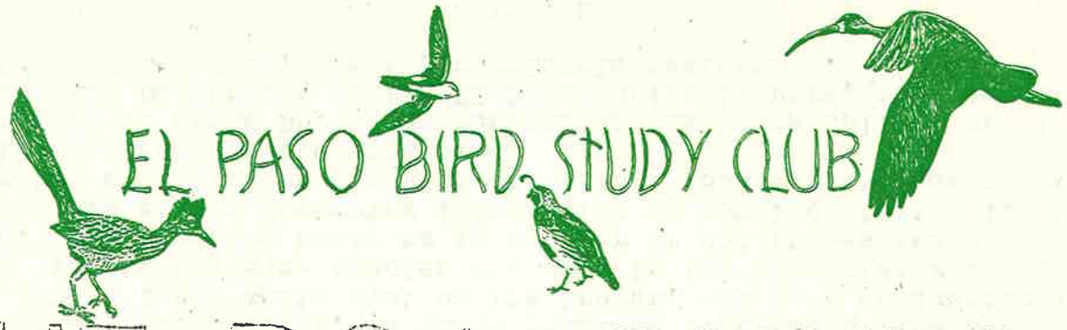

THE ROADRUNNER

May 1942

THE APRIL MEETING

The April meeting of the Club was held in Room 504 Mills Bldg. on the evening of April 6th. Guest speaker of the evening was Mr. Arthur F. Halloran, Refuge Manager of the San Andres National Wildlife Refuge near Las Cruces, New Mexico. Mr. Halloran gave a thoroughly enjoyable and interesting talk on the refuge, and particularly the birds of the refuge. He said in opening that since the San Andres Refuge is primarily a big game refuge for the Bighorn Sheep, he had not devoted a great deal of attention to the bird life there, but his talk showed considerable knowledge and interest in birds. As a result of his talk it was decided for the Club to hold its May meeting in the form of a field trip to the San Andres Refuge.

Club Secretary Mrs. J. Owen Allen read a paper on"Albinism in Birds", the text of which is published in this issue.

THE MAY MEETING

The May meeting of the El Paso Bird Study Club will be held on Sunday, May 3rd, at Ash Springs, in the San Andres National Wildlife Refuge. One of the refuge personnel will meet and accompany the group throughout the day. Refuge Manager Halloran has suggested that members plan to arrive at the refuge headquarters not later than 9 am. At least one party is planning to drive up on Saturday afternoon and camp out overnight at Ash Springs. Others should leave El Paso not later than 7 am. on Sunday. Go prepared to spend the day out of doors and carry sufficent food for one or two meals. The place selected for the meeting - Ash Springs - is located in the mountain foothills where there are trees and water. It is accessible by car all the way.

Directions for reaching the refuge headquarters are as follows: Proceed to Las Cruces, then turn north on the Alamogordo highway, following it for 7½ miles; there turn left on a gravel road marked to "Hornado Range Experiment Station." Proceed for about 17 miles. The San Andres Refuge Headquarters is located right at the Hornado Experiment Station. Bring binoculars and cameras, and look forward to a thoroughly enjoyable day. This will be the last meeting until fall.

THE HUMMINGBIRD

A winged rocket curving through
An amethystine airy sea,
Blew up the magazines of dew
Within the fortress of the bee.

Some say the tulip mortar sent
The missile forth - I do not know.
I scarcely saw which way it went
The flash of flame surprised me so.

The bees forgot to sound alarm,
And did not pause their gates to lock;
A topaz terror took by storm
The tall tower of the hollyhock.

Around the rose a halo hung
As if the bomb had been a gem,
And round the dahlia's head there swung
A blade that looked a diadem.

What more befell I cannot say;
The ruby glint and emerald gleam
So dazed my sense, the garden lay
Around me like an opal dream.

Maurice Thompson

ALBINISM IN BIRDS

by Mrs. J. Owen Allen

Albinism is due to a congenital deficiency of pigment in all or part of the body. It occurs in all species and in all climates.

It is a recessive trait which behaves according to Mendel's Law which was discovered by the Austrian monk, Mendel. After years of experimenting with peas he learned that the inheritance of characters in plants and animals depends upon certain units being present or absent in the germplasm.

This principle when applied to albinism means that if a pure albino parent and a pure normal one are mated that all of their brood would be normally colored. However, some of them would be carriers of the albino strain.

When two of these carriers are mated, their brood would show one normal bird, two normal colored carriers, and one pure albino.

Natural coloring is a dominant characteristic while albinism is a recessive one. So, if an albino or a normal colored carrier is mated with a natural colored bird there would be only normal colored broods, although a number of the offspring would be carriers of the albinistic strain.

But when two pure albino parents are mated, their broods will always be pure albinos one hundred percent.

When partial albinism is transmitted to the offspring the white areas are not inherited in a particular region but may appear anywhere on the body. The inheritance of identical white patches which are not normal to the species would then be the result of a mutation and not of albinism. A mutation is an actual change in the units of the germplasm. By selective breeding it would be possible to produce any number of these peculiarly marked birds.

