

With respect to Dr. Grinnell's note, it should be pointed out that in winter when the observations were made, insect life, for the most part, does not "move about again." Hibernating insects are relatively stationary and a considerable part of the insect food available to small birds at this season consists of the eggs and chrysalides of numerous insects, and adult scale insects, which do not change location at all. Furthermore, since there is no hard and fast line between non-flocking and flocking birds, any sequestration theory is bound to run counter, to the recognition-mark and related theories. Indeed, does it not appear that theories are best avoided? When facts accumulate sufficiently, their average tendencies, which we are in the habit of calling "natural laws," are apparent of themselves.

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[In connection with the oft-quoted Bachman-Audubon experiment which Mr. McAtee once more falls back upon, why cannot some of our ornithologists in the Southern States, where Vultures abound, try this experiment over again? We are not usually willing to accept a statement of this sort without corroboration and why should we not have more light upon this matter?—ED.]

Ridgway's Birds of North and Middle America, Vol. VIII.

EDITOR OF 'THE AUK':

In a monumental work such as Ridgway's 'Birds of North and Middle America,' errors are certain, however careful and competent the worker may be. Part VIII of that work has just been received and I hasten to indicate rather an unfortunate mistake so that correction may be at once undertaken.

On p. 608 appears "*Larus affinis* Reinhardt, Siberian Gull," and its only claim to inclusion in the work appears to be the record of the type described from "Nenortalik, Julianehaab, S. Greenland." I have shown that the type was not referable to the Siberian Gull so-called, but was a specimen of the form of *Larus fuscus* Linné which Lowe had separated under the name *L. f. britannicus*. This has been accepted by all British ornithologists and the entry in Ridgway's synonymy, p. 609, "*Larus fuscus affinis* Kennedy, Ibis, Jan. 1917, 31" refers to this fact and not to the "Siberian Gull." Consequently all the matter under the heading "*Larus affinis*" on pp. 608-609, save that dealing with Reinhardt's specimen and the one above quoted, must be eliminated as not pertinent to the American fauna. The essential references in confirmation read:

Lowe, British Birds (Witherby), Vol. VI, No. I, p. 2. June 1, 1912.

Lowe, Bull. Brit. Orn. Club, Vol. XXIX, p. 119. July 17, 1912.

Iredale, *Ibid.* XXXI, p. 68. March 29, 1913.

Iredale, *British Birds* (Witherby), Vol. VI, No. 12, p. 360. May 1, 1913.

Larus fuscus affinis, *List Brit. Birds Comm. B. O. U.*, 2nd Ed., p. 255. 1915.

Ibid., *British Birds* (Witherby), Vol. IX, p. 10. 1915.

Another less important matter may be here attended to.

On p. 554, Ridgway has used "*Megalopterus minutus atlanticus*" for the Caribbean White-capped Noddy referring to Mathews, 'Birds of Australia,' Vol. II, pt. 4, Nov. 1, 1912, p. 423, but on that page Mathews proposed *Megalopterus minutus americanus* for the subspecies from the Caribbean Sea and British Honduras separating it from the bird from Ascension Island to which he gave the name used by Ridgway. As the name *americanus* has anteriority and was given to the American bird, it should have been used or the matter discussed, but the name is quite ignored. Just previously in his key on the same page, Ridgway defined a form from the Kermadec Islands calling it "*Megalopterus* —?" stating, "I am unable to place this bird." He also noted, "Owing to absence of specimens, I am unable to compare this [*M. m. atlanticus*] form with *M. m. minutus*." Mathews had included the Kermadec Island bird, which he figured and described, with the typical subspecies (from Torres Straits), but later in the 'Austral Avian Record,' Vol. III, No. 3, April 7, 1916, p. 55, has introduced for it the name *Megalopterus minutus kermadeci*.

It is displeasing to me to record such errors in such a magnificent work, but I am sorry to think that probably others may even occur as Ridgway has apologized for lack of first-hand reference to certain works, and there is evidence in the work itself of unverified references in other connections. On p. 797 it is written, "The remainder are names given by an anonymous author and therefore, according to my view, not eligible." On p. 308 he had utilized "*Calidus alba* (Pallas)" but the names in Vroeg's Catalogue must be accredited to Vroeg, otherwise the author is anonymous. "Tunstall's" names are barred also by absolute anonymity.

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1920. "Ridgway's Birds of North and Middle America, Vol. VIII." *The Auk* 37, 344–345. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4072772>.

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