

A Trait of the Western Robin.

THE object of this article is to further investigation by club members during the coming mating season of a peculiarity of our friend the robin, that has, so far as I know, passed unnoticed by contributors to the CONDOR, and that is the drooping of the bird's wings. For the benefit of the uninformed I will add that quite a large but variable percentage of the birds in a flock of robins droop their wings continuously while feeding and infrequently when perched elsewhere. Other avian species droop their wings at times but the habit does not seem to be so persistent in them as it does in the robin and it is in regard to the value of this habit to the bird itself that I wish to gain the assistance of the club members.

For a long time I have noticed that when juncos or goldfinches are pairing the wings of the male (and sometimes of the female) droop and flutter continuously while the bird is engaged in his amorous proposal to the female, and I have no doubt that these actions are of considerable benefit to the male birds in their annual courtships, as in some manner it expresses visibly to the female

the depth and sincerity of the male bird's passion for her, and those males that were most adept in such actions might in some way mate more successfully. Lately and infrequently I have noticed male juncos and goldfinches drooping their wings in the winter months, for what reason it is hard to say. And this habit being used by juncos in winter is possibly very similar to the drooping of the robin's wings at the same period. In order to find out if this trait is confined to one sex of robins and therefore of some sexual advantage to that sex, I recently shot quite a number and noticed a lot more at close range through a glass carefully and I give the results below but as these results are rather conflicting and only obtained from one locality, I place little value in them and think it best to submit my imperfect results to the club members before the opening of the mating season so that those interested may pursue the subject more fully. In studying a species of birds sexually so nearly similar in plumage as the robins are, it is rather hard to avoid an occasional error and where I have been in doubt I have left the identity of the sex alone.

TABLE OF RESULTS.

BIRDS SECURED.	SEX	WINGS FOLDED	WINGS DROOPED	BIRDS NOT SECURED.	SEX	WINGS FOLDED	WINGS DROOPED
	Males.		22		Males.		28
Males.	8		Males	16			
Females.		5	Females.		9		
Females.	7		Females.	15			
unknown		3	unknown		1		
unknown	1		unknown	2			
TOTAL.	46 birds.	16	30	TOTAL	71 birds	33	38

Sum total of 68 birds with drooping wings and 49 birds with folded wings.

JOHN J. WILLIAMS, Applegate, Cal.

February 18, 1901.