

**Unusual Records from California.**—The following specimen records, considered of unusual interest, were obtained in San Luis Obispo County, California, in 1951 and 1952.

*Sayornis phoebe*. Eastern Phoebe. An adult male was collected in a grove of small cottonwoods on the Sacramento Ranch near Shandon on December 3, 1952. This is believed to be the third specimen taken in the state of California.

*Empidonax difficilis*. Western Flycatcher. As this flycatcher is regarded as a summer visitant only, it is of interest to report that one was taken by Mr. Eben McMillan at Cholame on November 24, 1951. The specimen, now in my collection, is an immature female. It has been identified by A. R. Phillips as *E. d. hellmayri*.

*Ammospiza caudacuta*. Sharp-tailed Sparrow. At Morro Bay, on December 27, 1952, I flushed five Sharp-tailed Sparrows from a salicornia flat. All flew directly to the thick vegetation, chiefly three-square bulrush, that fringes one side of this open flat, and I collected two of them near the edge of this cover. Both are females in fresh fall plumage and are similar to specimens of *A. c. nelsoni* from Beaver Hill Lake, Alberta, when consideration is given to seasonal plumage wear in the latter.

*Melospiza georgiana*. Swamp Sparrow. Mr. Eben McMillan collected a specimen of this sparrow for me in a three-square bulrush marsh near the southern extremity of Morro Bay on December 31, 1952. No others were seen in the numerous times the marsh was visited in the course of the winter. The specimen, a female in first-winter plumage, is darker and more blackish on the crown than is an immature male in comparable plumage from Nulki Lake, British Columbia, and in this respect more closely resembles a male in fresh autumn plumage from southern Ontario, which is an example of *M. g. georgiana*. One of the three other California-taken specimens is reported to display the characteristics of *M. g. ericrypta*, the two others being assumed to represent this "western" race (Pac. Coast Avif. No. 27:542). However, as Godfrey (Auk, 1949, 66:35-38) has demonstrated *ericrypta* is a northern, rather than a western race.—J. A. MUNRO, *Okanagan Landing, British Columbia, August 20, 1953*.

**Further Notes on Plumages and Molts of Red Crossbills.**—Jollie (Condor, 55, 1953:193-197) has recently made some assertions pertaining to Red Crossbills (*Loxia curvirostra*) that seem to me to require comment. He states (p. 193) that from the series of crossbills examined by him "it is clear that there are four typical plumages in the male (with rare variants): a striped, juvenal plumage, a mottled orange and yellow plumage (the first immature) which is later replaced by an adult-like red plumage (the second immature), and lastly an adult plumage characterized by reddish or brownish margined tail and wing feathers . . ." He says also (p. 195) that the "plumages of the female Red Crossbill are much simpler. The juvenile molts into a typical female plumage soon after leaving the nest," the wing and tail feathers being retained until a "second molt." I presume this "second molt" corresponds to the first postnuptial molt in standard terminology of molts (Dwight, Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci., 13, 1900:73-260, and most subsequent authors).

Jollie postulates that the two successive molts producing the "first and second immature" male plumages are completed before the skull entirely ossifies. The age at which ossification of the skull is complete in the Red Crossbill is not known. However, my impression, gained from collecting in the autumn, is that six months might be a fair guess for most species of passerines. Nero (Wilson Bull., 63, 1951:84-88), in a careful study of specimens of *Passer domesticus* of known age, determined that ossification of the cranium in this species was complete by ages 181 to 221 days—roughly six to seven months. If we assume that crossbills resemble other passerines in this respect, we must visualize, by Jollie's theory, two complete molts of the body plumage in about six months, followed almost immediately by still a third, prenuptial, molt which is incomplete (see Tordoff, Condor, 54, 1952:200-203). No other bird, to my knowledge, has a first-year sequence of molts of this sort. Jollie's conclusions were based on seven "first immature" and eight "second immature" males and seem to hinge on the occurrence of a few juvenal feathers on the belly in the first age class and their absence in the second age class.

As a speculative point, one might inquire as to the functional significance of a rapid-fire series of molts in young male Red Crossbills. In most birds, at least, the sequence of plumages and molts follows a pattern which seems to make sense biologically. That is, molts are not ordinarily "wasted." The resultant plumage usually serves some obvious function. No function is obvious to me for the two postjuvenal immature plumages—the first retained for only two or three months—presumed by Jollie to occur in male Red Crossbills.