

a unit flock, but they appeared together only at times at a favorable feeding-ground, and by the fact that all of them remained here after the last Gambel Sparrows had departed.

During the morning of October 6, while the five Harris Sparrows then present were feeding on the ground about thirty feet from my house, I slowly approached them with a camera in hope of securing a distant photograph of the group. As I stood in full view about twelve feet from the birds they suddenly scattered precipitately. A blur of feathers hurtled into a small birch tree about a rod from where I stood, and a second later there emerged a Sharp-shinned Hawk carrying one of the sparrows in its talons. Almost before I realized what was happening, the hawk with its prey skimmed by within two feet of my shoulders, skirted a corner of the house, and disappeared. A few seconds later the remaining four Harris Sparrows were again picking up weedseeds in the spot they had been forced to vacate so suddenly.

As the birds did not fully conform to any of the available published descriptions of the varying plumage of this species, I venture to include here a digest of my incomplete notes taken and rechecked at various times as I observed these Harris Sparrows daily for three weeks. It is perhaps significant that the five birds were practically identical in size and plumage coloration. "General comparison with Gambel Sparrow: decidedly larger and heavier, about three-quarters of an inch longer; back, wings, and tail much as in *gambelii*, but with streaks on back more uniform in width, the contrast between brown and gray not so marked; wings with narrow whitish or pale buffy bars, tips of primaries margined with whitish; tail without light markings. Entire head and neck except throat, an unmarked light brown, forming a hood (suggestive of a female towhee) that cuts sharply across the breast; no suggestion of black on crown; center of throat with a wedge-shaped patch of clear white narrowly margined at the sides with deep brown or black. Brown head 'hood' separated from the clear white underparts by a conspicuous band of dark brown or black spots and streaks, this band widened at the center to form a large, triangular patch narrowing downward through the central part of the breast. Sides of chest, flanks, and under tail-coverts heavily washed with medium brown. All markings of throat and breast very distinct and conspicuous, with no merging of outlines or colors." Thus the birds appeared to me in life.—WINTON WEYDEMEYER, *Fortine, Montana, March 11, 1937.*

Notes on the Saw-whet Owl.—The known breeding range of the Saw-whet Owl (*Cryptoglaux acadica*) extends southward in the mountain ranges of western North America to southern California (San Jacinto Mountains, Stephens, Condor, vol. 4, 1902, p. 40), southern Nevada (van Rossem, Pac. Coast Avif. No. 24, 1936, p. 24), central Arizona (San Francisco Mountain, Mearns, Auk, vol. 7, 1890, p. 54), and probably northern New Mexico (Bailey, Birds of New Mexico, 1928, p. 338). But also the species is known from Mexico south to Vera Cruz. A related species occurs in the arid tropical zone in Guatemala (Griscom, Am. Mus. Nov., no. 438, 1930, p. 1). It is entirely in keeping with this widespread occurrence that this owl should be found in southeastern Arizona, and it is only surprising that it has not heretofore been met with in this section of the western cordillera.

On the evening of May 18, 1936, in Bar Foot Park, 8300 feet, in the Chiricahua Mountains, Cochise County, Arizona, the rhythmic whistling of a Saw-whet Owl was heard at a distance. The next evening at twilight, just after the Whip-poor-wills had become active, one of these owls began calling in some low aspens at the foot of a talus slope near camp. I had no difficulty in approaching the bird and shining its eyes. The owl was collected (no. 68855, Mus. Vert. Zool.) and proved upon dissection to be a male, with testes 7 mm. in length. At 2:30 a.m., the same night, I again heard the notes of a Saw-whet in the distance. A lengthy stalk, lasting more than half an hour, was made possible by the continuous calling of the bird. Although I could not induce it to move toward me by imitating its note, it was not disturbed by my noisy approach through two hundred yards of deciduous oak scrub on a talus slope. Finally its calling tree was reached, a dense *Pseudotsuga* on the crest of a ridge bounding the park. There it remained effectually concealed in the dense foliage immediately overhead. With every gust of wind, it stopped calling, and finally, shortly before daybreak, it ceased altogether.

This experience substantiated a belief that, several years before, I had called one of these owls into camp one night in the Sierra Ancha, Gila County, central Arizona. In the evening of June 6, 1931, on Workman Creek, west of Aztec Peak, in the low Transition zone of these mountains, at 5500 feet, the rhythmic whistle of this owl was heard. The note was coming from a steep slope above a cliff on the north-facing side of the canyon. After my imitation of it for about 15 minutes, the bird came down into the canyon bottom, fluttered overhead, and perched close to me in an open tangle of live oaks and alders. There it called excitedly and loudly. In the beam of the light it appeared distinctly yellow, and no ear tufts were noted. Unfortunately an effort to collect it failed.

