

Torrance County, New Mexico. Laguna del Perro is approximately 130 air miles northwest of the locality at which Montgomery recorded an individual of this species between May 16 and 20, 1958. When collected the godwit was being harassed by approximately 20 adult Avocets (*Recurvirostra americana*) which had occupied the pond area as a nesting site. The godwit skin (U.N.M.C.V. no. 173) is now in the collection of the University of New Mexico. Perhaps these two known records of this bird in the state give a true indication of its accidental status there. On the other hand, one wonders if a systematic investigation of the widely scattered ponds and reservoirs on the plains of eastern New Mexico would not prove the Hudsonian Godwit to be more common in that area during spring migration than is shown by the available records.

On May 13, 1955, I observed an adult Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) in an oak grove on the eastern margin of a large playa approximately 6 miles east of Cloverdale and 4 miles north of the Mexican boundary in Hidalgo County, New Mexico. I approached within 75 yards of the bird as it sat on the top of a weathered stub in the crown of an oak. It was watched for nearly five minutes, during which time it was repeatedly attacked by a male Sparrow Hawk (*Falco sparverius*). Cloverdale is approximately 300 air miles west-southwest of the vicinity of Roswell, New Mexico, from which Montgomery has reported three sight records of this kite in June, 1958.—JOHN M. CAMPBELL, *Yale University, April 12, 1959.*

Ruby-crowned Kinglet Feeding on Nectar.—The Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*) is a common winter resident in northern interior California. At Paradise, Butte County, in the fall of 1958, the first kinglets were observed on October 5, and by October 9 they were quite common. By October 13, a Ruby-crown had discovered our two hummingbird feeders, hanging in the ceanothus shrubs. Two or more Anna Hummingbirds (*Calypte anna*) were regular visitors to the red nectar bottles, and the Ruby-crown soon became a regular customer also; it continued until January 30. I have never seen more than one kinglet at a time, and I do not know if more than one individual comes to feed. The hummingbirds either hover in front of the bottle, or perch on the wire loop and feed for several seconds before flying away. The kinglet comes to the perch, takes a sip, flits away, comes back for another sip, and is always in motion. After several sips it flies into the surrounding shrubbery and in a few minutes it is back again. This goes on throughout the daylight hours.

As I could find no published record of Ruby-crowned Kinglets feeding on nectar, I wrote to the Tucker Bird Sanctuary, Orange, California, for information. In reply, Mr. John W. Williams writes as follows: "With reference to the Ruby-crowned Kinglet, we have had a similar experience with them. We have [two] that attempt feeding on the nectar in our bottles, but of course with the Bee Guards to protect they do not get nectar. Occasionally we leave the Bee Guard off to give them a feed."

Does the Ruby-crowned Kinglet also feed on the nectar of flowers if it is available?—JOHN McB. ROBERTSON, *Paradise, Butte County, California, January 30, 1959.*

A Late Seasonal Record of the Yellow-breasted Chat.—On December 5, 1958, a Yellow-breasted Chat was caught in a trap I had set on the roof of an aviary in my garden at 923 South Longwood Avenue, Los Angeles, California. The trap was intended to recapture a sunbird that had escaped from the aviary and was baited with honey water. This record of the chat is one of very late date for its presence in southern California. Willett (Pac. Coast Avif. No. 21, 1933:149) records it in the fall only as late as October.—J. DELACOUR, *Los Angeles County Museum, Los Angeles, California, March 9, 1959.*

Bark-eating of Red-headed Woodpeckers.—While studying the territorial behavior of Red-headed Woodpeckers (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) which wintered in Seneca, Maryland (Kilham, *Wilson Bull.*, 70, 1958:107-113, 347-358), I noticed that some individuals ate bark with increasing frequency from December, 1956, until May, 1957. On December 15, for example, I watched a Red-headed Woodpecker fly to the trunk of a river birch (*Betula nigra*) and remain at one place for 15 minutes, pecking lightly on the bark and resting intermittently. On close examination, I saw a series of shallow indentations. These covered several square inches and did not extend to the underlying wood. On the following morning the woodpecker worked on an adjacent birch in a similar manner

and on December 29 it was again pecking gently and eating pieces of bark from the first birch. Three other Red-headed Woodpeckers observed in December were all feeding on bark of pin oaks (*Quercus palustris*).

In continuing observations I found one Red-headed Woodpecker (RH-1) of particular interest. This individual was marked by having a red head and black back while retaining the black bars which distinguish the white primaries of an immature bird. RH-1 fed on the bark of a pin oak within its territory from December through April. The feeding areas were low and I could observe the woodpecker at a distance of 30 feet while using 7×50 binoculars. RH-1 flew to the trunk of the pin oak on December 22. It would peck two or three times, then eat bark from a small area only just begun and located below where a limb emerged from the trunk, 12 feet from the ground. The woodpecker



Fig. 1. Area of exposed inner bark on a pin oak where a Red-headed Woodpecker fed from December (at right within saw cuts) until March (at left).

