

Notes From Alameda, Cal.

American Barn Owl, *Strix pratincola*. The following notes will be of interest in sequel to my account of "Barn Owls in Captivity" in Sept.-Oct. number:—I now attribute the cause of death of the three birds mentioned to prolonged diet of dead chickens, basing my opinion on the effect such diet had upon a cat which had to be killed in consequence. The earliest nesting record in the article referred to was March 24, 1900, 6 eggs, incubation fresh to slight, but this was beaten in 1901 by finding on March 20, 4 eggs in one nest and 5 in another, incubation fresh to begun; and on March 24, 6 eggs in one nest and 7 in another, incubation slight, while much better yet, a nest of young about a week old. These nests are all in Alameda County and were empty later than this on previous years.

Date of nesting of Salt Marsh Song Sparrow, *Melospiza melodia pusillula*. The earliest nesting date of this bird is much earlier, this year at least, than is generally supposed. In recent years I have noted full-fledged young flying about the marshes in April and on March 11 about 10 sets of 3 eggs each were taken on portions of the salt marsh here not subject to overflow from the flood tides. Incubation was fresh to slight and the nests built in the salt weeds or grass, literally upon the ground.

Records of Snowy Owl, *Nyctea nyctea* at Alameda, Cal. My note book contains the following:—December 2, 1896, a fine specimen was shot by Tom Cavanaugh on the "sand-hills" between the marsh and the beach of Bay Farm Island, and he approached within easy range obtaining a "pot" shot. It passed into the possession of Percy Fox who had it mounted and its identity passed upon by the taxidermist and by H. R. Taylor. October 26, 1897, Sherry Fish (deceased) told me he saw on the marsh the "mate" to the Snowy Owl Tom Cavanaugh shot last winter. W. E. Bryant reports three birds taken in

Sonoma County by parties unknown to him, about that date. See California Department of "The Osprey" for January 1897 for account.

Western Evening Grosbeaks, *Coccothraustes vespertinus montanus*, were noted twice in Alameda last winter; January 29, 1901, a small flock seen by Percy Fox, feeding upon seeds of pepper tree in town. March 6, 1901, a flock of 11 ? birds flying in direct line, about 40 ft high, at 5:30 p. m.

Song of Golden-crowned Sparrow, *Zonotrichia coronata* in winter is not an uncommon occurrence here. October 24, 1901, at present they are singing incessantly, often singing but two notes, accentuated exactly like the first two of the regular song of three notes:—as Mr. Jos. Grinnell describes it "oh dear" and "oh dear me."

California Jay, *Aphelocoma californica* as a flycatcher. Recently on a vacant lot in town I observed this Jay pursuing a small yellow butterfly and capture it in midair after several maneuvers.

Four varieties of rail in one day on salt marsh near Alameda. During a high tide which flooded the marsh for about two hours on November 7, 1900, I took 10 California Clapper Rail (*Rallus obsoletus*) one *Porzana carolina* which is rarer than the next variety, 10 *Porzana jamaicensis*, and one *Porzana noveboracensis*, ♂, badly moulting. *Rallus virginianus* is a rare bird here.

California Creeper, *Certhia familiaris occidentalis*. January 14, 1899, ♂ taken here on live oak tree, the only bird I ever noted.

Arizona Goldfinch, *Spinus psaltria arizona*, ♂ taken here, January 16, 1898, among *S. psaltria*, and one seen at close range, August 20, 1899, in moult, and feeding upon lettuce tops gone to seed.

Late nesting of Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax naevius*. In a recent article in this magazine I commented upon late nesting of this species stating that nestlings were heard clamoring well into August. This year I heard some young in a cypress tree on

September 1st and on September 15 heard a nestful making a racket at 1 a. m.

DONALD A. COHEN,

Alameda, Cal.



Getting a Late Supper.

RETURNING from work on my wheel during the latter part of August, I picked up a tack in my front tire and after many stops to pump up the tire, reached home in a bad frame of mind to find a cold supper. After supper I concluded to repair the puncture which I did, commencing at eight o'clock and finishing half an hour later.

The first thing I did was to turn on the electric light on the front porch, and look for the puncture. While so engaged a shadow kept falling across the wheel and looking up, imagine my surprise to see a Black Phoebe sitting on a branch of a rose-bush about four feet over my head, biting the wings from off a large moth it had captured and eyeing the other insects which were darting about the light. After whetting his bill on the branch he selected another moth which was captured on the second attempt.

The electric light in question is eight candle-power and throws just enough light on the porch to attract a few insects. The phoebe did not seem the least bit alarmed at my presence and continued to catch bugs within two feet of my head, while I watched operations directly under the lamp. Soon I called my mother and brother but the bird paid no attention to the three of us standing near the lamp. I turned the light off for a few minutes and when I turned it on again he immediately started after the bugs. After watching him for half an hour I came to the conclusion that it was bad for birds to eat between meals, so put out the light and retired.

W. B. JUDSON.

Los Angeles, Cal.

Notes on Say's Phoebe.

On April 28 I took a set of two Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) on the mesa northwest of Elsinore. This nest was 40 feet down an old mine shaft and was completed before work was resumed. But in spite of frequent passage up and down and occasional blasts, the bird had the eggs half incubated when taken. A report a few days ago is that she has carried the old nest piece by piece up twenty feet and is now setting on two more eggs. I observed this pewee in Pomona May 11 and am satisfied the species breeds on the hills south.

J. EUGENE LAW.

Pomona, Cal., May 30, 1901.



QUERY COLUMN.

7. We have a dark white-rumped shrike in California in winter that comes from Nevada and north of us. How far south does it go? It is common in the Sacramento Valley in winter, but I do not think I have seen it as far south as Stockton. L. BELDING, Stockton, Cal.

8. Has any variation been found in the plumage of *Dryobates nuttalli*, indicating a cross between it and any of the eastern "ladder-backs," and if so have any specimens been secured in this state? J. J. W.

9. What is the range of *Merula m. propinqua* in this state in the months of August, September and October? Owing to their complete absence from this locality and also at Independence Lake during this period, annually, I am led to believe that they are found in numbers in some other locality during this time. J. J. W.

10. Has any detailed study been made of the song and habits of *Harporhynchus redivivus*? If so, by whom and can their observations be purchased? JNO. J. WILLIAMS, Applegate, Placer Co., Cal.