

heermanni. If geographical intergradation still exists between them, I should expect to trace it among the Song Sparrows occupying the brackish tide marshes where the San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers flow into the head of San Francisco Bay. But such material is as yet inaccessible to me. Skins from the salt marshes on the north side of the Bay (St. Vincent, Marin Co.) agree exactly with Baird's description of *samuelis*. As the type locality, Petaluma, is within 5 miles of tide water, it seems reasonable to suppose that the type was a tide-land bird. So far, I have failed to learn of a yellow-bellied Song Sparrow being obtained on the north side of the Bay. We are, therefore, to suppose that the Bay forms a barrier between *samuelis* on the north and *pusillula* on the south. The yellowness of the under parts is the most striking character of *pusillula*, and the great majority of my specimens have this character well pronounced. But I have a few skins from the salt marshes near Palo Alto, taken along with yellow examples, which are scarcely or not at all yellow beneath. These closely resemble *samuelis*, but are not so broadly streaked with black dorsally, and the general tone is ashier. Such birds seem to me properly considered as individual variants of *pusillula*; for they are exactly like the more or less yellow examples in every other respect. It has been suggested that Baird's *gouldi* was one of these white-bellied varieties of *pusillula*. This might be decided by a comparison with the type. Some ♀♀ of *pusillula* have the wing 2.10, though this is rather below the average. Perhaps, in view of the above evidence, some would prefer to rank *pusillula* as a species; but its relationship seems to be best expressed by the trinomial.

I have no material from California north of Marin County. Scores of skins are needed from almost every valley in California before we can hope to properly classify the various local races of the Song Sparrow. Although so much alike, they appeal to one with all the more interest; for a study of two slightly differentiated races will certainly give us a clearer insight into the manner and causes of the evolution of species, than if we gave attention exclusively to the completely separated forms.



Two Years With Mexican Birds. III. Some Plantation Birds.

BY E. H. SKINNER.

GRAY'S ROBIN (*Merula grayi*) during his stay in the vicinity of Tapachula is one of the commonest varieties. They are present in large numbers late in the winter and spring and almost entirely disappear in summer. The coffee plantations with a heavy undergrowth of coffee shaded by larger trees are the favorite resorts of these birds, very few being found in the deep woods or in pastures. In December a very few arrive and we are made aware of their presence by the lovely song which is occasionally heard, the Mexican Zen-zontli being famous for his minstrelsy.

By the middle of February the birds have all arrived, being scattered all

over the cafetal, but not going in flocks. Towards evening when the sun comes out after an afternoon shower everything is inexpressibly bright and fresh and the robins seem to appreciate it, for at such times I have heard as many as fifty birds singing as if their lives depended upon it. Besides their song they have a little whistle which is almost exactly like the last seven notes of the familiar air, 'You Can't Play in my Yard', and another guttural note "chuck-chuck", which, by the way, is their Indian name.

The breeding season commences in April and continues into July. I have taken fresh eggs between April 20 and July 11. The nest is a coarse affair

made of roots, moss and mud, well packed together, and owing to the daily showers, a nest generally raises a good crop of grass and weeds around its edges. The nest is placed commonly in coffee bushes, bunches of bananas or any low shrub at from eight to twelve feet from the ground. The extremes which I noted were two and twenty feet respectively. There were as many as 50 nests in the 80 acres surrounding the house. When the young are just beginning to fly the native small boy goes out and captures the little fellows by the dozen, using them to make bird stew. Gray's Robin lays two or three eggs, and although I have examined hundreds of nests I have never found four. There is great variation in size, shape and markings but an average egg resembles those of our Black-headed Grosbeak.

The Black-headed Saltator (*Saltator atriceps*) is a representative bird of Chiapas and is found mostly in flocks in the wooded portion of the lowlands and foothills, flitting about in the bushes and tree-tops chattering harshly all the time. The nest is loosely constructed of twigs and leaves and two eggs are always laid, being blue with heavy black markings at the larger end, similar to the eggs of the Redwinged Blackbird. The nesting season extends from the latter part of April to the latter part of July.

Synallaxis erythrorhox is a great deal like a little wren with nothing much to distinguish him but his nesting habits, but here he rivals anything in the feathered kingdom. The nest is usually placed from four to ten feet up in dense bushes and is composed of dry twigs four or five inches long. The bird makes a pile of these sticks a foot in diameter leaving a cavity of three or four inches diameter inside. After this is done a horizontal tunnel two inches in diameter is made, leading away from the nest. At about a foot from the nest at the end of the tunnel another pile of twigs is constructed through

which the tunnel turns upward for a few inches. This is the opening of the nest upon which the male roosts while the female is setting. The inner cavity is lined with leaves and three light blue eggs, rarely two, are laid.

I found the Grove-billed Ani (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*) rather common, nesting according to Davie as good birds should. I found sets varying from four to ten eggs and was told by Indians that 20 eggs were sometimes found in a nest, from which it appears that this species has the same habit as *C. ani* of several birds using the same nest. I found one nest of *C. sulcirostris* built on the top of a nest of Giraud's Flycatcher.

The Central American House Wren (*Troglodytes intermedius*) seemed like an old friend to me, flitting about and singing like our wrens at home. They reared their young in dark holes under the rafters of the house and barn and in the hollow trunks of trees. I found one nest in a hollow stump on the ground. The bird lays but three or four eggs, which are lighter than those of our common house wren. This little fellow and the Turkey Vulture were seemingly the only old friends I had in Mexico.



Scott's Oriole at San Diego, Cal.

SCOTT'S ORIOLE (*Icterus parisorum*) is not rare on the desert slope of the mountains in San Diego County in the migration, but it is very seldom seen between the mountains and the sea here. I saw two males in April, one of these being in the eucalyptus grove in the city park of San Diego. The song of this male was peculiar in some ways, so I followed him around to make sure of the identification. Last Sunday (June 2) I heard the same song in another part of the grove, a few hundred yards from where I saw the bird in April. This would indicate that he had become a summer resident here and probably had a mate. I know of no breeding record of this species in the coast region of San Diego County.
San Diego, Cal. FRANK STEPHENS.