

## Maryland Ornithological Society



### Maryland / District of Columbia Records Committee Skins Workshop 1 March 2008

Edited by Phil Davis, MD/DCRC Secretary

#### 1. General

On 1 March 2008, the Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee (MD/DCRC) held its annual Skins Workshop at the Division of Birds, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Our host was Roger Clapp of the US Geological Survey – Biological Resources/Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. Roger is resident at the museum. The committee wishes to thank Roger for the time he dedicated to our workshop.

The agenda and taxa to be reviewed during the workshop included the following:

- (a) Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows – all 3 subspecies
- (b) Broad-tailed, Calliope, Allen's and Rufous Hummingbird – including the 2004 MD Calliope specimen
- (c) California Gulls – all ages
- (d) Remeasure and photograph the 1842 DC Leach's Storm-Petrel specimens:

USNM #A12684

USNM #A1194

USNM #25278

- (e) Measure and photograph the circa 1842 DC Long-billed Curlew and compare it with a Eurasian Curlew:

USNM #6408            (Long-billed)

USNM #224300        (Eurasian)

#### 2. Attendees

Committee members in attendance were: Paul O'Brien (Chair), Phil Davis (Secretary), Stan Arnold, Tyler Bell, Paul DeAnna, John Hubbell, George Jett, Ellen Lawler, Marcia Watson, and Leo Weigant.

#### 3. Skins Studies

We began the workshop at 10 am, following our security check-in. We assembled in the Bird Division specimen case area on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor. Our objective was to study specimen skins related to sighting reports that are currently in review or are expected to be reviewed over the next year

or skins that relate to potential identification problems for Maryland and DC. The findings from the skins we examined are summarized below.

### 3.1 Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows (*Ammodromus nelsoni*) Subspecies

Account by Paul O'Brien

#### 3.1.1 Background

In 1995, the AOU split the Sharp-tailed Sparrow into two species: Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodromus caudacutus*) and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*A. nelsoni*). Nelson's consists of three subspecies: An interior group that includes the Prairie race (nominate *A. n. nelsoni*) and also the James Bay race (*A. n. alterus*); the third subspecies is the Acadian race (*A. n. subvirgatus*).

*A. n. nelsoni* breeds from north Alberta, central Saskatchewan, and south Manitoba to northeast South Dakota and winters along the Gulf Coast and southern coast of California. *A. n. alterus* breeds on the south coast of Hudson Bay and James Bay and winters along the coast of the United States from New York to southern Texas. *A. n. subvirgatus* breeds along the coast of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the coast of Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick to central Maine and winters from coastal Massachusetts to northern Florida.

Published discussions of the structural and plumage differences among the subspecies of Nelson's Sparrow are often sketchy and frequently give little detail on the James Bay population, *alterus*, other than to say it is intermediate between nominate *nelsoni* and the Acadian population, *subvirgatus*. As all three subspecies migrate through Maryland, it would be useful to determine whether there are characteristics that can safely be used to distinguish them in the field. Nominate *nelsoni* breeds in fresh water prairies and is the most likely migrant in the piedmont, but can also be found in coastal marshes. The other two breed in salt or brackish marshes and seem to be confined primarily to coastal marshes in Maryland. Although *alterus* must take an overland route to get to the coast, much of that journey may be to the north of Maryland. Nevertheless, *alterus* has historically been found at Cornfield Harbor in Saint Mary's County and may occur elsewhere on the coastal plain.

#### 3.1.2 Findings

**Subspecies of Nelson's Sparrow** - The identification reference starting point is David Sibley's article "Field Identification of the Sharp-tailed Sparrow Complex" (*Birding* 28, pp. 195-208, 1996). While this article is perhaps still the most useful for field birders, Sibley had only two *alterus* skins to examine and plumage variability could not be determined. Accordingly we examined trays of each of the three subspecies to ascertain the extent of variability and to settle on the most useful field characters.

**Face and Breast Color** - In all three subspecies the color of the submoustachial stripe is the same as that of the breast: bright orange in *nelsoni* and equally bright or somewhat duller orange in *alterus*. The orange color is a washed out grayish buffy in *subvirgatus*. We noted that the submoustachial stripe in Saltmarsh Sparrow, *A. caudacutus*, is brighter than the breast, even in the brighter nominate subspecies.

**Malar Stripe** - Although said to be indistinct many *nelsoni*, skins exhibited a pronounced sharp streak. It was diffuse or blurry but prominent in *alterus* and *subvirgatus* and thus a useful field mark in these two taxa.

**Rear Supercillium** - Clear or sometimes with subtle needle-thin streaks in *nelsoni*, so that the entire facial triangle and breast are the same bright orange. Somewhat clouded in *alterus* and very clouded in most, but not all *subvirgatus*, making the submoustachial the brightest part of the face in both *alterus* and *subvirgatus*.

