

The Band-tailed Pigeon in San Diego County.

BY C. S. SHARP, ESCONDIDO, CAL.

THE band-tailed pigeon (*Columba fasciata*) is a pretty regular winter visitant to the foot-hills of San Diego county, frequently coming down to the Escondido Valley in bands of fifteen or twenty when driven out by the snows above, but generally staying in the outlying orchards and grain fields near the hills. I have heard from several persons that they nest regularly on Palomar and the Cuyamaca Mts., but had no personal knowledge of such an occurrence.

This past season, however, while spending a few days with my friends J. S. and J. B. Dixon at their ranch on Pine Mt., some twenty miles east from here, my supposition was made a certainty. On May 11, while on a hunt in their company near the top of Pine Mt., a bird was flushed by Mr. J. B. Dixon from its nest in a medium sized black oak tree. The nest, which contained one egg, incubation well advanced, was on an almost horizontal fork of two medium sized branches at an elevation of twenty-nine feet, and was quite as poorly constructed as the average nest of the mourning dove (*Zenaidura macroura*) and was readily seen through from below. Perhaps fifty small twigs and a dozen or two pine needles were used, loosely laid together in the usual dove-like way. Its measurements were as follows: Diameter, outside, 6x4 inches, inside, 5x4 inches; depth, outside, one inch and inside, three-eighths of an inch. It was scarcely more than a rude platform, the depression being caused by the bird's weight.

On June 24, 1902, Mr. Dixon, on visiting the same locality, was surprised to flush a bird again from the same nest, and took therefrom a second egg, which was too far advanced in incubation to be preserved. The measurements of the first egg were 1.60x1.10 inches; those of the second were not obtained. This nest was at the very highest fringe of the oaks where they meet the pines, elevation about 3,250 feet. Another nest taken by the same collector on May 3, 1901, also at about the same elevation on Pine Mt., contained two fresh eggs. This likewise was in a black oak on the lower fringe of pines, and was composed of the same scant material, a few twigs and pine needles, and was placed seventeen feet from the ground. No measurements of this nest were taken. The dimensions of the eggs are 1.56x1.08 and 1.55x1.10 inches. In this case also the bird was flushed from the nest.

As these nests are apparently always placed at some little distance from the ground, and are mere platforms and hard to see owing to the surrounding foliage, they are not readily discovered except by the actual flushing of the bird. One must be quick even to see the bird. It does not flutter along the ground in the manner of the mourning dove nor does it sit on a nearby branch and coo, but is off like a shot and it requires a pretty sharp eye to follow its flight through the trees.

Palomar and Cuyamaca Mountains are several thousand feet higher than Pine Mt., where these nests were found, and partake more of the higher transition and Boreal which is supposed to be the breeding area of this species. I believe that a diligent search there would prove them a much more abundant resident species than the data at present attainable would lead one to suppose.