

It can hardly be doubted that many similar examples of extreme individual variation remain to be detected. Among the Terns two cases almost exactly parallel with those I have mentioned have already been brought to light by Mr. William Brewster,* though in these instances the author's arguments were based wholly upon the evidence offered by plumage, and, as a result, a generally accepted species was reduced to the rank of a synonym. A state of things no less remarkable is now familiar to ornithologists in the frequent melanism, partial or entire, seen in several species of Hawks; in the pure dichromatism of certain Owls and Herons; and in the irregularity with which the waxy appendages are assumed in the genus *Ampelis*.

NEST AND EGGS OF LECONTE'S THRASHER (*HARPORHYNCHUS REDIVIVUS LECONTII*).

BY G. HOLTERHOFF, JR.

In an article published in the "American Naturalist" for March, 1881, I gave a short description of the nest and eggs of Le Conte's Thrasher. As I believe these to be the first eggs known of this rare Thrasher, and as yet unique, I will endeavor to give a more complete and exact description of the set. The "find" was made near a small station on the Southern Pacific Railroad, called Flowing Wells. This is in the heart of the Colorado Desert, about seventy-five miles north of Fort Yuma. The country thereabout is a barren, sandy desert, broken by an occasional dry arroyo or river bed, scarce worthy of the name, as they are only rivers when bearing off the deluge from some fortuitous cloud-burst. Scattered sparingly along the course of these fickle streams is a stunted growth of mesquite and palo-verde trees, the commonest and most typical forms of desert vegetation. It was while wandering up one of these arroyos, wearied and almost parched by the fierce heat, that I caught sight of a dusky-gray bird flitting from bush to bush, always in short, jerky flights, and close to the ground. Expectation cheered my footsteps. The bird, alighting

* Some Additional Light on the so-called *Sterna Portlandica*, Ridgway. Ann. Lyc. Nat. Hist., N. Y., Vol. XI, pp. 201-207.

at the foot of a bush, would disappear for a time within its branches; then emerging suddenly near the top, pause for an instant as if to see if the coast was clear, and then resume its short ungraceful flight. Being about the only bird seen for some little time, I sat down in the shade of a mesquite to watch its course and movements. After a series of short progressions it disappeared in a thick palo-verde tree and there remained so long that I became suspicious, and, cautiously approaching, had the satisfaction of seeing it at home. I paused, breathlessly, but not before the shy denizen had seen my approach, and, silently dropping from her abode, had flown into a neighboring bush. I eagerly examined the nest, found it contained two eggs, and then withdrew to my former concealment to await the owner's reappearance. This was not immediate, for it seemed shy of returning, and when at last it did so, it was by a round-about course as if wishing to divert attention from the nest. Alighting again in the palo-verde, it paused for an instant on a lower branch, and that instant sufficed to end its earthly career. Securing my prizes, I loitered around the neighborhood for some time, hoping in vain to see the mate; but if present it skulked so closely within the thickets as to evade detection.

The nest, situated about five feet from the ground, was a very bulky affair, set so loosely and carelessly amid the branches that a considerable foundation had been thrown together before the structure was firm enough to bear the nest proper. This was composed of the thorny sticks and twigs of mesquite, loosely intercrossed, and the interior rather neatly lined with reddish fibres and rootlets. The external dimensions were about nine inches in depth and six inches in width at the top; interior, depth three inches and width about four inches. The cavity was deep enough to conceal the sitting bird, except as to its projecting tail. The two eggs were fresh and presumably an incomplete clutch. They are of a light pea-green color, sparsely marked with fine reddish specks, most thickly at the larger end. In shape they are elongate and tapering, more so than those of allied species, and they come nearer to those of *H. curvirostris* than any other species as yet compared. They measure respectively 1.17 by 0.78 inches and 1.13 by 0.77 inches. This bird was the only one of the species met with, and no other nests, old or new, were seen in this locality or elsewhere in the Desert.