**Breast Streaks** - Bold and dark in *A. caudacutus* (Saltmarsh); fine to lacking in *nelsoni* but broad, blurry and diffuse in *alterus* and *subvirgatus*, providing another good field mark.

**Back** - Dark with whitish to grayish streaks in *nelsoni* and *alterus*, but olive-gray with pale gray or no streaks in *subvirgatus*, yet another good field mark .

**Overall Summary:**

1) Saltmarsh has a bright orange face, paler breast and flanks with bold, dark breast streaks and a brownish back.

2) The face, breast and flanks are bright orange in *nelsoni* with fine or no breast streaks. The back is dark with prominent whitish streaks.

3) In *alterus* the face, breast and flanks are as bright as or somewhat duller than in *nelsoni* with a clouded rear supercillium, broad, diffuse, blurry breast streaks and a dark back.

4) The face, breast and flanks are pale orange to buffy gray in *subvirgatus* with broad, diffuse, blurry breast streaks and an olive/gray back, an overall grayish bird.

## 3.2 Broad-tailed, Calliope, Allen's and Rufous Hummingbird (including the 2004 MD Calliope)

Account by Tyler Bell

### 3.2.1 Background

Marshall Iliff published an article in the January/February 1992 issue of The Maryland Yellowthroat entitled "Maryland's Next Ten Species" and stated that if the list of "next" species were of birds that *will* be found and *should* be found, the list would consist mainly of hummingbirds due to the increased awareness and scrutiny of late fall and early winter hummingbirds. Of the 38 total species in the final rankings, several were hummingbirds: #9 Allen's, #11 Calliope, #22 Black-chinned, and #35 Broad-tailed. Since the article was published, Calliope Hummingbird has occurred three times, two of which were twitchable birds (Laurel and North Beach). Promotion up the list, due to species that have since been found in Maryland, has moved Allen's up to #4, Black-chinned to #17, and Broad-tailed up to #27. Since Black-chinned is an *Archilochus*, it won't be treated in this account. However, Allen's is overdue and the appearance of a hatch year female *Selasphorus* hummingbird in Mechanicsville (Saint Mary's County) in late December 2007 through early January 2008 had several Maryland birders delving further into the vagaries of *Selasphorus* hummingbird ID minutiae.

### 3.2.2 Findings (Rufous, Allen's, Broad-tailed and Calliope Hummingbirds)

Most agree that separation of immature female *Selasphorus* hummingbirds in the field may be impossible without capture and measurement of tail feathers; however, some field-identifiable features can lead toward correct identification. In this era of excellent digital photographic equipment, it is possible to capture a spread-tailed image that can identify a bird to species. This account deals almost exclusively with tail characteristics for field identification purposes.

When a hummingbird arrives at a Maryland feeder after October, it is almost assuredly either a Rufous, Allen's, Broad-tailed, or Calliope. Other candidates include Green Violet-ear, Green-breasted Mango, Black-chinned, and Anna's. The first two should present little identification challenge in the event that Maryland is ever graced with either. Also, separation of Ruby-throated, Black-chinned, and Anna's from *Selasphorus* species is straightforward due to their lack of rufous plumage. Separation of species within the genus *Archilochus* is cause for further research.

Beginning with a bird that displays some rufous coloration somewhere either along the flank or in the tail; how does one begin to key out the species? First, Calliope is actually in the genus *Stellula* and size can help with this identification. Overall, Calliope is about ½ inch shorter than either Rufous or Allen's. The tail is short and squared at the tip as the inner rectrices (R1 & R2) are marginally shorter than R3 (Figures 3.2.2-1 and 3.2.2-2). (Note: rectrices are numbered R1 through R5 from the inner to outer feathers.) Neither immature nor adult shows much rufous in the tail. So, basically, the rectrices are black with extensive white tips on R3-5 and small white tips on R2 on immature birds. Adult males have no white tips and have a peculiar spade-shaped R1. Adult females show white tips only on R4 & R5 and R1 has only a suggestion of a spade-shape (Figure 3.2.2-3).



Figure 3.2.2-1. Adult female rectrices: clockwise from top left, Rufous, Allen's, Broad-tailed, and Calliope.



Figure 3.2.2-2. Adult male rectrices: clockwise from top left, Rufous, Allen's, Broad-tailed, and Calliope.



**Figure 3.2.2-3. Female Calliope Hummingbird rectrices, R5 at left through R1 at right.**

The next species to eliminate is Broad-tailed (Figure 3.2.2-4). This is the largest of the three *Selasphorus* species to consider. Adult males have the pinnate rectrices common to both Rufous and Allen's but lack any of the extensive rufous color. R5 may have a small white tip on otherwise black webbing which alone rules out Rufous or Allen's. Furthermore, R1 is entirely green.

