

A COLLECTING TRIP BY WAGON TO EAGLE LAKE, SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS

By HARRY H. SHELDON

ON the morning of June 5, 1905, in company with Jim and Stanley Taylor, both enthusiasts in bird-study, I started from Marin County equipped for a three months trip by wagon to Eagle Lake, California. We purposed to collect some of the birds of the Lake and intervening region, and at the same time to enjoy the wilderness that abounds in the northern counties of California.

We had a trip of four hundred miles before us, a trip which proved to be one of the roughest we had ever experienced. A tedious fourteen hours of navigation up the Sacramento River brought us to the capitol city at 4 A. M. We were soon beyond the outskirts of Sacramento and into the big wheat fields of the valley, where after not more than three miles of travel we took our first specimen, a young Yellow-billed Magpie.

Having secured a permit from the Fish Commissioners we were not so wary of being molested by the "don't shoot here" property owners, that were numerous enough along the county roads of the valley. From the second day on we began to take notes, and the long evenings were spent in putting up skins of birds we had anticipated putting in our cabinets. On the fourth day, after traveling thru the intense heat of the valley, we arrived at a beautiful spot at the base of the "table" mountains, the commencement of the Sierras. Here bird-life was at its height. It seemed like entering a large aviary as we walked thru the thick foliage that grew on either side of the creek. Tree Swallows, Kingbirds, Chats, Gnatcatchers, Woodpeckers, Vireos and others were all nesting in numbers; most nests found either contained young, or eggs advanced in incubation.

The thickets of blackberry vines and thistles seemed to be there but for the purpose of a building-site for the Russet-backed Thrush and the Chat. The latter's pleasing whistle was ever to be heard, and above the din, from the throats of the numerous other birds, we would intently listen, at long intervals, to the melodious notes of the California Cuckoo.

After staying a day in this place, having procured some desirable specimens, we moved on to Chico, our last town south of the Sierras. Twenty miles of travel up the oak-covered hills brought us into the big cool timber; here our trip began in earnest, for nature was seen in all shapes and forms, and the names of the mountain dwellers were daily registered in our note books. The tin-horn song (as it impressed us) of the Red-Breasted Nuthatch was the first conspicuous bird-note we heard upon entering the timber, and close scrutiny would find him clinging a hundred or two feet up, on a dead pine. Chickadees, Tanagers, Kinglets, Warblers and Woodpeckers (many varieties of the latter) were seen in numbers, and on rare occasions a Pileated Woodpecker would give vent to his far-reaching call.

After several mishaps that occurred to us especially on the last fifteen miles to the lake, we passed Papoose Valley, a home of the Wilson Phalarope, Wilson Snipe and numerous other water fowl. Three miles from here thru the gigantic pine timber, traveling on nature's path alone, put us on the shore of Eagle Lake, June 26.

Well was it named, for above us, soaring in circles, was a solitary eagle, with his prominent white head and tail, and his dark body outlined against the proverbial turquoise sky.

Going along the shore for a convenient place to pitch camp, Ducks, Geese and Grebes, many with young, scurried out of range into the tules, that in some places afforded nesting sites for the swimmers. Fifty or a hundred feet from shore where the water in late years has risen to a foot or more on their trunks stand scores of bleached and rotten pines, which nature seemed to provide for the sole use of the bird kingdom. Of all the thousands of limbs on these trees I believe each one had been bored into, pecked at or marked in some manner, by the multitude of Woodpeckers, Sapsuckers and Nuthatches that inhabit the forest about the lake. There was ever to be heard the shrill calls and chatter of these wood-dwellers in supplying food for their young, and many interesting sights were observed from our dinner table in camp.

For more than a month we enjoyed the solitude of this beautiful place, where, after our long trip thru valley and mountains, our time was devoted to hunting and fishing, the former including the pursuit of ornithology which was the main feature.

The following list includes species seen on our travels thru Solano, Sutter, Butte, Plumas and Lassen Counties; the identification of the birds and eggs of uncertainty was completed with the aid of Mr. D. A. Cohen, for which I herewith extend thanks.

Aechmophorus occidentalis. Western Grebe. Seen only at Eagle Lake, but quite common there; young with parents seen frequently. One adult taken and a set of four eggs on June 30.

