

HUACHUCA NOTES

By F. C. WILLARD

DURING a number of seasons spent collecting in the Huachuca Mountains, in Cochise County, Arizona, I have noticed a great difference in the altitude at which various species were to be found nesting on the eastern and the western slopes.

A description of the range may be desirable to understand the difference referred to. The main ridge extends from south-east to north-west. On the east a flat mesa extends from the San Pedro river to the foot of the mountains, which rise rather abruptly but uniformly from this point to the summit of the main ridge some 5000 feet higher up. The mean altitude of this ridge is 9000 feet. The average distance is about seven miles by trail. Several lateral ridges extend toward the east nearly to the mouths of the canyons and at a height little less than that of the main ridge. These laterals are the partition walls between a number of deep and cliff-lined canyons.

Going over the divide onto the western slope the whole character the mountains changes. The descent is very abrupt for the first two miles, after which it is gradual, ending in a number of low hills and rolling mesas, barren on the ridges, with a scattering growth of oaks on the slopes. There are no lateral ridges of any height on this side and the canyons are more shallow and more poorly watered, with a growth of trees scanty in comparison with that of the eastern slope. The growth for the first two miles down from the ridge is practically all scrub oak brush so thick that it is impossible to walk thru without cutting a trail. This zone is very limited in bird life. Black-throated Gray Warblers nest here at 8000 feet, while on the east they are not in any numbers over 7000 feet. Roadrunners nest in these thickets and are practically unknown on the east above the foothills, altitude 5000 feet. Arizona Juncos and Mountain Towhees complete the list of birds nesting here but they are found also at the same altitude on the eastern slope and on the summit.

On top of the main ridge and on the high laterals on the east, Chestnut-backed Bluebirds, Western Robins and Rocky Mountain Nuthatches nest. They are absent from the eastern side but are even more common at 4000 feet on the western slope than on the summit.

The Violet-green Swallow nests on the summit and down to 7000 feet on the east. It does not nest at all on the west. The Lucy Warbler nests commonly up to 4500 feet on the west, but I have no record of its nesting within eight miles of the foothills on the San Pedro side.

Plumbeous Vireos nest at 4000 feet on the west and not under 6000 feet on the east. The Stephens Vireo is present in a few localities at about 6500 feet on the east and is entirely absent from the west.

The Brewer Sparrow nests at 4000 feet on the west and is entirely absent on the east. Long-crested Jays nest commonly at 6000 feet on the east but only a few pairs on the west, and those right close to the ridge, not lower than 7000 feet.

Desert Sparrow Hawks are quite common on the west nesting in hollows in the sycamores along the canyon bottoms. They also nest on the summits of the ridges, but none at all in the canyons on the eastern side.

Western Nighthawks nest on the flat mesas between the canyons on the western slope but are rarely seen within several miles of the mountains on the San Pedro side.

Buff-breasted Flycatchers are found at 4500 feet on the west and not under 6500 on the east.

The Rivoli Hummingbird nests from the summit down to 5500 feet on the east but not at all on the west.

These are a few facts as I have noted them but I have no theory to offer as to why they are so in any case. An exhaustive study of the food supply might explain it; but superficial observations in that line have afforded no clue. Neither do climatic conditions. It is still an interesting subject for one to speculate upon.

Tombstone, Arizona.

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

A Striking Example of Protective Coloration.—The accompanying photo of an adult Rocky Mountain Screech Owl standing at the entrance of its nesting cavity illustrates more forcibly than any description, the remarkable similarity between many birds and their typical characteristic environment.

In this case the soft grays and browns of the owl's plumage blend perfectly with the lights and shadows upon the grayish tree trunk which forms the background, and this picture further answers the question so often asked as to why so many observers never see a screech owl during their woodland tramps. The only tell-tale bit of color in the make-up of these little fellows is their brilliant yellow eyes, but as the latter are nearly always closed during the day, this does not interfere with the perfection of their concealment to any great extent.

No better proof of the effectiveness of this protective coloration may be had than that the ever vigilant arch villain of the woods, the Magpie, seldom spies this esteemed enemy of his, as he sits stone still but in plain sight; but when from any cause the owl is forced to take wing he is immediately the center of a noisy mob of Magpies. But as soon as he is again able to assume his tree-like statuesque pose his tormentors seem at a loss to understand his sudden transformation and quietly depart in search of more profitable villiany.—R. B. ROCKWELL, *Denver, Colorado.*



ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCREECH OWL: AN EXAMPLE OF SPECIAL PROTECTIVE RESEMBLANCE

The Bryant Hybrid Hummingbird.—In *The Auk* for 1907, p. 312, Thayer and Bangs record and describe a hybrid hummer from the Bryant collection of mounted California hummingbirds. They also refer to my note entitled "Broad-tailed Hummingbird in California" and suggest that the specimen recorded by me was really the hybrid now described by them. I have no doubt that they are correct in this as well in the correction of the date as given in my note. I published the record without having seen the specimen, depending upon the verbal notes fur-