Adult female Broad-tailed rectrices are rounded compared to Rufous or Allen's. R3-5 show rufous at the bases, a black central area, and large white tips. R2 is often all green or with limited rufous on the edge of the basal portion and R1 is entirely green (Figure 3.2.2-5).



**Figure 3.2.2-4. Adult Broad-tailed Hummingbirds: male left, female right.**

Immature Broad-tailed males have more spade-shaped rectrices, another feature similar to immature Rufous and Allen's. However, there is an overall lack of rufous compared to the latter two. R1 is solidly green and the rufous is restricted to the bases on R3-5 and only the outer web of R4. Otherwise the tail is similar to that of an adult female.

The tail of immature females is also similar to that of adult females. R1 is long, rounded and almost solidly green with very limited rufous at the base. Rufous on R2-5 is on the base, sometimes absent on R4. R2-5 are rounded with white tips.



**Figure 3.2.2-5. Female Broad-tailed Hummingbird rectrices, R5 at left through R1 at right.**

The most confusing species pair remains Rufous and Allen's. Adult male Rufous and Allen's are readily distinguishable with a clear view of the spread tail. Allen's rectrices are more pointed than Rufous with less black in the tips. Rufous R2 has a peculiar notch whereas Allen's R2 has only a slight indentation. R5 on Allen's is hardly wider than the feather shaft. For a comparison, see Figure 3.2.2-6, below. Another helpful, but not definitive characteristic is that adult male Allen's always have extensive green backs (Figure 3.2.2-7), whereas most Rufous (~95% per Sibley 2000) have rufous backs. Rufous adult male skins at NMNH are all almost entirely rufous and if there is any green present, it is minimal (Figure 3.2.2-8). Rufous adult males' backs are almost entirely rufous and if there is any green present, it is minimal (Figure 3.2.2-8).



**Figure 3.2.2-6. Adult male Rufous, left and Allen's, right. Note restricted black on tail tips on Allen's and extensive green back.**

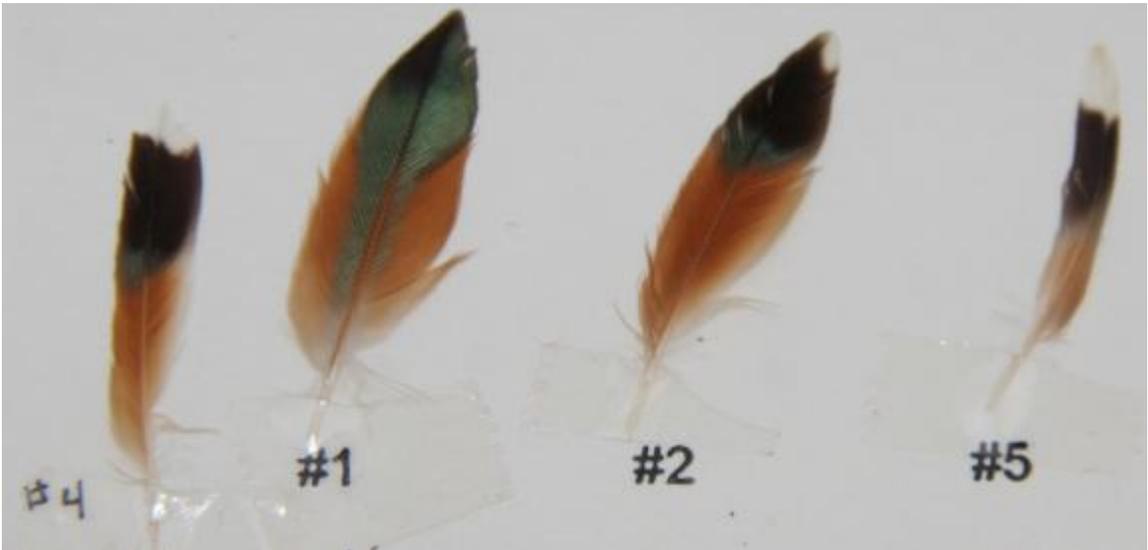


**Figure 3.2.2-7. Adult male Allen's showing extensive green on the back.**



**Figure 3.2.2-8. Adult male Rufous showing lack of green on the back.**

Adult female Rufous and Allen's also have differently shaped rectrices. Allen's R5 is narrow, though not as narrow as males (Figure 3.2.2-9). Otherwise, the rectrices are virtually indistinguishable though Rufous usually has an indentation on R2 (Figure 3.2.2-10).



**Figure 3.2.2-9. Adult female Allen's rectrices.**



**Figure 3.2.2-10. Adult female Rufous, left, and Allen's, right.**

Immature male, and female (Figure 3.2.2-11) Rufous often have an indentation on R2 and immature male and female Allen's have the narrow R5. Males of both species have extensive rufous across all rectrices. Females of both have extensive green on R1. Otherwise, immature Rufous and Allen's males and immature Rufous and Allen's females are virtually indistinguishable. Photographs of a well spread tail, taken at high speed, may yield enough detail to distinguish Rufous from Allen's. To adequately differentiate between immatures of either species, in hand measurements are surely the most foolproof method.



