

Riverside County, California, November 29, 1885; Rosarito, Baja California, Mexico, February 17, 1925; Gray's Well, Imperial County, California, January 9, 1926; Punta Penascosa, Sonora, Mexico, February 19, 1934; Pilot Knob, Imperial County, California, February 18, 1938.—CLINTON G. ABBOTT, *San Diego Society of Natural History, San Diego, California, December 15, 1939.*

The Nectar Eating Habits of the Purple Finch.—In February of 1939, at my home in Berkeley, California, I noticed that the California Purple Finches (*Carpodacus purpureus californicus*) were singing every morning in a plum tree which was in full bloom. On closer observation the birds were seen to be plucking blossoms. Each bird worked systematically, and in one movement picked a blossom and snipped open the base; it then removed the nectar while holding the blossom in the bill, following which it dropped the blossom to the ground. Upon examination the dropped blossoms were found to be undamaged except for removal of the nectar. The birds' unhurried swiftness was interrupted only when they paused to sing. In March the purple finches transferred their attentions to the apricot trees and continued the same procedure. Four of the eight trees which were under observation were worked consistently, while the other four trees were not. Of the four trees that were not worked one had been pruned.

In July and August when the fruit ripened, the four apricot trees whose blossoms had been thinned by the purple finches had fewer, but larger, fruits. Of the four apricot trees which had not been visited by the purple finches the three unpruned trees were loaded with small fruit. In this instance the purple finches presumably had been beneficial rather than harmful. The tree which was young and had been pruned bore fruit comparable in size and quantity to the four trees visited by the purple finches. Because observations were made for only one season, it is not possible to determine whether these results were actually brought about by the purple finches or merely coincidental to other factors such as soil fertility, moisture, insects, and the general health of the trees.

Was the nectar eating habit of the California Purple Finch formerly beneficial and is it now harmful because of the introduction of man made factors? Is this habit harmful when practiced in pruned orchards or is it of further benefit? Has this nectar eating habit always or ever been harmful, or has it had any noticeable effect? These questions should be answered at least in part by further observations. Different findings may be expected where different kinds of trees and different ecological conditions are involved.—NED W. STONE, *Berkeley, California, September 28, 1939.*

Bendire Thrasher in Lincoln County, Nevada.—On May 16, 1939, while Dr. R. M. Bond, of Berkeley, California, and I were driving from Caliente to Pahrangat Valley in southeastern Nevada, we saw a pair of thrashers apparently new to both of us near the roadside about three miles north of Delmar, and at an altitude of about 5500 feet in the Joshua tree belt. We collected one of the birds, which proved to be an adult male *Toxostoma bendirei*. So far as I am aware, this is the first record of the Bendire Thrasher being taken anywhere in the state of Nevada.—STANLEY G. JEWETT, *Portland, Oregon, September 17, 1939.*

The Clapper Rail of Morro Bay.—On February 6, 1939, I took a mated pair of Clapper Rails on the salicornia-covered island in the center of Morro Bay; at least three others were seen at the Federal Sanctuary on the east side of the bay and Dr. A. T. Marshall, who has long been a resident of Morro, considers the species to be a scarce but regular permanent resident at other points around Morro Bay.

Having secured the specimens it should naturally be considered an easy matter to decide whether the birds were the California Clapper Rail (*Rallus obsoletus obsoletus*) or the Light-footed Rail (*R. o. levipes*), but after careful comparison with the series in my own collection and consulting all available works of reference, I am in considerable doubt both as to what to call my Morro birds and as to the validity of the subspecies *levipes*. The latter until recently was always regarded as a full species!

My series consists of twelve good skins of *obsoletus* from San Francisco and Tomales bays and two skins of *levipes* and *beldingi*. I have also gone over the series in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. As far as I can see the recognized distinctions of back color, breast color and superciliary stripe are without value, as a series of the northern birds will show specimens with all the characters of the southern forms. The only tangible difference, and that an extremely slight one and possibly due to exposure, between the northern form and the two southern ones is the browner centers to the feathers of the mantle in the two southern subspecies; in the northern form these centers are black.

On this count I would call the Morro birds *Rallus obsoletus obsoletus*, although the locality is closer to the range of *levipes*; on the other hand the measurements of the female come well within those given for *levipes*. But an analysis of the distinctions in measurements shows that there is actually