

FROM BOULDER TO THE SEA

By MILTON S. RAY

With Photos By OLUF J. HEINEMANN

I HAVE traveled with pack, afoot and on horses, with team and wagon and even in an automobile; but the most care-free trip I have ever taken was in May of the present year (1907) when Heinemann and I set forth from Boulder Creek carrying practically nothing except a film-pack camera and some tools of taxidermy. For board and lodging we trusted to the usual hospitality of Californians, altho we had for emergency a few Italian biscuits called "galletta" which while little known are a positive boon to the camper.

What impressed us most as we walked along that grand mountain road, built by the State, which leads to the Big Basin, was the devastation of the timber. Lumber mills were cutting everything in the tree line, "as long," as one of the hands stated, "as would make a three by four," while the shingle makers bringing up in the rear and utilizing the stumps, left only a brush-covered waste in their wake. Boulder itself no longer possesses any of the magnificent groves it did in the past and in time it seems the Big Basin Reserve will be all of the great woods that will remain.

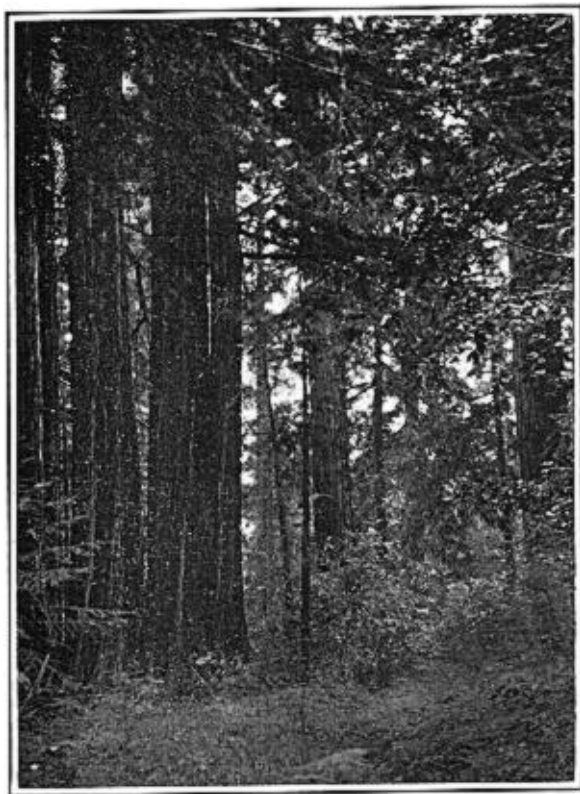
On starting, in a weed patch, on the ground, we came upon a nest of a typical bird of the region, the Point Pinos Junco (*Junco hyemalis pinosus*), with four large young. But this find was soon forgotten when we discovered on the headwaters of Boulder Creek the most beautiful nest of the American Water Ouzel (*Cinclus mexicanus*) that it has ever been my good fortune to locate. A great ball of rich green moss placed against a mossy bank, overhung with leaves and just above a miniature waterfall, it made so perfect a picture that it seemed unreal. The stream is not deep, the water cold, nor the current swift, when one has a nest like this to photograph. After the tripod was placed in two positions in the water and the views were taken, the nest was reached and found to be just completed. The owners who flew back and forth lit so close at times that we were almost tempted to try a film or so on them. On returning to the road and meeting a band of bare-footed urchins I feared for the safety of the pretty little nest by the waterway for there are many still who disregard the ukase of Vogelsang.

Altho we rambled along with a lazy, careless stride and stopped and inspected everything worthy of notice we finally crossed, however, the ridge which walls the California State Redwood Park, better known as the Big Basin, on the east. The recent forest fire while it swept over a large area luckily did not destroy much State timber. On the edge of this burnt section I saw about fifty yards away two birds running thru the brush that appeared very much like grouse. I ran forward, but with a sudden whir of wings, also grouse-like, the birds took flight and disappeared in the thick forest. I have seen grouse in the high Sierras and in Mendocino County, which is a type of country very similar to this; still I hesitate to record the bird for Santa Cruz County on this evidence alone, but feel confident future workers will verify it.

