the urge of the migration impulse birds may travel at speeds somewhat more rapid than under ordinary circumstances, in which he differs from Meinertzhagen, who has said that migratory flight differs very little from speed under ordinary circumstances. To substantiate his argument Harrison compares Meinertzhagen's records for migrating Rooks which traveled 38 to 45 miles per hour with his own observations of the same species which under ordinary circumstances flew only 29 to 35 miles per hour. Similar comparisons with like average difference are made for the swallow and lapwing.

The speediest bird recorded by Harrison in his personal observations was a Stock Dove flying at 59 miles per hour and the slowest a Herring Gull traveling at 17. The speeds of 41 and 45 miles per hour recorded for the Tawny Owl are quite surprising.

The paper closes with a bibliography of titles relating to speed in flight that will be of importance to other students. The author states that he expects later to give a summary of all that has been published on the subject, which will be awaited with interest.

The reviewer some years ago made a number of observations on flight speed from automobiles and was convinced that useful information was to be obtained by this means. It is to be hoped that Mr.

\*Harrison, T. H., On the Normal Flight Speeds of Birds. *British Birds*, vol. 25, no. 4, September, 1931, pp. 86-96.