

always numerous, and conspicuous among them were several partial albinos. Black Phoebes (*Sayornis nigricans*) and Ash-throated Flycatchers (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) make their homes in an old lime kiln. California Bush-tits (*Psaltriparus minimus californicus*) and Black-tailed Gnatcatchers (*Polioptila californica*) are sometimes seen in the brush; and a frightened Road-runner (*Geococcyx californianus*) occasionally appears. The high rocks serve as good lookout points for stray hawks that happen to pass by that way. In the early days the Turkey Vultures (*Cathartes aura septentrionalis*) made their homes on this old peak but now they only soar around the hill as if to inspect the work of man. Of course hummingbirds and other birds found in the valley are found at the base of the mountain.

Spring is now here again and as I write these notes I feel the longing to visit the birds in their haunts and I am hoping that I may secure some more information concerning the White-throated Swifts on Slover Mountain.

Colton, California; March 1, 1909.

SOME NOTES FROM FRESNO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

By JOHN G. TYLER

THE Pigmy Nuthatch (*Sitta pygmæa*) is not an uncommon bird in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of this county, but only once during the past eight years has the writer noted its presence here in the San Joaquin Valley.

About two miles south of Clovis is an irrigation canal locally known as the Gould Ditch. Numerous ragged old willows and occasionally a cottonwood are found along the banks, sometimes close together and in other places farther apart but forming practically the only large trees to be found in the immediate vicinity in any numbers. Among this double fringe of trees, with water and good feeding grounds near at hand, many of our birds find suitable nesting places, and here during migration one stands the best chance of seeing some straggler from other regions.

On the first day of November, 1903, while making my way along this canal a Pigmy Nuthatch was seen working over a large cottonwood tree. When first observed the bird was about fifteen feet from the ground and upon seeing me it dodged behind the tree for a moment giving me a chance to approach unobserved, an opportunity that I quickly took advantage of, finally pausing not over eight feet from the base of the tree and remaining motionless. Soon the bird appeared again working around the tree in a sort of spiral fashion, head downward. Nearly half an hour was spent in watching this little visitor from the Sierras in its search for food. So long as I remained quiet it seemingly did not notice my presence, but a sudden movement would cause it to fly to the upper branches only to begin again its up-hill downward climb evidently not having exhausted the food possibilities of that tree; and when I finally went away it was still at work.

The town of Clovis can boast of an elevation of about 340 feet and the nearest foot-hills with their scattering oaks are at least ten miles away, while the heavier timber such as this species generally frequents is not nearer than twice that distance; so the little slate-colored nuthatch seemed to have wandered far from its usual haunts.

Another species for which I have but one record is the Spotted Owl (*Syrnium occidentale*). The ninth day of March, 1908, found me in search of a much needed nest of the Pacific Horned Owl. The place selected was one of the canyons leading down from the hills east of Clovis. A small creek followed the windings of this canyon, its course marked by the usual tall sycamores and cottonwoods with a few willows scattered along at intervals. I knew there were a number of old nests to be found in this canyon and had hopes of finding a pair of the big owls occupying one of them but had failed to rouse an owl of any kind after some hours spent in throwing rocks and sticks until finally, upon entering the upper end of a small but rather dense grove of cottonwoods, a large owl flew from a tree nearby and disappeared. So certain it seemed that my efforts were to be rewarded that a search was begun at once for some old nest which I was sure, when found, would reveal the mate of the bird that had been disturbed. In a very short time a nest was found and almost at the same time my owl was seen sitting motionless on a branch almost directly overhead, and hardly more than twenty feet away, so that only a glance was needed to assure me that the bird was not a horned owl. The round head and absence of ear tufts would alone have made its identity certain, but when I had passed directly under the bird and noted the white-spotted head and neck there seemed no room for doubt, as, with the small glass I carried and with which I had hoped to detect the presence of a downy feather on some old nest, I brought the bird down apparently almost to arms' length and watched it for some moments as it sat quietly on the branch giving me a fine view of its almost chocolate colored upper parts against which the large round white spots were rather conspicuous, while no less distinct were the heavy black bars and blotches on its whitish underparts.