Podilymbus podiceps. Pied-billed Grebe. Common breeder at the Lake; many young seen. We watched a family feeding close to shore in a growth of water lilies and dead tules; when they saw me, each bird sank like a rock until nothing but his small head protruded. July 17, one adult was taken; and one young in down was taken August 1.

Gavia imber. Common Loon. Fairly numerous at the Lake, but very wary and hard to approach. A pair came close to shore on account of a thunder storm and the female was secured.

Sterna fosteri. Foster Tern. Seen along Feather River, Plumas Co., and fairly numerous at the Lake. Found breeding on the northwest side of Lake twelve miles from our camp. Three birds were taken.

Hydrochelidon surinamensis. Black Tern. Very common at Big Meadows, Plumas Co., Papoose Valley, and Eagle Lake. A few sets of eggs were taken at Big Meadows, June 19. Old birds were taken at Eagle Lake and also immatures; one chick in down taken on June 19 at Big Meadows.

Phalacrocorax dilophus albociliatus. Farallone Cormorant. A large colony were breeding in dead pines on the northwest side of the Lake. One bird was taken. A few pairs were breeding on stumps of pine trees one hundred feet out in the Lake on the east side.

Pelecanus erythrorhynchos. American White Pelican. A large colony was said to be nesting at the northeast end of the Lake. As we had no means of getting to the island where they bred, we failed to visit the birds. Stockmen told us that on one occasion they had killed the nestlings with clubs on account of their becoming so numerous. Many birds were seen by us in the Lake.

Merganser americanus. American Merganser. Two or three broods seen at the Lake, one juvenile taken July 14.

Anas boschas. Mallard. Common at Lake; several old birds were seen with young half grown.

Querquedula cyanoptera. Cinnamon Teal. Several flocks seen at Lake. Three

nests were found in a grain field on the northwest side, with 7, 8, and 10 eggs respectively.

Aythya vallisneria. Canvas-back. One was seen alone swimming about four hundred yards from the shore of Lake.

Aythya collaris. Ring-necked Duck. Many seen in pairs, or old with young; always close to shore and not as shy as other ducks; inhabits the lake margins where many dead trees lie in the water. Often seen perched on limbs of dead pines above water.

Branta canadensis occidentalis. White-cheeked Goose. Common at the Lake but hard to approach; many broods seen about half grown.

Botaurus lentiginosus. American Bittern. One was flushed from a swamp in Papoose Valley, June 28. Heard several times at the Lake.

Ardea herodias. Great Blue Heron. Many were seen on rivers; and two nests with young were noted in pine trees with the colony of Cormorants on the northwest side of the Lake.

Rallus virginianus. Virginia Rail. Plentiful in Big Meadows and Papoose Valley. At the latter place a set of eggs was taken. Nest laid in low tules, composed of dry coverings of tules. Also breeding at Lake in fair numbers.

Fulica americana. American Coot. Breeding in large numbers in Big Meadows, Big Springs, Plumas County, and Eagle Lake.

Phalaropus tricolor. Wilson Phalarope. Seen at Papoose Valley and Big Meadows. Two old and one chick in down taken at the former place July 1.

Gallinago delicata. Wilson Snipe. Seen at Papoose Valley July 1, and at Big Meadows June 19.

Actodromas minutilla. Least Sandpiper. Seen at Lake July 11.

Actitis macularia. Spotted Sandpiper. Fairly common at Lake; one set of four eggs found and young in down taken June 28, July 7 and July 11, all about the same age, three or four days old. Always seen flying along rivers and creeks most anywhere in the Sierras.

Ægialitis vocifera. Killdeer. Breeding commonly at the Lake and in Papoose Valley.

Oreortyx pictus plumiferus. Mountain Partridge. Seen only in Big Meadows, on Feather river, where they breed rather plentifully. Three large broods seen August 11.

Columba fasciata. Band-tailed Pigeon. Two birds were seen sitting on the tip of a tall pine in the mountains above Butte Meadows, August 18. None seen at the Lake.

Zenaidura macroura. Mourning Dove. Seen at intervals thru the Sierras; quite numerous at Big Meadows and occasionally shot at Eagle Lake. A few bred at the northwest end of the Lake three miles from our camp.

Cathartes aura. Turkey Vulture. Common at the Lake.

