

off the seeds as they passed through their mandibles. They have also been observed feeding on beard grass (*Andropogon*), *Agrostis* and rarely salt grass (*Spartina patens*) as well as beach golden-rod. In the south, Sprunt (op. cit.) remarks that it feeds largely on sea oats (*Uniola paniculata*).

As to artificial feeding, there is an old New England report of the Ipswich Sparrow picking up grain scattered about on the beach. At Gilgo, five years ago, I watched one feeding on cracked grain which I had spread out for that purpose.

(To be continued.)

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CRITICALLY NEEDED BIRD SPECIMENS FROM NEW YORK

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Most serious amateur bird students are aware that certain factual questions about birds can be answered satisfactorily only by the collecting of specimens. In many cases the specimens which already exist in our museums are more than ample to serve our needs, especially in a relatively well-studied state like New York. The two outstanding collections of New York birds are those at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City and Cornell University in Ithaca. Other museums in the state, such as those at Albany, Buffalo and Rochester, have smaller but nevertheless valuable collections. In spite of the existence of this fine New York material, some questions about distribution within the state remain, and some of these questions can be solved only by collecting specimens. In most cases these questions pertain to the subspecific status of a relatively few species, in certain special areas of the state. For example, we do not know for certain the relative distribution of two subspecies of Henslow's Sparrow in New York, primarily because of a lack of specimens from that part of the state lying south and east of Syracuse. Such questions become important when, for instance, the species' range is being described in the new edition of the A.O.U. Check-list. In such cases only the specialist will know just which birds, from which areas of the state, are needed to complete our knowledge of distribution.

There are a few species, mostly rather uncommon, which *should be collected*, at least in certain parts of the state (sometimes *anywhere* in the state) whenever the opportunity presents itself. Many readers will want this statement justified, and I hope to show that, for about a dozen species, the knowledge of bird distribution gained will amply justify the collecting of the few birds involved. Most of the species I shall discuss are quite rare in New York, and (here is the crucial point) may enter our borders from several different directions. In each of these cases there are subspecific distinctions involved which will allow us to say, after the specimen has been identified by a qualified taxonomist, from which segment of the species' geographic range this bird has come. As an example, let us take Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*). There are now several good sight records of this species in various parts of New York, but no specimen has ever been collected within our borders. It would be of much interest to students of

bird distribution to know where these birds are coming from. There are two eastern subspecies of Bewick's Wren; one, *T. b. altus*, is found along the Appalachians from central Pennsylvania south to Alabama; the other, *T. b. bewickii*, is found west of the mountains from eastern Ohio west to Kansas and Nebraska. It would seem a good guess to suppose that most of the Bewick's Wrens which show up in New York would probably come from within the range of *altus*, but this is *just a guess*. It is perfectly possible that some of our records of this species, especially those from central or western New York, might represent individuals of *bewickii* which have straggled east from Ohio. The point is that we have no way of learning what these "invasion routes" are unless we are able to examine the specimens and identify the subspecific population from which they came. I would say, therefore, that any Bewick's Wren discovered in New York should be collected by a person holding the appropriate permits, and the specimen sent to a museum where it may be studied and compared with out-of-date specimens of the pertinent subspecies.

Below is a short list of those species which I feel should be collected in New York (at least in the area specified) whenever they may show up, and a summary of the problem involved in each case.

Eared Grebe (*Colymbus caspicus*). Although there are several sight records for this species in New York, it has never been collected in the state. Some of these sight records have been made by careful, conservative observers, and there is little doubt that the species does, occasionally, occur in New York. Great Lakes records are almost certainly of the North American subspecies, *C. c. californicus* (although a confirming specimen would be desirable). Along the Atlantic coast, however, there is the interesting possibility that a stray Eared Grebe might have actually crossed the ocean. Some observers on Long Island have even ventured to identify, in the field, an Eared Grebe as the Old World *C. c. caspicus*. Needless to say, such an identification is not justified without the specimen in hand, but the possibility does exist, and any Eared Grebe seen along the coast should be collected if at all possible.

Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*). This arctic species has occasionally reached our waters, but no specimen has as yet been taken in New York. There are two Atlantic subspecies to which a Fulmar along our coast might belong; the population which breeds on Baffin Island (*F. g. minor*) or that of Greenland, Iceland and northern Europe (*F. g. glacialis*). It should be of no little interest to know which route our few Fulmars have followed, but this cannot be determined without the specimen in hand to measure.

Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*). The Hudson Bay population of this duck was named *sedentaria* by L. L. Snyder on the assumption that it was non-migratory, wintering in the open waters of Hudson and James bays. However, a specimen (one of three seen at the time) was collected on the Ontario side of the Niagara River on November 21, 1936; it is now in the National Museum of Canada. Since there are occasional sight records of Eiders on the Great Lakes, it would be of great interest to know whether there is, after all, an occasional light southward flight of *sedentaria* down from James Bay in winter. It had previously been assumed that such records were probably based on individuals of *S. m. dresseri* wandering southwest along the St. Lawrence River. Again, only examination of specimens can determine this.

Willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*). The relative status of the two subspecies of Willet has been well worked out for the coastal portion of New York (see Cruickshank, "Birds Around New York City", 1942, p. 189). The Eastern Willet (*C. a. semipalmatus*) is the spring transient and the Western (*C. s. inornatus*) the fall transient. In the interior of the state, where the Willet is a rare bird, the status of our knowledge is far different. We may feel fairly certain that fall Willets from the interior belong to the western race, and this has been confirmed by the taking of a very few specimens. In the spring however, the Willet is exceedingly rare inland, and we do not know if these few spring birds are, like the spring Long Island migrants, *semipalmatus*, or whether they are *inornatus*, which might seem more probable on geographic grounds. To summarize: any Willet seen in New York in spring away from the coastal region should, by all means, be collected for subspecific identification.

Dowitchers (*Limnodromus griseus* and *L. scolopaceus*). Until the appearance of an extensive and scholarly monograph by Frank Pitelka (Univ. Calif. Pub. in Zoology, 50, 1950, pp. 1-108), the literature on the Dowitchers was a mass of confused and conflicting statements. The students of the genus could not agree on how many species or subspecies to recognize, nor on the characters of the forms they *did* recognize. It has now become clear that many (if not most) of the records in the literature of Long-billed Dowitchers (*L. scolopaceus*) in the northeastern states were based on *L. griseus hendersoni*, which is longer-billed than the well known eastern *L. g. griseus*. Since the status of the various forms was so widely misunderstood (and still is, among those not familiar with recent findings), sight records of subspecies of Dowitcher from New York and the other eastern states must be discarded as a body. Even now many specimens repose in collections under incorrect identifications, since the differentiating characteristics are incorrectly given in older literature.

The relative frequency of the three Dowitchers, *L. g. griseus*, *L. g. hendersoni*, and *L. scolopaceus*, along the coastal region of New York was worked out fairly accurately by Pitelka, since specimens may be found in good numbers in existing collections. Specimens from the interior of the state, however, are rare, and do not exist in sufficient numbers to permit a determination of the ratio of the three forms. It might be suspected that *griseus*, predominant along the coast, would show somewhat less of a numerical superiority inland, since *scolopaceus* and *hendersoni* are, respectively, far-western and mid-western breeders. Without specimens we cannot verify this.

Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*). Although the subspecific division of this species has not been universally supported, material I have seen shows that the two races are quite recognizable. New York records from fresh water (Great Lakes, Finger Lakes) are presumably the form which breeds in interior North America, *S. f. forsteri*, although I have seen just one specimen to confirm this (Cayuga Lake). The other subspecies, *S. f. litoricola*, breeds along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts from Virginia to Texas. As a species, Forster's Tern is now a regular and fairly common fall transient in the Long Island region, as many as 300 having been recorded in a single flock (Cruickshank, *op. cit.*, p. 239). It appears doubtful whether all of these birds would have come from the breeding population of the southern Atlantic

coast, although the very few Long Island specimens I have examined have, indeed, been *litoricola*. Further collecting, especially a sampling of these larger flocks, should be undertaken to determine whether a substantial number of these birds may not be migrant *forsteri* from the interior.

Least Tern (*Sterna albifrons*). I know of no authentic record of this species from the interior of New York. Occurrence of Least Terns on our inland waters is perfectly possible, however. Any such bird that may appear should definitely be collected, as it would be probable that a Least Tern in western or central New York would be from the breeding population of the Mississippi and Ohio river drainages. This would add a new subspecies, *S. a. athalassos*, to the state list. There are several records from Ohio and western Pennsylvania.

Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*). In an earlier paper in *The Kingbird* (1953, pp. 4-6) I summarized the status of this species in New York, emphasizing that, despite widespread belief to the contrary, the two subspecies cannot be identified with certainty in the field. The Yellow-throated Warbler is apparently undergoing, to at least a slight extent, a northward movement like that of many other austral birds. The collecting of specimens and their identification as *dominica* or *albilora* will help to to plot more accurately these "invasions" as they occur.

Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) and Pine Grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*). Both of these species are subject to occasional major irruptive flights into New York. When possible, a sampling should be made from flocks of these birds, since their movements are so irregular that their geographic origin is unpredictable. There are three subspecies of the Crossbill and two of the Pine Grosbeak which may be found in New York; judicious collecting may help us to work out some sort of pattern for their movements.

Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudacuta*). The four New York subspecies (one breeding, three migrant) of this species are now much better understood, after many years of confusion and conflicting statements in the literature. There is much we still need to learn, especially about the migration routes and relative abundance of the two inland forms, *nelsoni* and *altera*. We need more specimens from more localities in the interior of New York. Especially do we need spring specimens. The spring migration of the inland races of Sharp-tailed Sparrow is very poorly understood; to my knowledge, only one New York spring specimen each of *altera* and *nelsoni* has ever been taken. These birds are very rare in New York at this season, and should be collected whenever encountered.

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