

Bird Studies in Strawberry Valley, Aug. 25—Oct. 25, 1902.

MRS. C. A. MOODY, LOS ANGELES, CAL.

AT the end of a long and dusty stage ride up the mountain road, and several hours after the sun had dropped behind the peaks, we reached this valley—now more widely known as Idyllwild, Among-the-Pines. Naturally, in the morning, our first thought was a mixture of curiosity and a great desire to find out what kind of a place we had come upon in the very heart of the mountains.

In a natural park of white oaks and yellow pine trees stands the Idyllwild Sanatorium, having for a picturesque back-ground, the towering granite peaks of the San Jacinto Mts. The lower parts of these mountains are thickly wooded with yellow and sugar pines—each attaining a giant-like size with the growth of many years, while cedars and firs abound tho' by reason of their nature they do not aspire to such dizzy heights. Glimpses of white tents here and there among the trees, give one the impression that out-of-door life is much preferred.

Very pretty, modern cottages have been erected near the sanatorium, in which are comfortably furnished rooms. Beyond the park, on another ridge, one may find cottages for housekeeping. Our choice was a large tent furnished for housekeeping, and somewhat isolated from the others. It was set just at the edge of a rocky slope, well shaded by white oak trees with a yellow pine or two to keep them company. Down the hill, and across a pasture path,—where sweet ferns, youthful pines and many grasses grew, we found a cool mountain stream, making haste to reach the valley below. Now, I thought, this should be an ideal place for birds; so without much delay my hammock was swung where I could easily look down the hill, and beyond the waving ferns into the shadows cast by the trees along the brook.

The red-capped woodpecker was the

first bird to attract my attention. He was, by far, the noisiest bird here and can safely be termed, "monarch of all he surveys," in this immediate neighborhood at this time of year. At times, by way of courtesy, he will allow the bluejays a small section of the ground. The smaller birds, however, don't count for much in Mr. Redtop's opinion, for he chases them away quite remorselessly, and goes on with his hammering. One small boy said, "I should think he would knock out all of his brains" so hard would he pound away sometimes.

This California woodpecker is a noticeably showy bird, with his glossy green-black coat, crimson head-dress, and a dash of yellow at his throat. Some think he is a blue-black, but in some lights I found the green luster very clearly brought out. Male and female are much alike in markings, unless possibly the female wears a smaller red cap. His ways of covering a tree when in quest of food is truly ludicrous. Creeping, sliding, gliding up or down the tree seems equally agreeable to him. He rarely comes to the ground, but puts in most of his time drilling through the thick bark of the yellow pine. Sometimes he strikes a choice spot, and there he will cling, serenely sipping something as if it were the "nectar of the gods." The thought came to me that perhaps he had taken to chewing the pine gum!

The jay seen about here, is the blue-fronted jay, known to inhabit the coniferous regions. Male and female have a crest and markings are similar. The light-blue lines which extend up the forehead between the eyes give a very quizzical expression to the bird. At first the jays kept rather quiet and were not much in evidence. One came to inspect, then a few more. After a little while I had more jays than I had bargained for, feasting at the back of the tent. Bread exposed to the dry moun-

tain air soon hardens, and many pieces were to be found half hidden among the sticks and stones on the hillside.

An enterprising jay found a particularly hard piece one day. He flew up to a branch of the oak tree, and, putting his feet on the bread to hold it quite firm, proceeded to hammer it with his bill, after the manner of a woodpecker. For many minutes he wrestled with that piece of bread, (he must have been in a terrible state of mind) until another jay came to see what could be the matter. He meant to stick to it, however, and didn't intend to "go shares." I haven't yet made up my mind whether he came off conquerer, or abandoned the situation. I do know that he worked hard for a long time then flew away. Occasionally I add grapes to their menu. That is a surprise and much appreciated. Some were put in a bag and fixed in one of the trees, and, instantly, their curiosity was aroused.

One came and pecked at the paper bag, and soon discovered that when he tore the paper it made a noise. It was not long before the grapes were found, and such a hue and cry came from the lookers-on in the branches above. Down they flew jabbering as they came, and it is needless to relate that there wasn't a grape left in the bag in a very short time. Since then I've never doubted the inquisitiveness of the bluejays. In addition to the characteristic scold note the blue-fronted jay has many distinctly different notes, some of which are soft, whispering notes, and very pleasant to hear.

All of the jays are more or less pugnacious, and few birds come about their feeding grounds while they are in possession. The ground squirrel is more bold, and one was often seen feeding with them.

Chickadees, mountain bluebirds, flycatchers, and Brewer blackbirds are seen every day if one takes the time to observe. The bluebirds come for a frolic on the tent ropes late every after-

noon, after all the noisy birds have said good-bye for the day. As the shadows grow darker, flocks of tiny seed-eating birds come to the quiet hillside, and flit through the ferns and grasses, where they find food to their fancy. Twice a hummer came and stuck his long bill into a scarlet penstemon flower, but was off again before I could note his colorings.

An almost daily visitor is a cunning creeper, who comes to the nearest tree, and inspects it for food. He has a sweet note of inquiry, and appears to have little fear. Once he flew to the ground to see what the other birds were doing, but he seemed to care more for the food which he found in the trees. This was the slender-billed nuthatch. Three times a grosbeak was noticed eating at the bird-table, but was not clearly identified.

As the weather becomes colder, the hammock studies came to an end, and I was obliged to go abroad. On one of my long excursions, I caught sight of a white-headed woodpecker, flying from one high point to another. Chickadees were seen feeding on the manzanita berries. The clear ringing note of the red-shafted flicker was heard often, but he rarely showed himself. Finding the feathers of one near our tent one morning I concluded that there had been a tragedy during the night.

A common night sound, coming from the distant canyons, is the hootings of the owls, which is not especially conducive to peaceful slumbers, if there is only a piece of striped awning between one and the wide-wide world. The woodpeckers began putting in their supplies for the winter about the first week in October; and after that they worked every day from early morning till sun-down, picking the acorns, taking off the cap, and skillfully packing them away in the holes made by them in the bark of the pine trees. On every walk and ride strange birds were to be seen, so that I was fully convinced a student would find here a good field for birds.