Accipiter cooperi. Cooper Hawk. A male was taken at the Lake August 4.

Buteo borealis calurus. Western Red-tail. A few pairs breed at the Lake. We found a nest in a pine tree on the northwest side, with two half-grown young, July 7.

Haliaeetus leucocephalus. Bald Eagle. One was seen at the Lake June 26 and 27. Was not seen again after we pitched camp.

Falco sparverius. Sparrow Hawk. A few were seen at the Lake and one shot.

Pandion haliaetus carolinensis. American Osprey. Two nests were found at

the Lake, one containing a young bird about half-grown, July 7. The other nest was found June 29. In this case both birds circled about me as I neared the nest, which was placed on the top of a big dead pine. This nest was a large one, at least three and a half feet in diameter and some of the sticks were like small trees in size. Thinking I would have a set later on, I climbed to it again ten days later, but even tho the birds again circled about me, I was disappointed to find it empty.

Ceryle alcyon. Belted Kingfisher. A pair inhabited the shore of Eagle Lake near our camp. One was taken.

Dryobates villosus hyloscopus. Cabanis Woodpecker. Breeding at Eagle Lake. One taken near Butte Meadows June 15. Seen occasionally thru the Sierras.

Xenopicus albolarvatus. White-headed Woodpecker. First seen at an elevation of 6000 feet on the south side of the Sierras. We watched the birds and discovered a nest in a dead stump about twelve feet from the ground. This contained four young about three days old, and one addled egg. While we were around the nest the old birds stayed about one hundred yards away well up in the pines and seemed not at all anxious about their young. The White-headed were by far the commonest of the woodpeckers thru the Sierras and at Eagle Lake. Up to June 22 seven nests had been found, each containing young. Some juveniles and old birds were taken.

Picoides arcticus. Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker. Juveniles were seen at the Lake and an adult male and female taken July 14. A male was taken August 17 on Buck Creek about ten miles from Big Meadows, Plumas Co.

Sphyrapicus ruber. Red-breasted Sapsucker. Common thru the Sierras and at Eagle Lake. July 27 two juveniles and one adult male were taken.

Ceophlæus pileatus abieticola. Northern Pileated Woodpecker. Very scarce and hard to approach. A nest was found containing young almost full grown. This was located in a large dead pine in the dense forest about ten miles from Big Meadows. The nest was located by hearing one of the old birds hammering, which sounded as tho a house was under construction. When I found the nest which was about 75 feet up, I saw a large crimson head protruding, and after I threw up several rocks the bird flew out and was shot. This was one of the young birds, fully feathered, but the plumage was soft and not as bright as the adults. Several attempts were made to make the others leave the nest, but without success. I was about to leave when the old male flew down close and was taken. Also the female and one more young the next day, four in all; two were left, being able to care for themselves. One more adult was taken about five miles from Eagle Lake near Papoose Valley.

Melanerpes torquatus. Lewis Woodpecker. First seen at Big Meadows, Plumas County, where it breeds. Common resident at Papoose Valley; not so numerous at Lake. Most always seen in open glades where there were plenty of grasshoppers. Four taken in July.

Colaptes cafer collaris. Red-shafted Flicker. Few breeding at the Lake.

Phalænoptilus nuttalli. Poor-will. Heard near Papoose Valley and at Eagle Lake.

Chordeiles virginianus henryi. Western Nighthawk. Common at the Lake where a male and female were taken.

Chaetura vauxii. Vaux Swift. Seen at Eagle Lake July 3 when four were flying over camp. Common at Duck Lake 18 miles from Big Meadows on headwaters of Feather River. Five were secured August 8 at the latter-named place.

Stellula calliope. Calliope Hummingbird. Seen in the mountains near Big Meadows and at Papoose Valley. One taken at Eagle Lake on the northwest side, July 5, and one of a pair seen at Papoose Valley taken July 1. Very rare.

Tyrannus verticalis. Arkansas Kingbird. This was a common breeder at Eagle Lake, where it was numerous along shore in dead pines.

Contopus richardsonii. Western Wood Pewee. Occasionally seen in Sierra Nevada Mountains, and a nest found in large pine tree at the Lake July 12. Not common at the Lake.