At the Governor's Camp, as the settlement is called, in the heart of the Park, we spent the close of day, the night and some hours in the morning. This point lies twelve miles from Boulder Creek at an elevation of 1002 feet. Here in the clearings we met with bands of Santa Cruz Chickadees (*Parus rufescens barlowi*), a few California Quail (*Lophortyx californicus californicus*), and Western Blue-

birds (*Sialia mexicana occidentalis*). The only songster much in evidence was an occasional Black-headed Grosbeak (*Zamelodia melanocephala capitalis*) which trilled from some lofty perch in the redwoods. We found the Coast Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri carbonacea*), however, to be the commonest bird thruout the entire region.

After rambling among the greater trees about the camp the highest of which rises 290 feet, we struck out for the Blazed Trail hoping in the usual course of events to reach some habitation by nightfall. The sky was cloudy and became more so as we went coastward, but even on clear days but little sunlight filters thru this great maze of trees. The ground is a damp spongy mass of decayed vegeta-

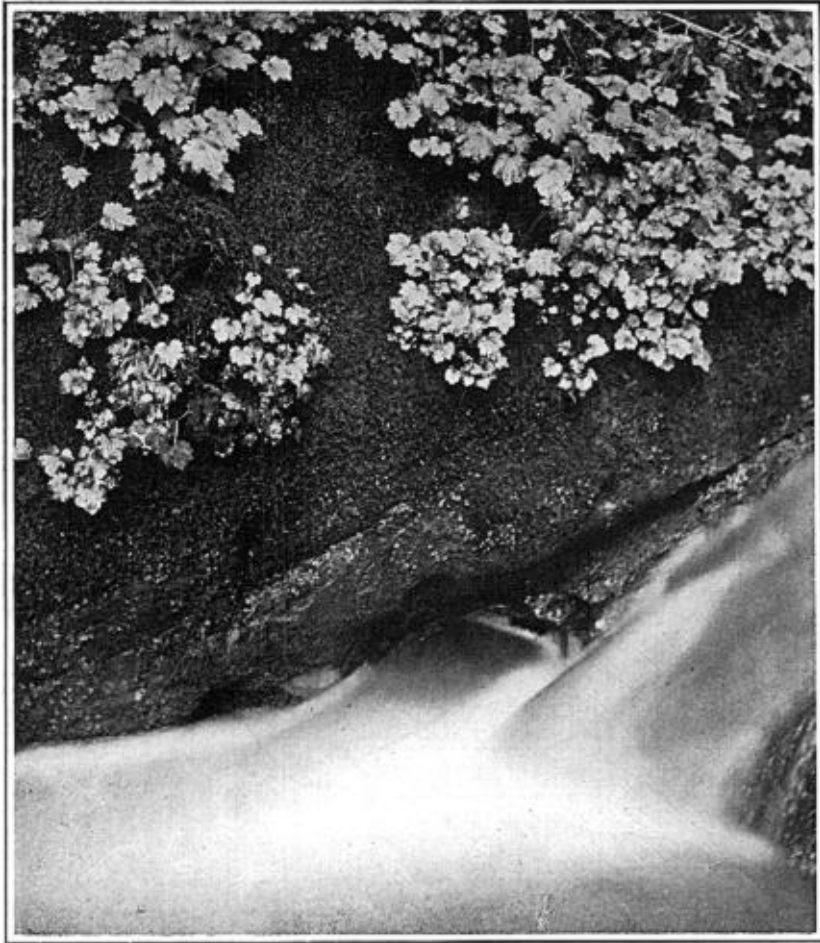


A FOREST VIEW, ABOUT TWO MILES WEST OF GOVERNOR'S CAMP, BIG BASIN

tion on which the footfall is noiseless. The wind in the tree tops, like the roar of some far distant surf, the splashing of a stream as it swings along and an occasional bird call is all that breaks the stillness of these majestic but gloomy solitudes. We left the Blazed Trail for a branch that led us to the waterfall of Berry Creek which tumbles in a delightful fashion, with foam and spray, for seventy feet down a moss-grown bank. It was here at the foot of this fall, amid the roar and flying mist, placed like a wedge in the crevice between two giant boulders, that we found our second nest of the Ouzel. It was in a position which made it almost impossible to photograph. This nest like the first was but newly completed. The birds in this case were very wild compared to the previous pair.