It has been a matter of surprise to me since then that the Saw-whet occurred so low in the Sierra Ancha in the breeding season. But further evidence of tolerance of conditions that are almost Upper Sonoran now is at hand. On July 24, 1936, F. G. Palmer collected a juvenal *Cryptoglaux* (no. 69522, Mus. Vert. Zool.) 4 miles south of Hernandez, San Benito County, California. The exact locality was Laguna Ranch, 4000 feet. The arid inner coast ranges of central California have only a scant representation of the Transition zone. The owl was taken in a black oak and Coulter pine woodland. This record represents the only known instance of breeding in the central coast ranges of this state.

So many diverse accounts of the Saw-whet Owl's notes have appeared in the literature, that it might be well to stress that the notes which I have traced to this species have been uniform in type. Presumably all the birds encountered were sexually active males. The notes consist of round, almost liquid whistles that are repeated at the rate of nearly two per second, rarely with the faintest trace of an aspirate. The pitch varies slightly, but it averages about C or C#, two octaves above middle C, which is near, but slightly higher than, the notes of Pigmy Owls. The notes are repeated without interruption for long periods. Great change in intensity is characteristic, and at a distance the notes fade out completely. A bird which was watched in midafternoon (3 p.m.), June 2, 1934, near Bowron Lake, British Columbia, called continuously for 15 minutes. At 25 feet, the notes were sometimes barely audible, but the bird, which remained quiet with its head thrust out of a woodpecker hole, could be seen moving the mandible in unbroken rhythm. Notes distinctly different from those here described evidently are given on other occasions.

Ridgway (Birds N. and Middle America, vol. 6, 1914, p. 629) mentions "a slight average difference in the hue of the brown of the upper and under parts" of Saw-whet Owls in different geographic areas. The color is "more grayish brown in those from the Rocky Mountains." Van Rossem (*loc. cit.*) questions whether pale birds taken in the Charleston Mountains of Nevada may not represent an undescribed race. In handling the bird from the Chiricahua Mountains in the field, and later upon comparing it with other Saw-whet Owls, the grayish-brown dorsal coloration, the paler streaking below, the more prominent white on the forehead, and the greater amount of white in the lateral scapular area were striking comparative features. These observations accord with those of van Rossem and, as further evidence, lend support to the idea that these birds from desert ranges may be more than just individual pale variants.—ALDEN H. MILLER, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, March 16, 1937.*

Notes on Leg Colors of White Herons.—In connection with the questions raised by Dr. Loye Miller (Condor, vol. 39, 1937, p. 17), the experiences of easterners may be of some assistance to those who would like to settle the status of *Florida caerulea* in California. Snowy Egrets may be identified with absolute certainty at close range by their strikingly colored yellow feet which no Little Blue Herons ever have. Less important, but extremely useful when direct comparison is available, is the shape of the birds' bills—thin and tapering in the Snowy, a bit broader at the base in the Little Blue and slightly more curved along the top. The Little Blue never has black legs but those of the Snowy may vary in color. In summer around New York and New Jersey, a single Snowy may show black legs when viewed from one angle and distinctly yellowish green ones when viewed from a different direction. This has been kindly explained to me by Charles A. Urner: the legs are black with a narrow band of yellowish green extending down the posterior surface.

In checking on three caged birds last fall, I found all birds had black legs, one entirely so, another with gray on the posterior side of the tibia, a third with a narrow band of yellowish green extending dorsally along the full length of both tibia and tarsus. Audubon described the color of young Snowy's feet as at first olive, and Forbush mentions birds in October with legs "yellow green marked black." Individual variation, for which an explanation is still lacking, may be found in the legs of other herons: Black-crowned Night Herons in the vicinity of New York often show pink instead of yellow legs. B. W. Tucker has likewise written (British Birds, vol. 30, 1936, pp. 70-73) of similar peculiarities in Buff-backed Herons (*Ardeola ibis ibis*).

Aside from the purely faunistic considerations, the correct identification of the small white herons may help in settling other interesting questions. The Snowy Egret, in common with the Louisiana Heron, has a propensity to race about while feeding. Could this be insect catching rather than fish hunting? Up to the present time field work in the East indicates that the Snowy's well known habit of stirring up prey in the water by a single foot extended forward is not possessed by other herons. While this would give us an extremely easy field mark, it also emphasizes that a definite biological correlation may exist between this unique feeding habit and the unusual color of *Egretta thula's* feet.—JOSEPH J. HICKEY, *New York, N. Y., March 1, 1937.*