**Figure 3.2.2-11. Rufous female juvenile rectrices, R5 at left through R1 at right.**

### 3.3 California Gulls – all ages

Account by George Jett

#### 3.3.1 Background

California Gull (CAGU), *Larus californicus*, is a four year gull that is generally a western bird. The species breeds in interior western North America from Mono Lake, CA, in the south to Lac la Martre, Northwest Territories, in the north, and as far east as western Manitoba (Winkler 1996). Seasonal breeding may occur over a wider range (see Howell & Dunn, page 395). CAGU generally winters in the western coastal region from southern British Columbia to southern Mexico. This species wanders widely, and is now annual in the mid-Atlantic region.

There have been 28 reports of this species in the MD/DC region, most of which were during January and February (per the MD/DCRC online database). The first area report was on March 18, 1978; however, it was not accepted MD/DC records committee. Subsequently, eleven records have been accepted and three others were not accepted. Several are un-reviewable due to a lack of documentation, and the remaining reports are either reviewable (i.e., older sight reports but perhaps detailed documentation exists), or are ready for review. With increased populations of gull flocks due to more reliable food sources (landfills), this species could be reported any time outside of the breeding season, but is generally reported during the winter months in our region.

**Subspecies.** There are two accepted races of California Gull, but the Smithsonian Museum specimen trays are not labeled as to race. The characteristics of the two races are subtle and not likely separable in the field. *L. c. californicus* has a darker mantle and generally smaller size. This race breeds in the Great Basin region of w. U.S. (California, Oregon, Nevada, Utah) and nearby areas (Washington, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado). The larger race, *L. c. albertaensis*, breed in the Great Plains (S. and N. Dakota, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Northwest Territories). Based on geography, *albertaensis* is the more likely in our region. These animals range so far afield that there is little reason not to believe both races could visit Maryland or D.C.

#### 3.3.2 Findings

**Size.** In general, adults are reported since this cycle is the easiest to recognize. The species is intermediate in size between Ring-billed Gull, *L. delawarensis*, and Herring Gull, *L. argentatus* (see Figure 3.3.2-1), and about the size of Lesser Black-backed Gull, *L. fuscus* (not shown).

**Characteristics.** Adults have a darker gray mantle than either Ring-billed or Herring Gulls and are paler than Lesser Black-backed Gull, with a white head heavily streaked brown in the winter (when we normally see them), long-winged with black primaries, clean white underparts, distinctive dark eyes, yellow bill with black and red spots, and greenish yellow legs.

**Mantle Color.** One item not analyzed during this skins workshop session was gray-scale mantle color. Since mantle color is variable to the eye based on the angle of light on the animals and level of cloud cover, the only useful field information is comparative mantle color to adjacent gulls with mantle angles the same as the bird being assessed.

**Underside Color.** Figure 3.3.2-2 shows the undersides of three different plumage cycles.



Figure 3.3.2-1. From top: Relative size differences between Ring-billed gull (*Larus delawarensis*), California Gull (*L. californicus*), and Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*).



Figure 3.3.2-2. California Gull undersides – different cycles.

**Other Age Groups to look for:**

Since California Gull likely migrates as far and wide as most of the other gulls, it is not out of the question to have any non-juvenile plumage in our region. Mostly, one should look for California Gull in winter in our region since this is generally the time when out of range gulls arrive.

Two basic field characteristics are most useful when searching for California Gulls: eye color and size. California Gull (21 inches) will have a dark iris in all plumages, and is intermediate between Ring-billed (17.5 inches) and Herring Gull (25 inches) in size. Feet and legs are light, ranging in color from bluish to gray to creamy white until adult plumage when the legs turn yellow. The bill shape is unique amongst the gulls we normally see here. In proportion to the head thickness, the bill is long, thin, and very straight with a steep gonys (see Figure 3.3.2-3). Head shape, with a flatter forehead and less rounded crown, and long-winged characteristics are also unchanged in all plumages. These can also be useful field marks when looking for California Gull in mixed flocks of gulls. If you find a candidate that fits the two major parameters (dark iris and mid-way between Ring-billed and Herring Gull in size), you should take a closer look.