Empidonax wrightii. Wright Flycatcher. Two sets of four eggs with nests were taken near Butte Meadows June 14. The nests were very beautifully constructed; each was placed in a manzanita bush, and composed of bark fibers of the same, so as to resemble the surroundings. Birds were seen at the Lake.

Cyanocitta stelleri frontalis. Blue-fronted Jay. Common at the Lake; two taken.

Nucifraga columbiana. Clarke Nutcracker. A few flocks seen at Eagle Lake; very wary and hard to approach; only one taken. Always seen in small open glades, surrounded by tall pines, in hot dry country in lava beds. Their chief diet seemed to be grasshoppers and juniper berries.

Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus. Yellow-headed Blackbird. First seen at Big Meadows where they breed in large numbers. Eggs and birds taken. A flock of a dozen birds were seen flying at Papoose Valley. Breeding at Eagle Lake on northwest side, 12 miles from camp, in open country in a great growth of tules.

Agelaius gubernator californicus. California Bi-colored Blackbird. Breeding at the Lake.

Sturnella neglecta. Western Meadowlark. One seen in small meadow surrounded by dense forest and far from any open country. Have never seen one in such a place before. Several were seen at the northwest side of the Lake.

Euphagus cyanocephalus. Brewer Blackbird. Several seen at edge of timber at the Lake. Altho no nests were found they must have been breeding, as young birds were frequently seen.

Hesperiphona vespertina montana. Western Evening Grosbeak. Two pairs were taken on Buck Creek, Plumas County, June 17; each pair taken at a different time on this date. No others were seen.

Carpodacus cassini. Cassin Purple Finch. Seen first at Buck Creek. Breeding at Papoose Valley, and seen at the Lake. Taken at all three places.

Loxia curvirostra bendirei. Sierra Crossbill. Two large flocks were seen at Eagle feeding in Maple trees; twenty-two birds were taken, varying in plumage.

Spinus pinus. Pine Siskin. Seen at Eagle Lake in the latter part of June and July.

Spizella socialis arizonæ. Western Chipping Sparrow. Seen thru the Sierras and at Eagle Lake. A nest with two eggs was found at an elevation of 5000 feet in a greasewood bush two feet from ground, June 25, three miles from Papoose Valley.

Spizella breweri. Brewer Sparrow. Breeding at the Lake; a few sets taken July 6 and 7. Nests built in sage brush close to ground.

Junco hyemalis thurberi. Sierra Junco. Breeding at Lake, where three sets were taken. First set taken June 12 and 14; last set found July 11, the last egg being laid on the day of discovery. Birds taken.

Passerella iliaca megarhyncha. Thick-billed Sparrow. Breeding at Lake. Nine birds taken.

Oreospiza chlorura. Green-tailed Towhee. Seen thru the Sierras quite commonly and breeding at the Lake. Five females and two males taken.

Piranga ludoviciana. Western Tanager. Fairly numerous at the Lake and thru the Sierras. Male and female taken.

Progne subis hesperia. Western Martin. Fairly common at the Lake. Juveniles and adults taken.

Petrochelidon lunifrons. Cliff Swallow. Breeding at the Lake.

Hirundo erythrogaster. Barn Swallow. Breeding at Lake.

Iridoprocne bicolor. Tree Swallow. Breeding at the Lake in dead pines.

Riparia riparia. Bank Swallow. Uncommon at the Lake.

Stelgidopteryx serripennis. Rough-winged Swallow. At the Lake, uncommon.

Lanius ludovicianus gambeli. California Shrike. Seen at the Lake.

Vireo solitarius cassinii. Cassin Vireo. Seen at an elevation of 6000 feet in the Sierras, but not observed at the Lake.

Helminthophila celata lutescens. Lutescent Warbler. Breeding along brushy creeks thru the Sierras and at Eagle Lake.

Dendroica auduboni. Audubon Warbler. Taken thru the Sierras where they were fairly numerous, and at Eagle Lake. Young seen June 14.

Dendroica occidentalis. Hermit Warbler. Very rare; two seen on Buck Creek, Plumas County, one August 16 and one June 17; both were taken.

Geothlypis tolmiei. Tolmie Warbler. Seen thru the Sierras. Taken at Buck Creek June 18, and seen with young at the Lake.