Some birds are wholly pigmented in summer and autumn, while in winter and spring they change to almost completely white plumage. The ptarmigan is a well-known example of seasonal "albinism". All of the bird's autumnal feathers change more or less to white. Moulting may be a contributing factor, although this has never been definitely determined. The eyes always remain wholly pigmented when this seasonal change occurs.

Partial albinism may be induced by the absence of the stimulus of light, change of food, and (or) other environmental conditions. However, such changes are only temporary.

Many observers report that albinistic individuals are most numerous in the autumn. Part of this is probably due to the confusion of mottled immatures with partial albinos. Albinistic birds would also have a tendency to disappear as they are very conspicuous, are allergic to certain foods, have blood which does not coagulate well, and are subject to certain diseases.

Observers also report that albino birds seem more shy, while birds of prey having this trait appear to be more crafty in hunting. At any rate these characteristics would certainly help an albino in his struggle for survival.

Other field reports indicate that albinism is most common among sparrows, robins, and crows, although there is no scientific data to support this.

Partial albinism is also reported to be far more prevalent than pure albinism, which is as would be expected.

Physical weakness and inbreeding are thought to be causes of albinism. It is believed that brown pigment is most likely to disappear.

The Krider's Hawk, which is albinistic in appearance, seems to be merely a light colored form of the Red-tail; however, as certain areas always remain light, though variations in size and intensity do occur, this hawk might be a mutant form. However it is not a partial albino, since the pigment seems to be distributed in more or less uniform areas.

Among domesticated birds it is interestingto note that we find several species of white chickens, ducks, geese, guineas, turkeys, pigeons etc. These fowls are entirely lacking in pigment.

This article was written as a result of a discussion which arose at a recent Club meeting, in which a member reported having seen a raven with a lerge white spot on its breast, and that an identically marked bird of the same species was seen in the same area several years before. The question arose as to whether or not it was the same bird. On the basis of the foregoing information we conclude that this was either the same bird or a mutant offspring. Since mutations are very rare it was probably the same bird.

We wish to thank Dr. Anton Berkman of the Texas College of Mines, the Research Department of the El Paso Public Library, and Tom Kirksey, President of the Club, for their valuable assistance. (end)

THE SACRAMENTO MOUNTAINS OF NEW MEXICO
by Mary Belle Keefer

Cloudcroft -

The comparatively short drive of about 105 miles from El Paso to Cloudcroft in the Sacramento Mountains in south-central New Mexico takes one into or through three Life Zones.

Leaving the hot valley where mesquite and creosote bush are characteristic plants and where Gambel's Quail, Roadrunner, White-necked Raven, Verdin, Mockingbird, and Pyrrhuloxia are common birds, we begin to climb at LaLuz through the pinon pine and juniper belt of the Upper Sonoran Zone.

Gradually these low growths give way to taller trees and we find ourselves in the pine forest of the higher slopes where we have ascended to the Transition Zone.

When we reach the village of Cloudcroft we have attained an elevation of 9000 feet. The slopes and ridges all about are covered with yellow pine, the commonest tree found there, some white pine, maple, particularly on the lower slopes, aspens, which lend beauty with their golden leaves in autumn, and some spruce. Also the pink-flowered locust is common.

My own observations have not been extensive enough for me to give an adequate list of the birds at Cloudcroft, but I have had access to Mrs. Lena McBee's notes, covering several summers spent there. She lists as the commonest birds, to be seen on every walk, however short, the following: Red-shafted Flicker, White-breasted Woodpecker, Western Flycatcher, W. Wood Pewee, Violet-green Swallow, Purple Martin, Long-crested Jay, Mountain Chickadee, Rocky Mtn. Nuthatch, Pygmy (Black-eared) Nuthatch, W. House Wren, W. Robin, Audubon's Hermit Thrush, Chestnut-backed Bluebird, W. Warbling Vireo, Audubon's Warbler, Western Tanager, Pine Siskin, Red-backed Junco, Gray-headed Junco.

The following are fairly common, but not always seen on a walk: W. Mourning Dove, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Rufous Hummingbird, Red-naped Sapsucker, Say's Phoebe, Olive-sided Flycatcher, American Raven, Woodhouse's Jay, Mountain Bluebird, Plumbeous Vireo, Virginia's Warbler, Rocky Mtn. Orange-crowned Warbler, Grace's Warbler, Black-throated Warbler, Townsend's Warbler (in Aug.), Macgillivray's Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, Green-tailed Towhee, Spurred Towhee, W. Vesper Sparrow, W. Lark Sparrow, W. Chipping Sparrow. (the last three are particularly abundant in Aug.)

In some seasons the Grasshopper Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, and Lincoln's Sparrow are abundant in August.

Occasionally seen are: Sharp-shinned Hawk, W. Red-tail, Mearns' Quail, Merriam's Turkey, Band-tailed Pigeon, Barn Owl, Spotted Owl, Long-eared Owl, Short-eared Owl, Stephen's Whip-poor-will, W. Nighthawk, Calliope Hummingbird, Mearns' Woodpecker, Lewis' Woodpecker, Natalie's (Rocky Mtn.) Sapsucker, Wright's Flycatcher, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Bullock's Oriole; Cowbird, W. Evening Grosbeak, Cassin's Purple Finch, House Finch, Arkansas Goldfinch.