**Figure 3.3.2-3. Second cycle California Gull found in Waldorf, Charles County on January 23, 2008 by George M. Jett.**

First winter birds, currently not reported in our region, might appear similar to first year Thayer's Gull (23 inches), *Larus thayeri*, but California Gull are slightly smaller, and darker. Since we are not likely to have a Thayer's Gull and California Gull in the same location, direct comparison is not likely. The overall appearance of first (cycle) winter is a paler Herring Gull type, long-winged, with a thin, straight, and long pale bill with a black tip. The iris is dark in both species. Unlike Thayer's or Ring-billed, the head shows a flatter forehead and less rounded crown. On standing birds, the primaries are darker and do not have the frosted edging of Thayer's Gull. The overall appearance of the bird is lighter than most Herring gull plumages of this age. Leg color is pale but not pink.

Unlike similar second (cycle) winter gulls (Herring, Thayer's, Iceland), California Gulls have an obvious gray mantle. (This characteristic was extremely helpful in the field since it caused me to look further at the Charles County bird.) The head is mostly white with some mottling or flecking around the crown and nape, while the tail is black. The bill is pale (light blue to me) with a black tip as shown in the attached image of the January 2008 Charles County bird. The secondaries and tertials are still like those of subadult gulls, and similar to first winter Thayer's Gull. It is not until the third cycle that the secondaries and tertial feathers appear more uniformly gray.

Third cycle birds appear nearly like adults. The major difference is that the primaries are dark with no white tips, and the bill is pale blue with a black tip. The underside is white, and the upperside is nearly dark gray. The head is likely to be more mottled than adult birds with more mottling on the head and upper chest. Leg color is generally a pale gray-blue, but depending on the individual bird could have yellow leg color like adult birds. Pale third cycle or adult Lesser Black-backed Gulls, *L. fuscus graellsii*, could be confused for third cycle CAGU except that they do not have a dark iris.

For good images of all plumages of California Gull see Plate 16 of Olsen and Larsson, pages 118-119. For more detail on all plumages and bare parts, see <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/259> doi:10.2173/bna.259, including molting sequences (but who is going to remember all this detail).

**Summary.** A strategy to finding sub-adult CAGU might be to look at all large flocks of gulls. If one finds a bird that is intermediate size between RBGU and HEGU with a dark eye, study the bird more closely, taking notes or photographs. Work from that basis but be careful. My [GJ] strategy is to look for what you are familiar with, and look at what you are not familiar with. California Gull is smaller than Herring with proportionally slimmer bill and proportionally longer wings. California Gull is larger and proportionally shorter-winged and heavier-billed than Ring-billed. California Gull is more similar in its proportions to the larger gull species than to the smaller members of its group. Like the larger gulls, California Gull has a more angular head profile (i.e., flatter forehead and less rounded crown) than do Ring-billed.

#### **Useful References:**

Dunn, Jon, et al. 2002. *Field Guide to the Birds of North America, fourth edition* ; National Geographic.

Grant, P. J. 1986. *Gulls - A Guide to Identification; second edition*. Buteo Books.

Olsen, K. M. and H. Larsson. 2004. *Gulls of North America, Europe, and Asia*. Princeton University Press.

Howell, S.N.G. and J. Dunn. 2007. *Gulls of the Americas*. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Sibley, David Allen. 2000. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Alfred A. Knopf.

Winkler, David W. 1996. California Gull (*Larus californicus*), *The Birds of North America*

Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/259> doi:10.2173/bna.259

### 3.4 DC Leach's Storm-Petrels (specimen histories and remeasurements)

Account by Phil Davis

#### 3.4.1 Background

In the MD/DCRC's baseline document, *The Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia* (Stewart and Robbins 1958), the species account for Leach's [Storm-]Petrel states: "Specimens (USNM) have been taken in the District of Columbia as follows: 2 in August 1842; 2 about 1859; ..."

Based on this reference, four Leach's Storm-Petrel records were logged into the MD/DCRC database as follows:

DC/1998-007	DC; August 1842
DC/1998-009	DC; August 1842
DC/1998-010	DC; about 1859
DC/2004-102	DC; about 1859

The Secretary then attempted to match the published accounts with actual specimens in the USNM collection with the objective of photographing and measuring the specimens in preparation for MD/DCRC reviews. The Secretary traced back through all available historical documentation and investigated the Smithsonian (USNM) database, the historical manual ledgers, and specimen cases of the collection.

#### 3.4.2 Findings

**Published References.** Published references, in addition to Stewart and Robbins (1958), that deal with these specimens include:

1. McAtee (1918a) wrote,

"In the *Proceedings of the National Institute for the Promotion of Science* are various interesting notes relating to the birds of the District. The donations announced at the meeting for September 12, 1842, especially are noteworthy, four specimens of Leach's petrel, one of Wilson's petrel, and one Audubon shearwater were presented. The birds were taken the preceding month, August 1842, and the records in each case are the first for the District. This incursion of maritime species is undoubtedly that referred to by Haley [see below] ...".

McAtee also summarized these specimens in the *Auk* (McAtee 1918b).

