

Looking through the binoculars we discovered that the birds were sleeping and either resting on one leg or lying flat on their bellies. Every minute or so one bird or another would untuck its bill, raise its head, and look about. Of course as soon as we looked through the binoculars we realized that the birds were Black Oyster-catchers (*Haematopus bachmani*). We watched them for one hour and five minutes, finally getting within 150 feet of them. The ten birds were scattered over a space about ten feet square and although closely grouped they were noticeably separated into pairs.

Children scampering over the rocks frightened the birds. They flew off in a compact flock, uttering a few squeally notes as they went. Three or four hundred yards up the coast the flock split and six birds turned back toward Bird Rock. Later in the day when returning home we saw six Oyster-catchers perched close to the water on the steep face of Bird Rock. These birds were also separated into pairs. They were not especially shy, since they paid no attention to a group of men who were fishing from the mainland a hundred yards from their perching site.

On October 25, after some search, we managed to find one Oyster-catcher. The tide was low and the bird was foraging on a mussel-covered flat. It was deliberate in its manner; stealth was in all its movements as it stalked its prey. A sudden stab, and when it lifted its head a long spile worm was dangling from its red mandibles. The whole performance reminded me of a robin stalking angleworms on a wet lawn.—CHARLES W. MICHAEL, *Pasadena, California, November 15, 1937.*

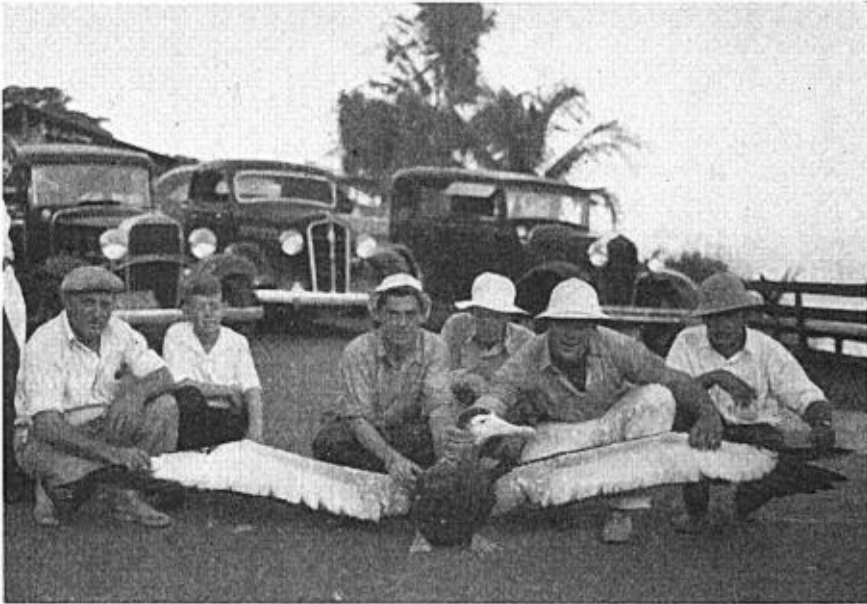


Fig. 35. Wandering Albatross captured and released in the Bay of Panama.

**The Wandering Albatross in the Bay of Panama.**—Mr. Lee B. Carr, of Balboa, Canal Zone, Captain of the launch "Wilpet" during my recent work along the Pacific coast of Colombia, informed me that an albatross had been captured in the Bay of Panama during August, 1937. Receipt of a photograph made by Mr. Carr reveals the surprising fact that the bird was a Wandering Albatross (*Diomedea exulans*), in the dark plumage of a yearling, with white face and wing-lining. Mr. Carr's note states that the captive was picked up by a fishing boat, carried into Balboa on deck, and was subsequently released on high ground, whence it took off successfully toward the sea after a running start.—ROBERT CUSHMAN MURPHY, *American Museum of Natural History, New York, March 11, 1938.*

**Concentration of English Sparrows to Feed on Oak Galls.**—On December 7, 1937, I noticed a group of from 70 to 100 English Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) in a large and rather isolated live oak on the Berkeley campus. The birds were actively and noisily feeding in the foliage of the tree. Several were seen clinging up-side-down in chickadee fashion to peripheral branches.

