

Odd Nesting Sites of Samuel's Song Sparrow. On the 29th of April, 1898, I found a nest of this species built in the side of a large bunch of driftwood and leaves, lodged in the forks of a willow tree, twelve feet above the ground, on the banks of a stream. The eggs, three in number, were laid in a depression, which was slightly lined with straw and hair, in the side of the mass of driftwood, and were far advanced in incubation. This nest was discovered by seeing the bird leave. Just a year later, upon the 29th of April, 1899, I secured a set of four fresh eggs from a nest which was built in an old nest of the Black-headed Grosbeak from which a set of eggs was taken in 1898. The nest was in a fork near the top of a small willow tree, ten feet from the ground, in a thick growth of small willows near a stream. It was placed in a Grosbeak's nest, and was compactly built of straw, leaves and grasses, lined with fine grass and horsehair. When we consider that this sparrow usually nests in blackberry thickets and thick underbrush three or four feet above the ground, it will be readily seen that the above recorded nests were in rather unusual places.

Queer Antics of a Western Redtail. While cultivating in my orchard one warm morning last spring, I was watching a Western Red-tailed Hawk that was passing over. It was flying high, in a north-easterly direction, and flying fast, as if returning to its nest, when suddenly it tumbled over and over in the manner of a tumbler pigeon, directly downward for a distance of about forty feet, then spread its wings and resumed flight. I thought for an instant that some one had shot it, but hearing no report and seeing the hawk continue its journey, I concluded that the bird had, in all probability, been attacked by some small bird or insect and had adapted this manner of eluding it. WM. L. ATKINSON, Santa Clara, Cal.

Discoloration of Plumage in Certain Birds. It may be worth while to notice the fact that many birds taken near cities have the plumage greatly discolored. Whether this is due to smoke, ashes, coal dust, or charcoal of burnt stubs I am unable to say. From their appearance it might be any of these agencies. About Denver it may be due to the smelter smoke. As to a certain *Otocoris*, sent to Dr. Jonathan Dwight, Jr., he said: "and 1077 [*arenicola*] is of course soiled with coal dust or some such thing, perhaps from feeding on ash heaps." Near Denver the birds which show the greatest amount of dirt on their plumage are the house finches. Every feather is greatly darkened by the extraneous substance and the red areas are so toned down as to be inconspicuous. In regard to this species I believe Mr. Ridgway has suggested that the birds feed in burnt timber. In the vicinity of Denver, at least, it is rather doubtful if this be the case.

In the same locality *Anthus*, *Lanius*, *Junco* and *Ammodramus* have also been taken with soiled plumages. Coming now to California, we find a smoky plumage in *Ammodramus*, *Thryomanes*, *Anthus* and *Zonotrichia*, all taken in the vicinity of San Francisco. Mr. Slevin, to whom I spoke of the matter, said that *Colaptes* hung around the roofs of buildings in Alameda and probably got dirty from sliding on the shingles, a theory which seems quite probable. In his collection he showed me specimens of *Colaptes*, *Accipiter* and *Regulus*, from Alameda, and a *Dryobates* from Aiken, S. C., all very much soiled.

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Brewer's Blackbird Nesting in Cavities. On April 21, 1895, while at Sargents, Cal., a peculiar nesting site of Brewer's Blackbird was noted. A colony of these birds were inhabiting a small live oak grove on a hill. I was surprised to find one nest built in a small cavity on the under side of a rotten oak limb, about ten feet from the ground. The nest was composed largely of Spanish moss and lined with horse hair. It contained two fresh eggs. The cavity was one such as is generally selected by a Sparrow Hawk in which to build. C. BARLOW, Santa Clara, Cal.

Sierran Crossbill in El Dorado Co., Cal. At Fyffe, El Dorado Co., on June 8, 1899, Mr. Carriger and I noted a bird on the low limbs of a pine near the house, which at first glance we took to be a male Cassin's Finch. Upon shooting it, the specimen resolved itself into a Sierran Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra bendirei*, ♂) in rich