2. Haley (1861) wrote, "... during a violent easterly storm a few years ago [i.e., prior to 1861], the Potomac was covered with multitudes of Mother Cary's chickens (*Thalassidroma Leachii*), which had been forced out of their natural habitat by the gale."

3. There are several published references (Ludlum 1963, Stick and Stick 1989, Barnes 1995) to two major storms (hurricanes) that hit the North Carolina coast at Portsmouth in the summer of 1842. The first hit on July 12 and was "one of the worst in North Carolina history" at that point in time. This storm is referenced to have tracked to the northwest and into Maryland. The second storm, which was less intense; however, "only slightly less destructive than the July storm," made landfall near Ocracoke on 24 August. The impact of this storm was hardest to the north [various citations]. The track of this second storm has not been specifically described.

4. From the Third Bulletin of the Proceedings of the National Institute for the Promotion of Science, Washington, D. C., in the proceedings of the meeting of September 12, 1842, the curator announced the following donations “for the cabinet” (i.e., specimens) [from among other specimens]:

Two specimens of *Thalassidroma Leachii*, from Washington City – From John Varden.

*Thalassidroma Wilsonii*, from Washington City – From Master [i.e., as in a “young boy”] Bender.

Two specimens *Thalassidroma Leachii* from Washington City – From Andrew Fueson.

*Puffinus cinereus*, from Potomac River – From J. Narden [probably a typo for “Varden PCD].

**Role of the National Institute.** The National Institute was the predecessor to the Smithsonian Institution and John Varden, donator of two of the Leach’s Storm-Petrels, was an active patron/curator of his own private collection of art and natural history artifacts and supporter of the National Institute. Varden’s specimens were transferred from his private collection, to the National Institute, and then, over time, to the Smithsonian, after it was established in 1846. Although most specimens were transferred earlier, any remaining specimens were transferred to the Smithsonian when the charter of the National Institute expired in 1862.

**Checklist History.** Here is the related chronology, working forward from 1842:

1. The first published checklist for Washington, D.C. after 1842, was Cooke 1921. In the Leach’s Petrel account, she cited, “Four, August 1842 (Spec. U.S. Nat. Mus.); two about 1859 (Spec. U.S. Nat. Mus.)” She also noted two Wilson’s Petrels; one for 1842 [citing McAtee in the Auk] and one “about” 1859 [citing a USNM specimen].

2. In the next published DC checklist, Cooke (1929) updated her Leach’s Petrel account and stated; “One (not 4 as given in former [1921] list) in August, 1842, following a severe northeast storm. Two, ♂ and ♀, taken about 1859 (spec in Nat, Mus).”

3. In the MD and DC baseline document, Stewart and Robbins (1958) wrote; “Specimens (USNM) have been taken in the District of Columbia as follows: 2 in August 1842; 2 about 1859 ...”

**Specimens Located.** Three Leach’s Storm-Petrels were located in the USNM collection with the following tag information:

USNM #A12684	“Potomac River; Varden”
USNM #A1194	“August 1842; Varden”
USNM #25278	“August 1842; Fueson”

In addition, the USNM ledger indicates that the fourth specimen, USNM #012649 was sent to Wesleyan University in Jan 1880.

**Discussion and Disposition:** With regard to the Leach’s Storm-Petrel specimens, after extensive research, the following is what the Secretary understands the correlation of specimens and data records to be:

1. Four specimens were collected on the Potomac River within the Washington, D.C. city limits in [late] August 1842; two by John Varden and two by Andrew Fueson. The data on these four specimens are shown in Table 3.4.2-1.

MD/DCRC Accession #	USNM Accession #	Collector	Status
DC/1998-007	A12648	J. Varden	Photographed and measured by the MD/DCRC. Under review.
DC/1998-009	A1194	J. Varden	Photographed and measured by the MD/DCRC. Under review.
DC/1998-010	025278	A. Fueson	Photographed and measured by the MD/DCRC. Under review.
DC/2004-102	012649	A. Fueson	Per the USNM catalog, specimen was sent to Wesleyan University in Jan 1880. Unreviewable.

**Table 3.4.2-1. 1842 DC Leach’s Storm-Petrel Specimen Status**

2. Some time during the beginning of this investigation (c. 1997), there was an extraneous reference to another specimen, USNM #25275; however, after researching this, the Secretary now believes this to have been an introduced typographical error and the corresponding MD/DCRC data record [DC/2004-103] has been deleted.

