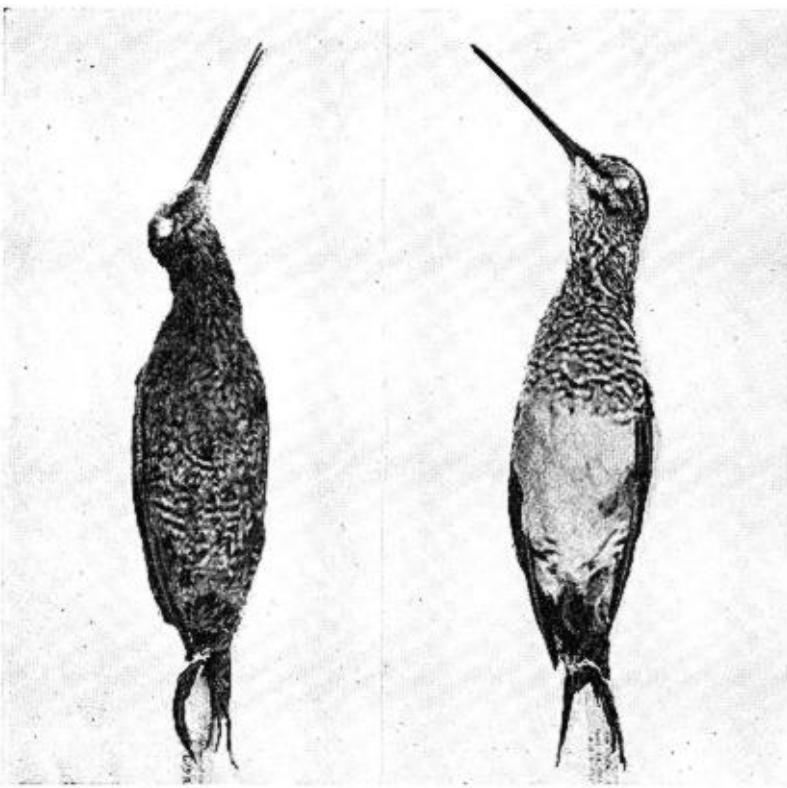


#### GENERAL NOTES

**A melanistic specimen of Wilson's Snipe.**—The University of Michigan Museum of Zoology received from William G. Fargo an interesting melanistic specimen of Wilson's Snipe (*Capella gallinago delicata*). The snipe, which Fargo reports was a fat, and apparently healthy, female, was shot near Jackson, Michigan, on October 10, 1929, by Frank Havens.

As shown by the accompanying photographs, the specimen is strikingly darker than normal snipe. It is almost solidly brownish black above. Though it has a stripe through the crown and light edgings on most of the back feathers, scapulars,



and upper wing coverts, these markings are very narrow and are all buff instead of pale buff and white as in the normal Wilson's Snipe. The tail is like that of normal snipe except that the terminal and subterminal bars are narrower and darker (about Mikado Brown of Ridgway, 1912), the terminal bar showing no white at all; the upper and under tail coverts are black, barred with buff. (The tail was damaged by shot, and some of the rectrices are missing, but the outer tail feather that remains measures 8 mm. in breadth at 20 mm. from the tip, confirming the identification of this specimen as a true Wilson's Snipe—cf. Witherby, *Brit. Birds*, 17, 1925:283.) The sides of the head, the neck, throat, and breast are

dull black, mixed with a large amount of Sayal Brown, but no white. The chin is buff. The belly, instead of being plain white as in normal Wilson's Snipe, is definitely brown, heavily barred with brownish black. The only pure white on the specimen is under the wing: the under wing coverts as well as the underwing side and flank feathers are narrowly tipped with white, and the axillars are very narrowly barred with white.

There seems to be no previous record of a dark-plumaged Wilson's Snipe, but Barrett-Hamilton recorded 55 melanistic specimens of the European subspecies, *Capella gallinago gallinago*, as early as 1895. N. A. Vigors (*Trans. Linn. Soc. London*, 14, 1825:557, pl.) described the first recorded specimen as a new species, *Scolopax sabini*, but the name was later placed in the synonymy of the Common Snipe, and modern papers on snipe usually dismiss it briefly as "a melanistic variety" (e.g. A. C. Meinertzhagen, *Ibis*, 1926:486). However, the case is not so simple as that. Pycraft (*Ibis*, 1905:289-291) pointed out that there is more than one kind of "melanistic snipe." Some specimens differ from the normal only in the intensity of their pigmentation. This is largely true in the case of a "Sabine's Snipe" lent to me by the American Museum of Natural History (No. 740894. Leadenhall Market, London, Jan. 13, 1894). In general, the pattern of this bird is normal, but all of the lighter markings are buff instead of white or pale buff; also the throat and belly are nearly uniform with the rest of the plumage, instead of being white or nearly white. There is, however, one important difference in pattern: the belly, instead of being unmarked, is definitely streaked—though less so than the rest of the underparts. (It is interesting to note that Vigors' plate of "*Scolopax sabini*," although rather crudely drawn, also shows a definite pattern of dark marks on the belly.) The only place on the Leadenhall Market specimen where pure white occurs is under the wings: the axillars and under wing coverts are marked with white, though the bars are as narrow as those of the normal Wilson's Snipe.

The second kind of "Sabine's Snipe," described by Pycraft and by Witherby ("Handbook of British birds," 4, 1940:203), seems to differ from the kind described above in having the crown black and unstreaked; the scapulars and mantle without broad longitudinal streaks; the belly uniform sooty brown (not streaked or barred?); the axillars and under wing coverts uniform sooty black (with no pale markings).

Dark phase specimens ("*sabini*") occur with some regularity in the range of *C. g. gallinago*; they are more common in certain parts of the range, particularly in Ireland. However, as remarked above, the specimen figured here is apparently the first melanistic snipe to be recorded from the range of the American subspecies. It is noteworthy that Wilson's Snipe has long been described as much less variable in plumage than the Common Snipe (e.g. Seebold, "The geographical distribution of the family Charadriidae," 1887:487).

Our dark phase Wilson's Snipe differs from the Leadenhall Market specimen of "*sabini*" in the strong black barring on the belly (perhaps an exaggeration and extension of the breast-barring that is one of the subspecific characters of *delicata*) and in the greater extent of black markings throughout the plumage.—JOSSELYN VAN TYNE, University of Michigan Museum of Zoology, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

**New records for northcentral Oklahoma.**—A Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) was shot by a duck hunter at Cushing Lake, Payne County, Oklahoma, on November 17, 1942. The specimen, a female in winter plumage and in good flesh, was deposited in the collection of the Zoology Department, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, by J. A. Heuston. The species has not previously been listed for the state.