Icteria virens longicauda. Long-tailed Chat. Common thru the Sacramento Valley and Sierras. Breeding at the Lake.

Cinclus mexicanus. American Dipper. One shot on the creek in Butte Meadows. Another seen on Susanville River, and a pair seen on Buck Creek, Plumas County.

Oroscoptes montanus. Sage Thrasher. Breeding in sage brush at the Lake on the northwest side. Nine birds were taken July 8, and one set of three fresh eggs; nest placed in sage brush six inches from ground.

Nannus hiemalis pacificus. Western Winter Wren. One seen on Buck Creek, August 16.

Telmatodytes palustris plesius. Western Marsh Wren. Breeding at Eagle Lake; quite common, and several empty nests found. One bird taken.

Certhia familiaris zelotes. Sierra Creeper. Fairly numerous thru the Sierras, and breeding at the Lake. Four taken.

Sitta carolinensis aculeata. Slender-billed Nuthatch. Breeding thru the Sierras and at Eagle Lake; fairly common, and birds taken.

Sitta canadensis. Red-breasted Nuthatch. Breeding thru the Sierras and at the Lake; comparatively numerous.

Sitta pygmaea. Pigmy Nuthatch. Breeding thru the Sierras and at the Lake. Most in evidence of the three species and seen more plentifully at the Lake than elsewhere. Adults and juveniles taken from July 12 to August 1.

Parus gambeli. Mountain Chickadee. Common thru the Sierras, the first being noted at an elevation of 4000 feet; several nests found, all with young. Very close sitters; on one occasion, where the nest was located in a stump about two feet from ground, the bird would not stay flushed and would fly back to the hole with mad chatterings. A few birds taken.

Regulus satrapa olivaceus. Western Golden-crowned Kinglet. Fairly common at the Lake; one was taken.

Regulus calendula. Ruby-crowned Kinglet. One seen and shot near Papoose Valley. Rare.

Myadestes townsendii. Townsend Solitaire. First seen in the timber near Big Meadows. Breeding at Lake. A nest was found near Papoose Valley with two young and one addled egg.

Hyalocichla guttata sequoiensis. Sierra Hermit Thrush. Very rare thru the Sierras. One taken near Papoose Valley July 1.

Merula migratoria propinqua. Western Robin. Common thru the Sierras, and breeding at the Lake in quantities. Juveniles taken, and set of four eggs found.

Sialia mexicana occidentalis. Western Bluebird. Juveniles taken June 12 on the Chico Mountains. Breeding at Lake.

Sialia arctica. Mountain Bluebird. Juveniles and adults taken at Eagle Lake. Birds fairly numerous.

A NEW BREEDING BIRD FOR COLORADO:

THE CASSIN SPARROW (*PEUCÆA CASSINI*) NESTING NEAR DENVER

By L. J. HERSEY and R. B. ROCKWELL

ON July 14, 1907, while working over the prairie at Barr, Adams County, Colorado, about twenty miles north-east of Denver, in quest of nests of the Mountain Plover, we were fortunate enough to flush an inconspicuous, small brown bird from a remarkably well concealed nest almost under our feet. A careful scrutiny of the *Gutierrezia*, or small rabbit-brush, from which the bird had flushed revealed the nest sunken into the dense foliage of the bush and totally invisible from all points except from straight above.

The nest was built among the closely interwoven stems and branches of the plant, the bottom of the nest resting on the ground but not sunken into it. It was a neat structure when supported by the numerous stems, but when removed proved to be rather flimsy in construction and very fragile. It was composed entirely of dry grass blades and stems, weed stems and bark, and vegetable fibers, lined with fine grass blades and a very few fine grass stems. The nest was unusually deeply cupped, with the sides built perpendicularly and slightly rimmed in. It measured as follows: outside, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in height, 4 inches in long diameter, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in short diameter; inside, depth of nest cavity from rim of nest $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, short diameter 2 inches, and long diameter $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The circumference of the inside of the rim was slightly less than that of the cavity where the eggs lay. The rim of the nest was not symmetrical but varied in height and thickness to conform to the branches among which it was placed, and altho built near the outer edge of the bush was supported and concealed on all sides by the spreading branches of the plant, which was about 10 inches high and 18 inches in diameter.

The bush in which the nest was built was located on a small knoll about 75