

could see many birds flying, but as a heavy wind had roughened the water considerably I decided to let that go until the next trip, and after packing a set or two of each variety I had found, I wound my way homeward.

Early on the morning of July 4, I was on the spot firmly resolved to reach that second island. I found the island no nearer than before but the water was as smooth as glass and, arming myself with a ten-pound wooden pickle bucket to bring back the spoils, I started out. After a half-hour's swimming I reached the goal and found it well worth the trouble. Altho I found no rarities here, the scene could not fail to interest any lover of ornithology. This island was smaller than the other, containing only about two acres. The beach was occupied by a colony of Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*), most of their shallow nests containing two or three young birds. I secured a few sets, however, which I was able to save. In one corner of the island was a small colony of White Pelicans, the nests containing two eggs each, mostly fresh. I found one lonely, half-grown nestling and, without exception, it was the ugliest thing I ever saw.

A few ducks were breeding here also, but the greater part of the island was taken up by a rookery of Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*). There were hundreds of their nests flat on the ground among the bushes, built to a height of two or three feet. At this date most of them contained nearly full grown young, and very pugnacious they were, too. They clearly considered me an intruder and their reception of me was not conducive to much familiarity on my part.

Having thoroly explored the island and finding nothing further of interest I filled my wooden bucket with donations from the Pelicans and Gulls and made the return trip without trouble, tho my cargo made my progress rather slow.

This was my last visit to the lake that year but I expect some time to return and hope to find no diminution of the numbers of this interesting colony.

*Los Angeles, California.*

## MEASURING A CONDOR

By M. FRENCH GILMAN

IN the spring of 1901, while stationed as Forest Ranger at Warner's Ranch, San Diego County, I assisted in measuring a live California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*). A cattle man shot it on Volcan Mountain, breaking one wing, and after a fight succeeded in getting it home. Here it was confined in a large roomy coop and its shattered wing carefully dressed and put in a sling. The bird, however, insisted on tearing open the bandages and picking at the wound. The lady of the house had named it Polly, tho it was a fine male, and was trying to make a pet of it without getting in reach of its powerful beak. For food they occasionally gave it a beef liver or a jack rabbit.

My friend, Nathan Hargrave of Banning, was with me and we persuaded the owner to turn it loose in the enclosed yard so we could see it in action. A noble bird it appeared when released, except for the one wounded wing. The size of its feet seemed remarkable, tho not as dangerous looking as the talons of an eagle, simply big and honest-looking foundations.

The bird strode about the yard and entered the open door of a shed. Here stretched on a bed lay the mail carrier enjoying a Sunday nap. The vulture hopped upon the bed and of course the man woke up. He was startled by this

strange bedfellow and began kicking frantically at the intruder and making inarticulate noises with his mouth. The bird seized him by one foot, fortunately he had retired with his boots on, but we rushed to the rescue and shoo-ed the combatants apart.

We were all very cautious about approaching Mr. Vulture, as familiarity might breed calamity. Only a short time before, an Indian had lost about half the fleshy part of his thumb by undue proximity to the captive's beak. Another Indian had the skin stripped from a finger by trying to pull away after the bird had seized it. The owner finally lassoed the great vulture and we proceeded to measure him. The number of assistants the process required reminded me of the old nursery rhyme telling how many people it took to extract the lacteal fluid from an ancient female specimen of *Ovis domestica*.

One man took firm hold of the bird's big neck and head; another grasped the feet; two extended the wings while two others stretched a tape line across the expanse of wing. Owing to the fracture we could not fully expand one of the wings, so the bird measured only 9 feet 10½ inches. I estimated that the wing would have been three inches longer if normal, thus making the expanse well over ten feet. On account of difficulty with the broken wing we did not attempt any other measurements. The owner told me he had killed a female the year before that measured twelve feet across the wings. I am told of another specimen shot several years ago that measured over eleven feet.

While we were taking the bird's measure a diversion was created by a ten year old boy who was "rubbering" and got too close to the business end of the vulture. The boy's cries called attention to the fact that one of his fingers was in the vise-like grip of the beak. A man instantly seized the boy to prevent him from pulling back, and a chisel had to be used before the bulldog hold on the finger could be loosened. We examined the finger and found blood blisters on each side—just as if it had been pounded with a hammer. These instances showing the mouth power of the Condor give me a proper appreciation of the nerve and courage of Mr. Finley as shown by his "bearding the lion in his den," the Condor in his lair.

My acquaintance with the California Vulture or Condor has been limited, tho of long standing. In former years when stock-raising was of much importance in our locality the birds were comparatively numerous; while now the sight of a specimen is a rare treat, at least in my part of southern California. During the summer of 1888 I visited Bear Valley and Holcomb Valley in San Bernardino County and saw a number of them. Many cattle ranged there during the summer months and furnished food for both buzzards and Condors. I counted fourteen of the great birds around a dead steer one day, while a big flock of buzzards stood at a safe distance waiting for the "core."

For several years a pair of Condors frequented Snow Creek falls, about sixteen miles east of Banning, California, on the north slope of San Jacinto peak. Their nest was situated in a big fissure half way up on a precipitous 500-foot rocky wall, and to reach, would require wings, a balloon, or 300 feet of rope along with more daring than most men possess. I know of no attempt being made to approach it and finally some hunter shot one of the birds. Now the place knows Vultures no longer.

Another pair nested for some time in the San Jacinto range about ten miles east of Banning. The nest, as in the other instance, was in a cave or fissure high on the side of a cliff which overhung at the top—as near inaccessible as could well be. I do not know of anyone molesting the birds, but they have not been seen for

several years. Mr. Hargrave, before mentioned in this writing, discovered the nest after watching the birds a long time.

I have been told that the birds are fairly numerous in a certain desert range of mountains; but I am afraid, as many others are, that the extinction of this great vulture is only a matter of time, not a long time either.

In closing I might mention that in early days the Mexicans used the large, hollow wing quills for the purpose of storing and transporting gold dust.

*Shiprock, New Mexico.*

### ENGLISH SPARROW NOTES

By WILLIAM L. FINLEY

CONCERNING the notes on the English Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) in a late issue of THE CONDOR, it seemed strange to me when I first went to Los Angeles not to find this bird about the streets, especially since it is so common in other parts of California. It would be interesting to have the records of other cities and know to what extent this foreigner has spread thruout the State.



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