Red imported fire ants have become a severe problem for cliff swallows in our area. However, we feel that we have been able to lessen the effect of the ants because of AMDRO applied during the course of our research. Should our research cease or become less intensive, the ants will not be controlled and could severely damage or destroy the local cliff swallow population.

Our thanks to the many students who gave up their earling morning hours to help with this study, and to Dr. S. B. Vinson for confirming our identification of the red imported fire ant. This is contribution TA 19811 of the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.

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THE TAXONOMIC AND NOMENCLATORIAL STATUS OF *MUS LUDOVICIANUS* CUSTIS, 1807

"An Account of the Red River in Louisiana. . .," edited by Nicholas King and including scientific reports by Thomas Freeman and Peter Custis, was published by the United States Government in March 1807 as a result of exploration of the lower part of the Red River by a federally-sponsored expedition in 1806. No more than 200 copies of the work were printed, and it has been overlooked subsequently by most historians, natural and otherwise. Recently, a newly edited version by D. L. Flores (1984*a*) has brought into focus Custis's substantial contributions to the natural history of the Red River country (see also Flores, 1984*b*), including the earliest description of a species of *Peromyscus*-like mouse, from what is now southwestern Arkansas or an immediately adjacent region, as follows (original p. 57; Flores p. 273):

> "*Mus Ludovicianus.*—Tail length of the body, ears large; fore feet 4 toed, hind 5; body reddish ash; belly white; eyes large, black; whiskers 5-rowed; size of *Mus musculus.* Burrows in hollow trees."

After consulting several references on mammals, Flores concluded that the *Mus ludovicianus* of Custis actually represented *Peromyscus leucopus*, which was described by Rafinesque more than a decade later. Thus, fully aware of the Law of Priority as applied to zoological nomenclature, Flores (*op. cit.*, footnote, pp. 273-274) proposed to change the name of the white-footed mouse to *Peromyscus ludovicianus*:

> "One of the few new scientific names he offered, *Mus ludovicianus* Custis, has not been picked up by mammologists because of the obscurity of the published account, but it now ought to be. It is evident from the description that this is the white-footed mouse (now *Peromyscus leucopus leucopus* [Raf.]), credited to Rafinesque in 1818. Custis's discovery and name for this species, which ranges from Texas and Oklahoma east to Virginia, and north to Illinois and is the type

species for sixteen additional subspecies in North America, antedates Rafinesque by a dozen years. . . . It is herein proposed that the name of this species be changed to *Peromyscus ludovicianus ludovicianus* (Custis) Raf., and that the species epithet in the present *leucopus* group be changed to *ludovicianus*, citing the publication of Freeman and Custis. . . ."

Despite Flores's general acquaintance with the rules of nomenclature, he was unaware of article 79 (as amended) of the International Code, which deals with long overlooked and unused senior synonyms. This article provides for suppression, as nomina oblita, of such names by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature. Inasmuch as *Mus ludovicianus* was used but once in the zoological literature insofar as we can determine, and that usage was more than 175 years ago, it clearly is a prime candidate for suppression as a nomen oblitum and we here request that the Commission take such action.

Moreover, for nomenclatorial purists who might ignore article 79 of the Code, there is an additional problem. Two similar species of *Peromyscus* occur in southwestern Arkansas and adjacent parts of Louisiana and Texas—*P. leucopus* and *P. gossypinus*—and, based on examination of specimens, it is, in our opinion, impossible to associate Custis's brief description with one as opposed to the other. Furthermore, *Ochrotomys nuttalli*, which also occurs in the region, cannot be ruled out completely. Therefore, under these circumstances and because no type material exists, *Mus ludovicianus* is a nomen dubium in that it is not certainly applicable to a known taxon and thus is unavailable under the rules.

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FALL AGE RATIOS OF THE BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK

Age ratios in post-breeding populations serve as an index to the reproductive success of a species (Bellrose, 1976). These have been measured routinely for most important game species of waterfowl in North America. However, the black-bellied whistling-duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*), a tropical species whose range extends only into the southern tip of Texas, has been little studied (Bolen and Rylander, 1983). Only 1 estimate of the fall age ratio of the south Texas population exists (Bolen, 1967). The objective of this study was to estimate the present reproductive success of black-bellied whistling-ducks in south Texas.

I sampled black-bellied whistling-ducks in 2 areas of south Texas in September and October of 1981. The lower Rio Grande Valley area consisted of sampling sites in Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy counties. The Coastal Bend area consisted of sampling sites in Refugio County, about 240 km north of the Rio Grande Valley. Some of the flocks sampled in Refugio County may have included birds previously counted. Thomas (Gould, 1975) described the ecological characteristics of south Texas. Areas near both sampling sites were cultivated, with grain sorghum (*Sorghum vulgare*) a major crop.

I used a variable-power spotting scope to view the birds loafing in shallow water or field-feeding on waste grain sorghum. Juveniles were separated from adults using plumage characteristics and bill color (Cain, 1970). A total count was obtained on the smaller flocks (range 38-103 birds) whereas a sample was made on larger flocks (approximate range 200-2,000 birds). The numbers of adults and fledged juveniles in the spotting scope's field of vision constituted 1 subsample; when additional subsamples failed to change the percentage of juveniles in the cumulative total, the observations were terminated (Alford and Bolen, 1977).