3. The Secretary could find no other references to the specimens referred to from “around 1859” and believes these were actually some of the original four specimens that were confused in the transfer of specimens from the National Institute to the Smithsonian during that time period. This scenario appears to be substantiated by the referenced 1842 DC Wilson’s Storm-Petrel, also taken during this same storm. That specimen was cataloged by the USNM on 7/20/1859 (Wetmore, 1925) and there apparently never was a 1859 specimen for this species as implied by Cooke (1908, 1921, 1929 [which even mentions the collector, a Master (i.e., a young boy) Bender], who clearly confused the 1859 USNM catalog date with the 1842 National Institution donation date. This Wilson’s Storm-Petrel error also propagated into Stewart and Robbins (1958). The Secretary feels very certain that the same confusion between donation dates and catalog dates is the source of the erroneous 1859 Leach’s Storm-Petrel specimens. Therefore, the MD/DCRC database entries for these two 1959 DC Leach’s Storm-Petrel reports [DC/1998-011 and DC/2004-014] have been deleted.

**Remeasurements.** At our workshop, we asked Roger Clapp to remeasure the three DC Leach’s Storm-Petrel skins that had not yet been reviewed by the MD/DCRC. Storm-Petrel measurement standards were compiled by Jonathan Alderfer at our 12 Feb 2002 Skins Workshop. The standards and recorded measurements taken are shown in Table 3.4-2.

**Table 3.4-2. 1842 DC Leach's Storm-Petrel Measurements.**

<i>Birds of the Western Palearctic</i> reference standards (and ranges)				MD/DCRC Specimens		
Measurement	Leach's ♂ = ♀	Wilson's ♂ > ♀ slightly	Band- rumped	USNM #12648 LHSP ♀  12 Sep 1842 DC/1998- 007	USNM #25278 LHSP ♂  Aug 1842 DC/1998- 010	USNM #1194 LHSP ♂  Aug 1842 DC/1998- 009
culmen	15.7 (14.2-16.6)	11.6 (10-13)	14.4 (13-15.5)	14.44	16.94	15.88
tarsus	24 (23-26)	35 (33-37)	22.2 (21-23)	23.80	23.52	22.83
tail	81 (74-91)	60 (52-67)	67 (61-74)	82.25	79.50	81.85 (worn)
tail fork	16-26	0-5	5.7 (4-12)	- 66.66=15.58	- 64.55=14.9 5	-63.15=18.7
wing	158 (148-165)	142 (133-150)	148 (42-154)	154.50 (worn)	147.25	155.94

A photograph of one of the DC Leach's Storm Petrels is shown in Figure 3.4.2-1.



**Figure 3.4.2-1. One of the 1842 DC Leach's Storm-Petrel specimens [DC/1998-009].**

## Literature Cited:

Cooke, May Thacher. 1921. Birds of the Washington region. *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington* 34:1-22. Biological Society of Washington.

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David M. Ludlum. 1963. *Early American Hurricanes, 1492-1870*. American Meteorological Society. 198 pp.

McAtee, Waldo Lee. 1918a. A sketch of the natural history of the District of Columbia. *Bulletin of the Biological Society of Washington* 1:1-142. Biological Society of Washington.

McAtee, Waldo Lee. 1918b. *Early bird records for the vicinity of Washington, D.C.* *Auk* 35(1):85.

Stewart, Robert E., and Chandler S. Robbins. 1958. *Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia*. North American Avifauna, No. 62. 401 pp. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Stick, David, and Frank Stick. 1989. *Graveyard of the Atlantic: Shipwrecks of the North Carolina coast*. University of North Carolina Press.

Haley, William D. (ed). 1861. *Philp's Washington Described, a complete view of the American Capital and the District of Columbia*. Rudd & Carleton. New York.

Wetmore, Alexander. 1925. Wilson's Petrel in Maryland. *Auk* 42(2):262-263.

### 3.5 DC Long-billed Curlew (measurement and photograph in comparison to Eurasian Curlew)

Account by Phil Davis

#### 3.5.1 Background

The Maryland baseline, Stewart and Robbins (1958:141) includes a DC Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*) record [MD/1999-091] based on a USNM specimen that was cataloged (not collected) on 04/11/1842. This specimen was originally documented in:

Swales, B.H. 1908. Bird migration in the District of Columbia. *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington* 21:116.

Cooke, Wells Woodbridge. 1920. Records of several rare birds from near Washington, D.C. *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington* 33:181-182.

The Secretary previously located the specimen (USNM #006408); however, it was a skull skeleton. The specimen had been transferred from the National Institute and apparently had originally been a full mount. A photograph of this specimen is shown in Figure 3.5.1-1. The challenge is now how are the MD/DCRC members to review a skull specimen for identification?