Examination disclosed the oak to be badly infested on the undersurfaces of perhaps half its leaves by a small gall of 2 to 4 millimeters diameter, caused by a gall-wasp (family Cynipidae). The sparrows were seen to be eating these galls, apparently whole, for the few dropping to the ground were not broken but seemingly just knocked off. Probably the younger galls were eaten for the most part, as the galls become dry and hard when older. Though the enclosed larvae must have proven acceptable food, it seems likely that the young and succulent plant tissue of the gall was equally acceptable. The concentration of sparrows remained great at least half of this day but dwindled during succeeding days, no sparrows being observed after December 10.

Although the economic value of these English Sparrows due to wholesale destruction of an insect which can cause extensive defoliation is undeniable in this case, it seems more appropriate to emphasize this observation as another example of the adaptability of the English Sparrow and of its propensity to congregate or to take advantage of a new food source even though this may demand new or peculiar habits of feeding. Such adaptability may well account in large measure for the progressive population of the United States by this bird. Although such plasticity is frequently exemplified in our native birds, it seems less characteristic of them. In the above oak, for example, two Song Sparrows were the only native birds seen apparently feeding on the galls.—FRANK RICHARDSON, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, January 13, 1938.*

**The Rusty Blackbird in Kern County, California.**—On December 16, 1937, while I was engaged in field work in the South Fork Valley of the Kern River, Kern County, California, Mrs. Stanley Smith, the wife of a rancher in the valley, called my attention to a "peculiar looking blackbird" which she had taken away from her cat. Being familiar only with our western blackbirds, I was unable to recognize this specimen. Therefore, upon returning to Los Angeles, I took the skin (now no. 1020, Stager collection) to the Los Angeles Museum, where Mr. George Willett identified it as *Euphagus carolinus*.

Credit is due Mrs. Smith, whose knowledge of bird life enabled her to recognize the specimen as of an unusual bird. According to Mrs. Smith, the cat caught two individuals of this species, but the second bird was too badly mauled to be worth saving. From all available literature, *carolinus* is a rare winter visitor in southern California. Three other records are known, two of which are from the Santa Barbara Islands and the third from Jamacha, San Diego County (Willett, *Pac. Coast Avif.* No. 21, 1933, p. 155).—KENNETH E. STAGER, *Los Angeles, California, March 4, 1938.*

**Two Late Fall Records of Birds in the San Francisco Bay Region.**—Dusky Poor-will, *Phalaenoptilus nuttallii californicus*. Before dawn on November 3, 1937, I was stationed on the first high ridge northeast of Temescal Lake, Alameda County, whistling poor-will calls. Soon, answering calls came from the next ridge to the north, and a poor-will appeared, its eyes shining red before my flash-light. It flew around me several times, uttering both the "poor-will" and "quup" notes, then perched for a while upon a fence post near-by. The latest previous record is for October 29, at Berkeley (Pacific Coast Avifauna No. 18, 1927, p. 92).

Cassin Solitary Vireo, *Vireo solitarius cassinii*. A Cassin Solitary Vireo was noted in Wildcat Canyon, Contra Costa County, on November 28, 1937. This is the latest definite record for the San Francisco Bay region. The vireo was foraging in live oaks and leafless poison-oak thickets with a mixed flock of juncos, Plain Titmouses, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Myrtle Warblers, and Hutton Vireos. It was promptly collected for identification with a sling-shot employed for such emergencies and is now a skin (male, number 200) in my collection.—JOE T. MARSHALL, JR., *Berkeley, California, January 14, 1938.*

**"Homing Instinct" in the Golden-crowned Sparrow.**—How unusual are the following two records? Since I began banding birds I have been interested in their so-called "homing instinct." By this I do not mean the instinct which impels them in their seasonal migrations, but that which gives them the desire and the ability to return to the same location after having been removed to a distance.

Most of my experiments on this subject have been with Golden-crowned Sparrows (*Zonotrichia coronata*), and I have removed about 100 of these birds from the places where I trapped and banded them to distances of from one mile up to more than 300 miles. Many have been recaptured; some remained for many weeks at the location where they were released and were repeatedly trapped there, but never, with one exception, after the first northerly migration.

The exception was in the case of Golden-crowned Sparrow no. 34-119203, trapped and banded at my home in the Santa Cruz Mountains, San Mateo County, California, about 40 miles south of San Francisco, at an elevation of 2000 feet. This bird was banded on December 10, 1936. It was