

and sometimes a look into the nest is required to make certain. But the old nests were sometimes a help as we made a close search in their immediate neighborhood and were often rewarded by finding the new one.

We found the birds very shy and rarely succeeded in seeing the bird leave the nest—which she did quietly, slipping from the bush on the side farthest from us. The bird is a very pleasing singer but not equal to the California thrasher. He sings less frequently and does not often perch on top of the brush during the performance but

seems to prefer the cover of branch and leaf. The song is rather in a minor strain—B flat I should say—and has fewer variations than that of his near relative. In company with the thrashers were seen many Abert towhees (*Pipilo aberti*) and two unfinished nests and one set of eggs found. A few Lecomte thrashers. (*Harporhynchus lecontei*) were seen on the outskirts of the thickets but they seem to prefer the more open and sandy country—the desert proper,—with which their light sandy “complexion” harmonizes.



### The Louisiana Tanager.

(*Piranga ludoviciana*.)

BY J. H. BOWLES, TACOMA, WASH.

**T**HIS handsome member of the tanager family is, perhaps the most brilliantly plumaged of all the birds in the northwest. Being an eastern observer, I eagerly looked forward to the first acquaintance with this relative of my favorite of the Massachusetts groves, the scarlet tanager (*Piranga erythromelas*.) Nor was I disappointed, for in comparing fully plumaged males of both species, although unlike in color in every respect, it would be hard to say which is the more beautiful.

For the benefit of eastern readers, it may be as well to make a few comparisons between the subject of this article and the scarlet tanager. Its habits differ considerably from the latter, as it is principally a bird of the clearings, while *erythromelas* is more given to the seclusion of the woods.

Among our northwestern migrants it is almost the last to come and the first to go, appearing in large numbers about the middle of May, and leaving early in September. Although essentially a warm weather bird, the majority seem to pass on to the north of Washington, as it can hardly be called a common bird around Tacoma at any time excepting that of migration.

Nest building in Washington and Oregon is seldom commenced before the first week in June and is more often delayed until much later in that month. The earliest set recorded is one of four eggs, incubation commenced, taken on June 4. The latest is a set of three, incubation slight, taken on June 28. Both of these sets were taken in Waldo, Oregon, by my brother, Mr. C. W. Bowles, and both were undoubtedly first sets.

The favorite location for the nest is an oak or fir, preferably the latter, on or bordering a prairie. Often, however, a tree is selected on some hillside from which nearly all the large timber has been cleared. In position, the nest is invariably on a branch, never in an upright crotch in my experience. As a rule it is placed at some distance from the main trunk of the tree, usually from six to ten feet and often much more. The height from the ground varies from fifteen to fifty feet, though any above thirty feet may be considered exceptional.

In these respects its habits are similar to those of the scarlet tanager, although the latter prefers a more secluded nesting place. The nest itself is also similar, with the exception that it is usually a considerably more bulky structure.

The composition is externally of twigs, rootlets, moss and coarse grass, while the lining generally consists of fine rootlets. Occasionally, however, a nest is found thickly lined with horse and cow-hair.

The number of eggs in a complete set varies from three to five, the latter number being very rare, while three is nearly as often found as four. In color the eggs have a bluish-green ground, rather sparsely spotted and dotted with colors varying from lavender to greenish brown and almost black. A few specimens rather closely resemble some eggs of *erythromelas*, but the vast majority have a much deeper blue ground color and the markings have a less reddish tinge. The markings generally tend to the formation of a ring around the larger end, but the eggs are always more or less marked over their entire surface.

The variation in size is considerable, the largest in our collecting measuring .96x.67 inches, while the smallest is .86x.67 inches. The average of twelve eggs taken at random shows a measurement of .925x.654 inches. Of course none of the eggs mentioned are in any way abnormal. These birds are seldom very solicitous about their nest and eggs. The female sits closely until forced to leave the nest, then flies to a short distance and soon brings the male by her chipping and soft purring notes. Both then come back and watch the intruder at a short distance, with but little display of anxiety.

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#### Eastern Limit of Lawrence Goldfinch.

In his 'Birds of North and Middle America,' Dr. Ridgway gives the eastern limit of the range of Lawrence goldfinch (*Astragalinus lawrencei*) as Fort Whipple and Pinal County, Arizona. I have two specimens (♂ and ♀) that I shot January 20, 1876 near Fort Bayard, Grant County, New Mexico, about five miles east of the continental divide.

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#### Correction of Errors in Identification.

I have been responsible for the following erroneous records:

(1) *Tringa bairdi* GRINNELL, Auk XV, April 1898, 126. The specimen referred to, taken at Sitka, later proved to be an immature spotted sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*)

(2) *Turdus aonalaschkeæ auduboni* GRINNELL, Bds. Pac. Slope Los Ang. Co., March 1898, 51. The specimen proves to be *Hylocichla a. aonalaschkeæ*, and not either *H. a. auduboni* or *H. a. sequoiensis*.

(3) *Otocoris alpestris leucolæma* BARLOW, Condor III, Nov. 1901, 167. I was to blame for this naming. The specimens were since compared by W. K. Fisher at Washington, and pronounced to be *Otocoris alpestris merrilli*.

These are all the mistakes in identification that I am so far aware of having made in any published writings. If others come to light, I propose to announce them at once, so as to avoid further danger of such erroneous records being quoted.

I would urge that other writers do the same. For mistakes are bound to be made at some time or another, and uncorrected errors of this kind have caused much trouble in the past. The sooner they are made right, the better. In the study of distribution and its modifying influences, a few mistaken records may cause confusion, and perhaps prevent correct deductions.

I do not include here changes in names, due to shifting nomenclature, or to separation of newly-recognized geographical forms. For the compiler will readily recognize the form meant usually by the locality. But out and out blunders like the above, where the spotted sandpiper was recorded as *bairdi*, could not be judged as such, unless admitted by the author. Such blunders we know to have been often made in breeding records; for instance, the "black swift" nesting at Seattle, and the "evening grosbeak" nesting in Yolo County.

It should be the duty of those who know of such errors to point them out as such, as soon as discovered.

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