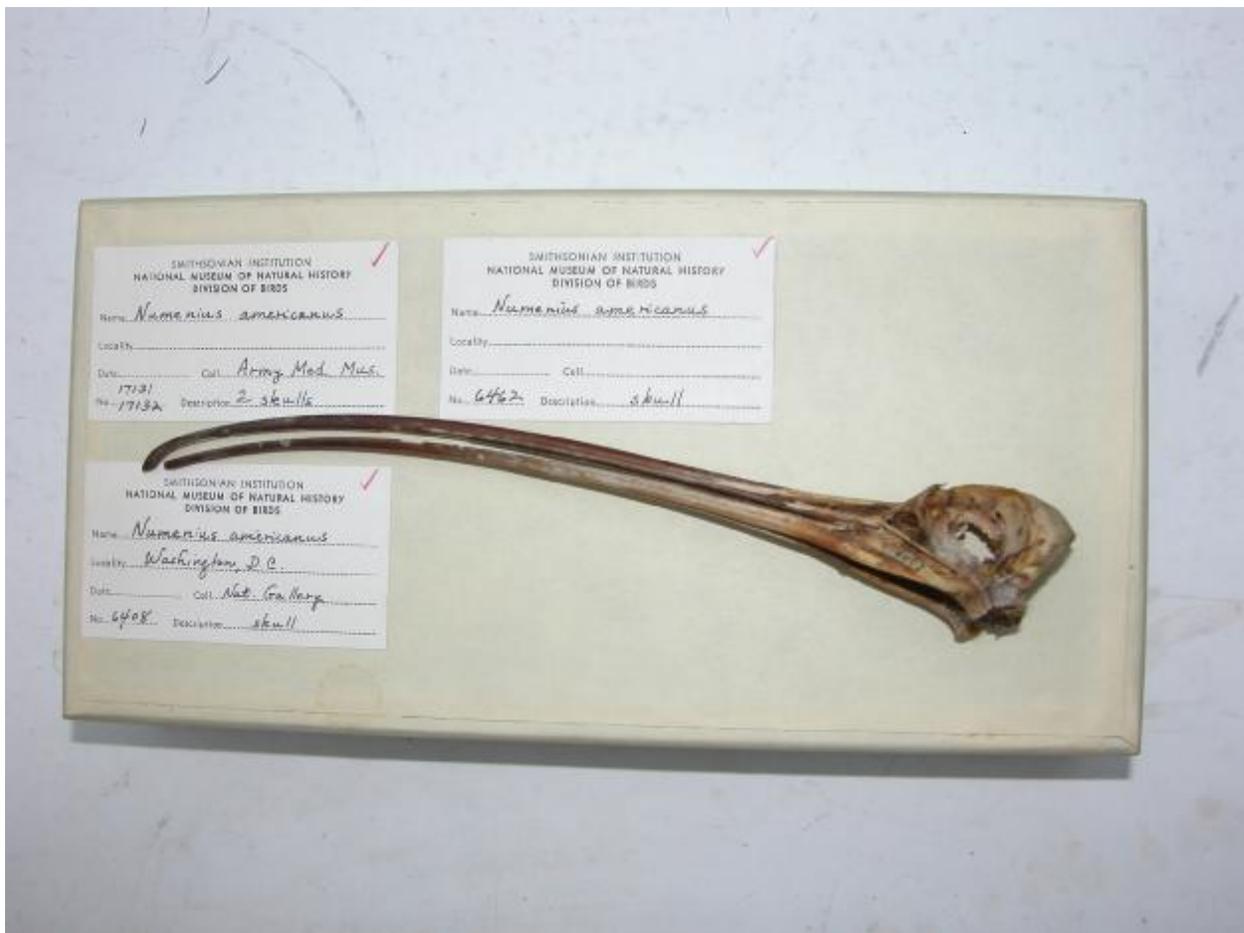


Figure 3.5.1-1. Long-billed Curlew skull specimen [MD/1999-091].

### 3.5.2 Findings

**Comparison Photographs.** Eurasian Curlew is thought to have the most similar curlew skull. Digital images of the Long-billed Curlew specimen (USNM #6408) and a comparison Eurasian Curlew (*M. arquata*) skull (USNM #224300) were taken by the Secretary, shown in Figure 3.5.2-1.



**Figure 3.5.2-1. Long-billed Curlew skull specimen (USNM #6408) and a comparison Eurasian Curlew (*M. arquata*) skull (USNM #224300).**

**Measurements.** At our workshop, we asked Roger Clapp to measure the DC Long-billed Curlew and Eurasian Curlew skull specimens. These measurements are provided in Table 3.5.2-1.

**Table 3.5.2-1. DC Long-billed Curlew and comparison Eurasian Curlew skull specimen measurements.**

Specimen	USNM #6408 [DC/1999-091] Long-billed Curlew ( <i>Numenius americanus</i> )	USNM #614126 Eurasian Curlew ( <i>N. arquata</i> )
Culmen measurement	164 mm	135.96 mm

**Summary.** These photographs and measurements, along with additional Long-billed Curlew references that the Secretary located, will be provided to the MD/DCRC members for their review.

#### **4. Adjournment**

The Workshop ended at approximately 2 pm.

#### **5. Acknowledgements**

Thanks to the species account authors and to George Jett for additional images.

Respectfully submitted,

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