

Two Amusing Incidents.

ON SATURDAY February 22, 1896 occurred the first of what I have denominated "two amusing incidents." It relates to an experience that I had, on that date, with an Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*). I happened to be collecting in a large dense grove of eucalyptus trees in this county, and in one of these I discovered a nest of the above species. On my shaking the tree the female flew off the nest, which was placed on a very thin limb and about fifteen feet from the ground. The main trunk of the tree was so thin and frail that I was compelled to climb another and stronger tree that grew some fourteen feet away, in the direction in which the horizontal limb pointed. I ascended this latter tree until I was on an even height with the nest and, reaching out with my right hand, I pulled the branch on which it was placed to me, and grasped the end thereof with my left hand. The female had alighted on the nest while I was climbing and still remained thereon. I shook the branch vigorously but the bird, undismayed, paid no attention whatever to me until I placed my hand within two or three inches of her, when she snapped at me ferociously several times. It was not until I had actually taken hold of the mandibles and lifted the bird from the nest that I was able to discover two fresh eggs therein.

But this is not all: while I was removing the eggs the hummer kept buzzing and darting around in close proximity to my head. After the eggs had been taken from the nest the female immediately flew back onto it and was determined to stay there. Being desirous of procuring the nest, I reached over the bird and severed the limb between the nest and the trunk. In my doing this the nest became completely inverted but still the persistent little hummer clung to it, and when I dropped the detached limb the bird re-

mained on the nest, which was still in this inverted position, for fully ten feet of the fall, when she finally released herself and flew off. I have had considerable experience with hummers and have often noted the bravery of these birds, especially Anna's, but I must confess that this was the bravest and most persistent one with which I ever met.

My second topic relates to an experience of mine with a California Screech Owl (*Megascops asio bendirei*). Under date of May 9, 1897, my note book reads as follows; "An amusing incident occurred during my trip today. I discovered a natural cavity in an old oak stump, which I considered would be a fitting receptacle for a set of Screech Owl's eggs. Walking up to the stump I projected a stick into the hole about two feet, when a female Screech Owl flew out and disappeared through the trees. I soon became aware that the stump was occupied in the upper story by a colony—and a large and warlike one it was—of honey bees, one of the beasts trying his best to alight on the end of my nose and place a wart thereon. This meant that I must retreat to safer quarters. I was convinced that the cavity contained either eggs or young and was reluctant to leave without ascertaining what the contents were. But the bees were so thick and wild that I determined to wait until my return homeward in the evening by which time I supposed that the bees would be inside and would not bother me. We continued on our journey and had not proceeded one hundred feet from the stump, when we observed Mrs. Owl perched on a dead oak limb in a dazed condition—asleep I suppose. One of the boys who was with me took hold of the bird and she then barely opened her eyes and lay perfectly numb in his hands. Two bees were found on the mandible evidently trying to sting her. One of her eyes was badly blood-shot and she was apparently a very sick owl. She remained entirely senseless in the hand

until we placed her on another limb and continued on our way. We returned over the same course some five hours later and imagine our surprise when, on reaching the last mentioned place, the first thing that met our gaze was the remnants of a perfectly fresh Screech Owl's egg. This egg lay broken on the ground directly beneath the spot where we had last placed the bird. The broken shell was soft and pliable and was all coiled up. The white and yolk were of a very thin and watery nature. I found the owl a few feet away on the ground, among some thick shrub roots. She was in the same numb, senseless condition, and I took her in my hand and placed her again in the cavity, where she immediately became very active.

In my opinion, there are two ways of

solving this problem, if such I may call it. Either the owl was in such a sleepy, insensible state that she dropped the egg in the ordinary course of laying, supposing she was on the nest, or she was so overcome by fright or pain that she was compelled to drop it. The former seems the more plausible theory.

This incident may serve to open up the question as to whether a female bird has, under any circumstances or conditions, any control whatever over the laying of her eggs, or whether, when the time comes, no matter where she finds herself, she must then and there deposit them. I think that it would be a very interesting question to discuss.

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Photo from life by Mr. J. G. Dudley.

HARPY EAGLE. (*Thrasaetus harpyia*.)

We are indebted to Mr. A. B. Baker of the National Zoological Park, Washington, D. C., for the photograph of this interesting eagle. Mr. Baker informs us that "the bird was presented by the Governor of the State of Amazonas, Brazil, to Commander C. C. Todd of the U. S. S. Wilmington for the National Zoological Park. It has been at the Park for two years and is still apparently in perfect health."