Winter study has been insufficient to provide a list.

Ruidoso

Ruidoso, like Cloudcroft, lies within the Lincoln National Forest. It is situated in the so-called White Mountains, which are a northward continuation of the Sacramentos, in Lincoln County, N.M., some 150 miles northeast of El Paso, the two places being the principal summer and winter playgrounds for El Pasoans.

The road to Ruidoso goes through the Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation, climbs more comfortably and gradually than the Cloudcroft road, and when nearing the resort passes through extensive mountain meadows where I always expect to see bluebirds. On this trip, also, we encounter the same three Life Zones, and at Ruidoso we are again in the Transition Zone.

Here the forest and the bird life are similar to those at Cloudcroft, but there are two striking physical features which Cloudcroft lacks. One is the beautiful little river dashing down over rocks with a constant singing that dominates other sounds - the Rio Ruidoso, or Noisy River, which gives the place its name. The other feature is Sierra Blanca Peak, whose top, snow-covered for the greater part of the year, and reaching to an altitude of 12,000 feet, looms over all.

The elevation at the resort is about 6,500 feet or more, but by climbing up toward the summit of the peak it is possible to ascend through the three Boreal Zones to reach the Arctic Zone at the summit. None of our observations, however, were made at such heights, but were confined to the region around the resort itself.

Here the birds are for the most part the same as those seen at Cloudcroft, and I shall not repeat the list, but will conclude with a few remarks about one bird not found at Cloudcroft, which is the first bird that comes to my mind when Ruidoso is mentioned. I mean the Water Ouzel, or Dipper.

If you go up the stream two or three miles past the farthest summer cabin and sit down to wait in sight of the water, you are pretty sure to be rewarded by the sight of this odd little stubby-tailed bird. He may suddenly appear, dipping and teetering on a rock in midstream from which he will presently dive headlong into the water, swimming beneath it to emerge some distance away. His dense, waterproof plumage underlaid with oily down enables him to perform this feat with complete unconcern, and in winter keeps the cold out and the heat in, enabling him to bear the rigors of a mountain winter. He is non-migratory in the State unless it is to make a slight vertical migration in the northern part of New Mexico from the highest parts of the Sangre de Cristo Range down to the foothills.

I have never heard the Dipper's song, which is described as bright and vivacious, nor have I seen its nest, but Mrs. McBee was fortunate to find and photograph a nest which had been abandoned.

OUR HERITAGE

"Every mill and farm is a memorial without inscription to the birds long forgotten except in the annals of science. Ignorance reads not, knows not God, sees in a bird a mere bit of animated clay to be shot in the gratification of the lingering instincts of the brute and the savage...The great Audubon fell on his knees in the forest where the Wood Thrush sang. The ignorant Spanish Catholic convert dropped his oars on the Amazon and crossed his breast in fear, as the Bell Bird of the South American forests sent out its bell-like notes to flood the listening earth; and in the far Northland constrained the soul that has parted with a little of its animality, to drop a tear as the White-throated Sparrow drops the curtain of the night with signal notes of soulful tenderness, or the Black-cap welcomes the rising sun with a crystal note of infinite sweetness and pathos...

"To be able to read and interpret the Great Book of Nature is worth infinitely more than to be able to read the languages of other times and peoples. Blessed is the man who, having got his eyes and ears open to the wonders of the earth and sky, walks daily amid things transformed to symbols of things eternal. The leaf and flower, the rosy fruit and golden grain, the sun-painted plumage, the sky-inspired songs of the birds, all - all make life worth living and heaven worth the hoping." - H.C.Munson, in The Warbler, Old Series, Vol.1,No.1, January-February, 1903,pp.3-4.

BIRD BANDING NOTES
Issued by the Fish & Wildlife Service

Flyway biologists.

During the spring and summer of 1941, Harold S. Peters, of the Atlantic Flyway, continued his investigations of migratory waterfowl in eastern Canada and Newfoundland and during the winter season in the Southeastern States. Charles E. Gillham, of the Mississippi Flyway, was similarly engaged in Alaska and in the lower Mississippi Valley. Because of the critical condition of the White-winged Dove, Dr. George B. Saunders, of the Central Flyway, was detailed to continuous investigations of that species in the lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas and in eastern Mexico. Robert C. McClanahan, of the Washington office, was assigned to waterfowl investigations in the Prairie Provinces of Canada during the summers of 1940 and 1941. Luther J. Goldman, of the Pacific Flyway, continued his studies of factors affecting waterfowl in Mexico and also maintained a check on conditions in the Western States.

Banding work during 1940 and 1941

	1940	1941
Banded birds reported	428,185	357,174
Number of species banded	445	431
Returns received	32,016	32,737
Grand total of birds banded since 1920	3,712,327	4,069,501

Four species - the Fork-tailed Petrel, King Eider, Purple Sandpiper, and Franklin's Grouse - were banded this year for the first time.