was consuming something for I could see that no bits of bark were drifting away with the wind. I returned with a saw on the next day to excise the area for examination. After making four cuts, however, I found the bark too adherent to remove. RH-1 was feeding at the same place three weeks later and the area was now enlarged by a downward extension of several inches. It became even larger at a later date (fig. 1). The woodpecker shifted its attention to a new place in March. This area was directly above the one with the saw cuts and was 20 feet from the ground with a southern exposure. Direct sunlight made the exposed, bright yellow, inner bark of the pin oak particularly obvious. The area of exposed bark had a peculiar U-shape. The arms of this U, pecked and nibbled over repeatedly, grew to be 6 to 7 inches long by April. Bark-eating was most frequent in this month, if one could judge by the rate of growth of feeding spots in this and in other territories of Red-headed Woodpeckers. On April 9, I observed a woodpecker feeding for five minutes on a serpentine area six inches long on a pin oak. My son climbed to the place with a saw, hammer and chisel. Removal revealed that the serpentine outline had been tattooed through the inner bark on the wood underneath. Bark-eating continued until the Red-headed Woodpeckers departed in May, for on May 4 I had an excellent view of one of them feeding on an odd-shaped area of inner bark of a pin oak.

In summary, I had observed nine Red-headed Woodpeckers feeding on bark over a period of six months. The living trees involved included nine pin oaks, two river birches, one hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), and one red ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*). Most of the bark appeared to be eaten in April.

One would like to know why the Red-headed Woodpeckers ate bark from limited areas on repeated occasions. These birds have not returned in two years and there has been no opportunity to continue investigations. It is of interest from an ethological point of view, however; that bark-eating is a habit common to at least two other genera of woodpeckers, as the following reports indicate:

(1) Writing of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (*Sphyrapicus varius*), Beal (U.S.D.A. Biol. Surv. Bull. 37, 1911:1-64) stated that "cambium, or the inner bark of trees, was eaten every month, but most in winter and spring. The greatest consumption is in April, 48.95 per cent . . ." (2) Pynnönen (Ann. Soc. Zool. Fenn., 9, 1943:1-60) has described the bark-eating of the Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*) in Finland. On December 6, 1934, for example, he observed an individual which visited a single spot on a birch tree eight times for this purpose, but he further states that the habit did not become regular until March. Both of these species drill holes to obtain sap. The sapsuckers can obtain sap in mid-winter in Maryland, as described elsewhere (Kilham, Auk, 73, 1956:451-452), and Great Spotted Woodpeckers may drill holes for sap, as described by Witherby *et al.* (Handbook British Birds, vol. 2, 1940:284) among others. My hypothesis is that Red-headed Woodpeckers, as well as sapsuckers and the Great Spotted Woodpecker, may obtain sap in an alternate way by consuming bark into which it has permeated, and, possibly, become concentrated by evaporation, following repeated wounding of a tree in a single spot.—LAWRENCE KILHAM, *Bethesda, Maryland, January 23, 1959.*

The Starling Arrives in San Diego, California.—Sixty-nine years after the original American stock of Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) was released in New York City, the species has finally reached the southwesternmost county in the United States. On February 4, 1959, the writer observed two Starlings at the intersection of 11th and C streets in downtown San Diego, California. Both birds flew low overhead, permitting positive identification; one Starling, already in breeding plumage, had the characteristic yellow bill coloring and the unmarked, iridescent green breast. This is the first recorded occurrence of the species in San Diego County, although it was reported in California (Siskiyou County) as early as 1942 (Jewett, Condor, 44, 1942:79) and has recently been recorded in Imperial County and as a breeding bird in Los Angeles County (Rainey, Van Hoose, and Tramontano, Condor, 61, 1959:57).—KEN STOTT, JR., *Natural History Museum, Balboa Park, San Diego, California, February 4, 1959.*

More Observations of the Least Petrel and Pale-footed Shearwater Off Southern California.—The Least Petrel (*Halocptena microsoma*) was considered by Grinnell and Miller (Pac. Coast Avif. No. 27, 1944:45) to be a "late summer or early fall vagrant" in the waters west of San Diego and only four occurrences for the state of California have been published to date. Observations of this species during the late summer and early fall of 1958 might indicate that this species occurs regularly in small numbers at this time in the extreme southern waters of the state. On September 1, 1958, about 40 individuals of this species were observed by me together with larger numbers of Black Petrels (*Loomelania melanis*), Leach Petrels (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*), and Ashy Petrels (*Oceanodroma homochroa*) about 5 miles east of Pyramid Cove, San Clemente Island. Prolonged observations of these Least Petrels revealed them to be easily separable in the field from the other three species of petrels and a discussion of their field characteristics might be in order so as to aid in future identification.

When the members of our party first sighted petrels, it was evident at once that among them were some noticeably small birds with swift, erratic flight that kept them close to the ocean surface. Even when seen unaccompanied by other petrels, their very small size was evident. The boat gave chase, but at full throttle (about 18 knots) we could not maneuver fast enough to get a clear shot at them, although several were attempted, and so none was collected. In addition to their small size (about two-thirds that of the Ashy Petrels and one-half that of the Black Petrels) and characteristic swift flight, as contrasted to the fluttery flight of the Ashy Petrels, no whitish areas were visible on the under sides of their wings; such is to be seen in the Ashy Petrels. The very best field mark of the Least Petrel, which was easily seen when these birds were close to the boat, was the rounded or wedge-shaped tail as compared to the forked tails of the other petrels. The tail was also shorter proportionally than that of the other species seen. These latter field characteristics were especially evident when the birds veered and turned.

On September 13, 1958, six more Least Petrels were seen at a point about 8 miles west of Point Loma, San Diego County, and they were successfully photographed in motion pictures.