

Communications

Mexican Crow range extension

Shortly after dawn on January 9, 1974, I watched a continuous flight of Mexican Crows (*Corvus imparatus*), estimated to exceed 2500 individuals, fly directly north over the Ramada Inn at Laredo, Webb County, south Texas. They were following a narrow flyway at an altitude of about 150-200 feet. In my field notes, I described their call as a hoarse "quook" or "quawk." Although I had no way of ascertaining their destination, they could have been flying toward a local dump to feed. In the lower Rio Grande Valley, Arvin, *et al.* (1975, *Auk* 92 387-390) first recorded the species in the United States, frequently saw this species at or near the Brownsville city dump and postulated that these northward invasions from Mexico resulted from a lack of food just south of the Rio Grande River. Their Texas sightings, while principally in the vicinity of Brownsville, were also in other areas of Cameron, Willacy, and Kenedy counties in extreme south Texas, and spanned the period from August, 1968 to December, 1973.

Laredo, like Brownsville, borders Mexico across the Rio Grande, but lies 200 miles farther northwest. Conspicuous plant species typical of the desert thorn scrub in the Laredo area are: mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*), huisache (*Acacia farnesiana*) and creosote bush (*Larrea divaricata*).

The foregoing represents the second area of invasion for the species into the United States —

Jack D. Tyler, Department of Biology, Cameron University, Lawton, Oklahoma 73501.

A Kirtland's Warbler life history

On July 2, 1971, Bruce Radabaugh banded (band number 116-24662) a fledged nestling Kirtland's Warbler at Mack Lake, 4 miles southeast of Mio, Oscoda County, Mich. During the summer of 1972 Warren Faust noted a bird wearing a rightleg band (as we banded nestlings) at the Lovells Management Area, Crawford County, Michigan, about 28 miles northwest of Mack Lake. The bird was a male and on territory. In late May 1973, Warren Faust and Larry Walkinshaw found the nest of a pair in this same territory. The male was banded on the right leg. On June 18, 1973, Walkinshaw captured this male Kirtland's Warbler which was wearing band number 116-24662. He placed a dark blue band above the survey band so that he would not have to capture it again. His mate was banded in a similar manner with band number 820-89201. Their fledged 4 young were also banded on June 23, 1973. One egg had failed to hatch. The young and the female have not been found since. But male 116-24662 was back May 31, 1974, mated with a female which had occupied the next territory in 1973 (neither of their mates was found in 1974). They fledged 5 nestlings (one nested 1/2 mile to the west in 1975), June 24-25, 1974, and then attempted a second nest in July which was broken up by

MASSACHUSETTS AUDUBON'S
NATURAL HISTORY

'77
Tours



FOR DETAILS AND AN ITINERARY WRITE:
DIRECTOR, NHS TOURS
MASSACHUSETTS AUDUBON SOCIETY
S. GREAT RD.
LINCOLN, MASS. 01773

cowbirds. This female, band number 81-58978, did not return in 1975 but band number 116-24662 did. He occupied the same territory and with his unbanded mate, fledged 5 young June 23, 1975. No second nest was found. On September 27, 1975, 7-year old Suzanne Doerger, Westwood, Cincinnati, Ohio found a male Kirtland's Warbler wearing band number 116-24662 and a dark blue band above this on their porch. It had flown into a picture window and was dead. It was preserved and is in the Cincinnati Museum.

Lawrence R. Walkinshaw

Ivory Gulls off Labrador in summer

The Ivory Gull, *Pagophila eburnea*, is well known as a winter visitor to the pack-ice off southern Labrador and northern Newfoundland (Todd, 1963). The return migration to the Arctic probably takes place in or before April, though birds may linger on into May. My own latest record prior to 1974 was of a single bird at 54° 45'N 53° 14'W on May 16, 1969, and the latest quoted by Todd is of two specimens taken off Sandwich Bay (c 54°N 57°W) on June 12, 1897.

However in the last two summers I have seen birds off southeast Labrador in late July. On July 19, 1974 there were four adults sitting on the water beside a drilling rig and its tender, in dense pack-ice at 54° 50'N 55° 48'W. They were seen over a period of 4 hours, and were apparently attracted to the ships' garbage. Again, on July 24, 1975, a single adult flew over my ship heading north, at 55° 35'N 57° 07'W. In contrast to 1974, there was no pack-ice and only a few icebergs, but surface water

temperatures were even colder: 0.8°C, against 1.3°C in 1974. There could be no question of misidentification at such close ranges; the pure white plumage and the dark feet, legs and bill were well seen, and the birds could not have been mistaken for anything else.

At that time of year Ivory Gulls ought to be in the vicinity of their high arctic colonies in north Greenland and the western Canadian arctic, at least a thousand miles farther north. I saw no more birds in 1975, though the cruise extended up into Hudson Strait and Hudson Bay. My only other sighting in 1974 was at 74° 49'N 65° 01'W on July 31. Similarly Dr. A.R. Lock (unpublished Canadian Wildlife Service survey) saw a few in Baffin Bay and Lancaster Sound north of 71° N in early August 1974, but the birds were common only in the pack-ice north of 77° N in Smith Sound

It is perhaps not too surprising that occasional Ivory Gulls should remain all summer off Labrador. The Labrador Current is extremely cold and the part closest to the coast is made up of almost unmodified high arctic, polar water (Hachey 1961), similar to that in the birds' breeding areas. The fact that they have not hitherto been reported is presumably due to the scarcity of observers in the area.

Hachey, H.B. 1961. Oceanography and Canadian Atlantic waters. Fish. Res. Bd. Canada Bull 134 1-120.

Todd, W.E.C. 1963. Birds of the Labrador Peninsula Univ. Toronto Press, Toronto.

R.G.B. Brown

Canadian Wildlife Service, Marine Ecology Laboratory, Bedford Institute, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada

GO BIRDING IN MEXICO WITH GEORGE M. SUTTON

December 26, 1976–January 4, 1977

Celebrate the New Year birding at the Hacienda El Cobano in Colima, Mexico, with world-famous ornithologist and painter GEORGE M. SUTTON. Enjoy paintings and lectures on Mexican birds by Dr. Sutton. Go on field trips to the Pacific coast and active Volcan de Fuego with biologist Dr. William Carter and Warren Harden, veteran leaders of West Mexican birding trips. Birds of area include the rare Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, Slaty Vireo and Collared Plover. \$440 from Guadalajara.

For information write

Hacienda El Cobano, University of Oklahoma
555 E. Constitution Ave., Norman, Oklahoma 73037