

mosquitoes harassed us constantly, while the perspiration kept dripping from our bodies, till, after three or four hours in the blind, our tongues were parched from thirst, and with loss of strength and patience, we were compelled to quit for the day. But for all we suffered there was a fascination in watching these wild birds going and coming fearlessly almost within arm's reach. For three different days we worked in the blind trying to picture the gulls in their characteristic attitudes of flight.

These gulls are masters in the air. I have watched by the hour birds similar to these following along in the wake of a steamer, but had never before had such chances with a camera. Often they poise, resting apparently motionless on outstretched wings. It is a difficult feat. A small bird can't do it. A sparrow hawk can only poise by the rapid beating of his wings. The gull seems to hang perfectly still; yet there is never an instant when the wings and tail are not constantly adjusted to meet the different air currents. Just as in shooting the rapids in a canoe, the paddle must be adjusted every moment to meet the different eddies, currents and whirlpools, and it is never the same in two different instants. A gull by the perfect adjustment of its body, without a single flap of the wings, makes headway straight in the teeth of the wind. I saw one retain a perfect equilibrium in a stiff breeze, and at the same time reach forward and scratch his ear.

Even tho we had good chances to picture the flying gulls, yet wing-shooting with a camera is such a difficult feat, that several dozen plates yielded but few good negatives. The short interval of time during which it takes a flying bird to sweep across the angle of vision of the lens generally gives the photographer only part of a second's time to aim, focus and shoot. A flight picture well focused and clear and satisfactory in its make-up is the record of a rare shot and a great many misses; perhaps it is more often a good guess, but it is rarely if ever made without a great deal of practice.

*Portland, Oregon.*

## EXPERIENCES WITH THE DOTTED CANYON WREN

BY WRIGHT M. PIERCE

**I**T was the latter part of June, several years ago, that I happened to be on a camping trip over in Coldwater Canyon, which is situated at the headwaters of the San Gabriel and which leads into Cattle Canyon, a branch of the right fork of the San Gabriel. Near the head of this beautiful Coldwater Canyon we found a cabin, which was badly worn by the weather and rough treatment that it had received at the hands of campers. Here in this cabin, the sides of which were made of logs with wide cracks between them, we made camp. The few rough shakes which served as a roof would afford poor shelter from either rain or sun. This cabin is typical of the old miners' cabins which one comes across when traveling thru the mountain wilds of southern California; but within I found a little home that would not, I believe, be called typical of miners' cabins.

This home was in an old dry-goods box which was suspended from the ceiling by baling wire. The box had evidently been used previously by campers as a

cupboard. Even tho it was open on one side it was pretty safe from the rats, suspended as it was from the ceiling.

As soon as I discovered the nest I told the rest of the party not to disturb the box or its occupants so as to give me a chance to identify the owners, as well as to study their actions. After a few moment's waiting I heard the shrill whistle or song of the dotted canyon wren (*Catherpes mexicanus punctulatus*) near the cabin. Almost immediately afterward the female wren appeared, carrying an insect in her beak with which to feed the four small hungry nestlings in the nest in the box. At first she seemed frightened at me, approaching the box only with the utmost caution, but after we had been in camp a few days she became accustomed to our presence and noise, and would enter the box even tho we were quite near. Both the male and female assisted in feeding the young. At night the female brooded the nest. I discovered this by taking a light and looking at her thru a crack in the box. She seemed frightened at the light but only blinked and crouched lower in the nest, as if to better protect her small babies.

I would have the nest in my possession now but for a misfortune that overtook it. After placing a small can lined with cotton in place of the nest, and after putting the youngsters in their new home, I laid the nest out intending to pack it at once. But for the time I forgot that mountain cabins are infested with rats. This fact was sharply impressed upon me when in the morning I went to get the nest; for there only remained the tattered remnants of a once beautiful structure. The rats in this camp, as I found out later, have been credited, and I do not believe falsely, with mysteriously carrying off everything that they can get at, even sides of bacon, boxes of crackers, and sacks of potatoes!

But to return to the nest: As I remember it, the top part resembled very much a wood pewee's in form and color, tho in size it was a little larger and deeper. The lower part was a great mass of coarse sticks, such as are always found in the nests of the wren family. The upper part was composed of fine grass, weeds, weed bark, and weed stems, covered over with an abundance of soft light-colored mosses and lichens. The lining was of soft feathers, a little hair, and a few soft weed fibers and the ever present piece of dried snake skin, which is nearly always found in the nests of the wren family. The inside diameter was about two and one-half inches, the inside depth about two inches. The outside diameter was about four inches and the outside depth, taking into consideration the mass of sticks, about five inches. All the upper part was very compactly and firmly woven, showing a high class of bird architecture.

I am happy to say that the old birds, after their first scare, did not seem to be concerned in the least about having their family transferred from a beautiful neat home to a rude tin can, and the young seemed to grow just as fast. All they seemed to need was plenty of food and a little warmth at night: No style for them.

Every morning before we got up we could hear the shrill clear whistle-like songs of our little friends as they sat on the roof of the cabin, or darted between and about the logs in search of their food. On the morning of our departure I took a last look at the youngsters. They were greedy now and showed much life. How I wished that I could stay with them and see that they left the nest safely. Even now, whenever I am in the mountains it is with pleasure and joy that, as I come around some point or cliff, I hear again the clear melodious song of one of these energetic little wrens. It always takes me back to the old cabin in Coldwater and its happy family of canyon wrens.

*Claremont, California.*