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PROMINENT CALIFORNIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS.

II. ROLLO H. BECK.

FEW more active ornithologists are found in California's present corps of field workers than the subject of our sketch—R. H. Beck. Having lived for years at Berryessa, Cal., which is almost a suburb of San Jose, nestling at the foot of the western slope of the Mt. Hamilton range, he has been within easy reach of a most interesting country and where much of his work has been done.

Mr. Beck first began practical collecting in 1889 and in a few years possessed an excellent oological collection of native species. Among his earlier good finds were several pairs of Dotted Canon Wrens which were annual contributors of interesting sets of eggs at which time few sets of the species were in collections. His work among the birds has at all times been active and as a result he possesses a valuable collection of study material in skins. Mr. Beck has followed taxidermy ardently for years and has put forth some excellent groups, while others are in process at the present time.

On the Alviso marsh of San Francisco Bay in 1891, Mr. Beck secured two specimens of a form of the Sharp-tailed Sparrow which were the first taken on the coast and unlike the eastern species. The form was described by Mr. Robt. Ridgway and named in Mr. Beck's honor, *Ammodramus caudacutus becki*. The marsh mentioned has yielded a

number of Black and Yellow Rail as a result of Mr. Beck's prowess.

For some years previous to Major Bendire's death Mr. Beck sent him many valuable notes on the nesting of little-known species which his extended field work had permitted him to secure. In Monterey Co., in 1891, he collected a nest and four eggs of the Rufous-crowned Sparrow which were secured by Major Bendire for the National Museum. Near the same locality he met with the Black Swift (*Cypseloides niger*) and his notes were subsequently embodied in Major Bendire's work.

In 1896 Mr. Beck in company with Mr. W. H. Osgood made an extended trip through the Sierra Nevada Mountains of Central California, spending most of the summer in the field and his good fortune again bore fruit. Two sets of eggs of special interest to science were taken; on June 10, 1896, he located a nest of the Hermit Warbler at 5000 feet altitude, placed 45 feet up in a pine, and by dint of carrying a heavy ladder up a steep hillside he secured the first positively authentic nest and eggs of this warbler. (Proc. Cooper Club, *Nidologist* IV, p. 79). On June 18, 1896, Mr. Beck collected a nest and four eggs of the Western Evening Grosbeak near the same locality having found it building a week before. This was the first set of this species known to science and together with the set of



Photo by R. H. Beck.

ROLLO H. BECK MOUNTING A GALAPAGOS TORTOISE.

Hermit Warbler found its way to the National Museum. (Proc. Cooper Orn. Club, *Nidologist* IV, p. 3).

In June, 1897, Mr. Beck was called from his camp in the Sierras to San Francisco where he became a member of the Frank B. Webster expedition under command of C. M. Harris and spent seven months collecting in the Galapagos Archipelago. The expedition brought back much new and valuable material which went into the Rothschild collection in London. Mr. Beck was honored in having a species of *Certhidea* named after him. It was from this expedition that the Giant Tortoise shown in the plate was secured.

Mr. Beck has made two collecting trips to Santa Cruz Island and others of the channel group where he secured considerable material of special interest, among them being specimens of the Island Shrike from which the type was described by Dr. Edgar A. Mearns in the *Auk* for July, 1898, as *Lanius ludovicianus anthonyi*. He also took the first recorded nests and eggs of the Santa Cruz Jay on Santa Cruz Island, from all of which work one may judge of the extreme energy of Mr. Beck as a

field worker. His skill as a sportsman is not less pronounced than his careful work in ornithology, and he is withal a true naturalist, a lover of the rod, gun and camera, possessed of a keen perception of art in nature and a modesty for the value of his scientific work. Mr. Beck's collecting grounds cover a rugged country but yield several sets of Golden Eagle each year, due more to tireless energy than good fortune. As a member of the Cooper Club since 1894 Mr. Beck has held the offices of president and vice president and contributed to the advancement of the Club.

The plate herewith given represents Mr. Beck mounting his Giant Tortoise from the Galapagos Islands. The tortoise lived for almost a year after its arrival at Berryessa and seemed to thrive upon a diet of cactus and would in all probability have lived many years to enjoy the salubrious climate of the Santa Clara Valley had it not on an evil evening forgotten to draw in its head! A frost came, the tortoise was nipped in the bud, and we present the very natural picture of Mr. Beck putting the finishing touches to a really excellent pose of the tortoise. C. B.



The Genus *Junco* in California.

BY HENRY B. KAEDING, TAYLORSVILLE, CAL.

[Read before the Northern Division of the Cooper Orn. Club, July 1 1899.]

THE State of California may be roughly divided into three sections, each having its characteristic climate and subsequent peculiarities in flora and fauna, and to the ornithologist it is particularly interesting to note the influence that these climatic conditions bring to bear upon the avifauna of the state.

The first of these sections is the Coast Range Mts. from the vicinity of Monterey, northward. Here we have a cool, moist region, of no great altitude, subject to sea breezes and fogs. The birds of this section show distinct traces of northern characteristics, as for instance, *Cyanocitta stelleri*, *Bubo virginianus saturatus*, *Oreortyx pictus*, etc. While of course at the southern end of this area some of the forms merge into their southern races and hence are intermediate in form, as one moves north

along the coast, the races become more distinct until the pronounced forms of the northern states are reached. It is in this strip of coast and nowhere else that typical *Chamæa fasciata* is found, and it is only in the northern part of this section that anything approaching *Junco hyemalis oregonus* may be found breeding.

The second section may be called the "low-lands" and comprises the broad valleys of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, with their adjacent rolling and foot-hill country. Here will be found the birds loving a hot, comparatively dry atmosphere—a profusion of blackbirds, meadowlarks, Black-headed Grosbeaks, etc. These birds reach their greatest abundance in this region, although they spread more or less plentifully all over the state.

Lastly and the most distinct of any,