Now, while I believe I fully appreciate the scenic beauty of waterfalls, still I must acknowledge I was not altogether anxious after seeing the Berry Creek Fall, to plunge into a trail-less forest for several miles to view an upper fall simply because it fell four feet further and some claimed made a prettier picture. But to that enthusiastic photographer, Heinemann, this was a challenge that could not go unanswered. We had been told that by following the stream and turning at certain points that the trip was an easy one, in fact we were informed several young ladies had reached the upper falls the previous year. After crawling on hands and knees thru brushy thickets, winding gingerly thru nettle patches, clinging and treading along mossy banks and lastly forced to wade the icy waters of the turbulent stream we finally came to realize that we had taken the

wrong fork. The banks of the stream had now become so precipitous that we were compelled to make our way thru the heavy undergrowth and over the countless logs of fallen trees. It was at this point we came on a nest prettily tucked in a natural cavity in the bark of a giant redwood. It proved to be that of a Western Flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis*) and was made of moss and bark strips and decorated with lichens and spider webs. The nest contained four young about one-third grown. While adjusting the camera the parents flitted nervously from

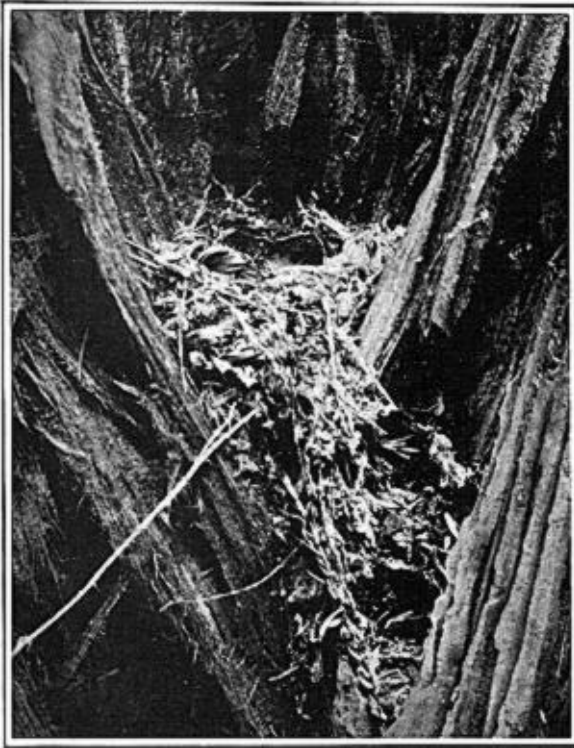


WATER OUZEL'S NEST (UPPER LEFT-HAND CORNER) ON HEAD-WATERS OF
BOULDER CREEK

branch to branch, uttering a feeble call note. But we soon left them and their tiny home in peace; for about this time we had troubles of our own. Having nearly lost the camera on one occasion we did not favor retracing our steps, so after some deliberation decided to journey straight over the hillside to the west. At least we thought it west, but the day was very cloudy and we lost our bearings; for after plodding along several hours we crossed a trail which showed we were heading for the east. An hour's walk on this trail brought us to the western edge of the great

forest; true heavy timber still prevailed along the streams but forsook the higher hillsides along which we now traveled. After a walk of several miles along the ridge and several more down White House Creek we found ourselves on the county highway, which for the most part runs along the edge of the cliffs.

We spent the night at the home of a prosperous dairyman and the only difficulty we had was to prevail on our host to accept some return for his kindness. The following morning, May 25th, Oluf desiring to take some views of Anna



NEST OF THE WESTERN FLYCATCHER ON THE TRUNK
OF A GIANT REDWOOD, BIG BASIN

Nuevo Island and its lighthouse we crossed a mile or so of sandy waste of a headland the point of which lies directly opposite the island. Here in the sand banks along the beach I found several colonies of Bank Swallows (*Clivicola riparia*), worthy of notice; for unlike the great colonies in the cliffs about Santa Cruz where several hundred birds nest, there were but half a dozen pairs or so together. The sand banks were about ten feet high and most of the nesting burrows were only placed eight feet or so up, so it was an easy matter to reach them. The tunnels ran from two and a half to four feet in and contained either eggs in various conditions or small young.

We resumed our tramp about noon and some hours later arrived at Scott's Creek. Finding the stage just about to leave and being informed that the road from there on

passed thru a region possessing little of variety or interest, we took passage and that evening found us again in our "bungalow by the sea" at Capitola, our permanent camp from where we made numerous other excursions into the mountains of Santa Cruz.

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