After watching the bird for some time the climb was begun to the nest near which it sat, but which proved to be unoccupied, as was also the only other one in the grove; so after failing to find the bird's mate I left the vicinity and did not return again until April 4 when, late in the evening, a friend and myself made camp about half a mile from the grove. The following morning we made a rather hasty search for the owl but failed to find any sign of it and the two nests were still unoccupied. During the night, however, I several times heard, far down the canyon, the hooting of what was probably a Spotted Owl as the notes were different from those of any horned owl that I ever heard. At times they somewhat resembled the latter and again sounded like the far-away deep baying of a hound. Heard in the stillness of the night the notes were rather weird altho somewhat mellowed by distance. I do not know that the bird was breeding anywhere in that region, but its occurrence there in March and probable presence near the same place almost a month later would seem to indicate that it might have been.

As before stated, there were numerous old nests scattered along the creek for miles, and only a few hundred yards from the grove were the nests of a small colony of Magpies; so there were probably plenty of suitable nesting sites to be found, but at least a two days' search would have been required to cover the ground thoroughly and I was compelled to give up the quest. At some future time, however, I hope to be able to give an authentic record of the breeding in this county of the Spotted Owl.

The following record is given to show the persistency with which some birds will continue their attempts at nidification even in the face of most discouraging circumstances. It also proves that the theory of second and third sets consisting of a smaller or the same number of eggs will not always hold good.

During the last few days in March, 1902, a pair of California Shrikes (*Lanius*

ludovicianus gambeli) completed a nest in a large, ragged, old willow, and from this nest I took a set of five eggs on April 8; incubation begun, as was proven by the fact that the set had been left for two or three days and had not increased in number.

By April 23 these birds had six more slightly incubated eggs in a nest not over sixty feet from the first one. It might seem that after collecting this set the birds should not have been molested again; but nevertheless a close watch was kept on them, and the 12th of May is the date on which their third nest was found to contain the largest set of shrike eggs the writer has ever seen, and this set which numbered eight was added to my collection. The experiment was becoming interesting, and as the sets were growing larger I seemed in a fair way to get a record breaker if the birds did not become discouraged and give up nest building for the season. This, however, they seemingly had no intention of doing and moved back to the same tree in which their first nest was built. This fourth nest was apparently just as carefully made as any of the earlier ones and yielded seven eggs to my cabinet on May 31. Seeing that the charm was broken, and feeling somewhat ashamed of my record, I resolved not to molest them again when they, with a perseverance that deserved its reward, began the work of constructing a fifth nest. It has always been a source of regret that circumstances did not permit a visit to this last nest until a day or two after the young had left it, so the number of young they finally succeeded in raising was not ascertained.

Now should any one accuse me of egg-hoggishness I am willing to plead guilty to the charge, but can add that the experiment has never been repeated, even upon a bird that is considered so great a rascal that it is one of the few species to which our State affords no protection.

The last day in February, 1902, it was my good fortune to see a part albino male Brewer Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*). The bird was feeding with a large flock on some plowed ground and I had a good view of it at no great distance. The greater part of each wing was white and the bird was quite as conspicuous among his dark fellows as is the occasional Yellow-head that is sometimes seen in these winter flocks of blackbirds.

The only breeding colony of this species that I have been able to discover was at Shaver Lake, in the Sierras, at an elevation of about 5300 feet. During the latter part of May, 1908, about twenty nests were found, and there were no doubt more. They were all built in the old dead pine stubs standing in the lake. Some were placed in deserted Flicker excavations, others behind loose bark or on the ragged, broken-off tops of the stubs, while a few were built against the body of the stub and supported by one or two horizontal branches. The only nest that was examined was found on May 27, and was built in an old excavation about three feet above the surface of the water. The bird flew from the hole, and the nest, which was scarcely more than a circle of dry grass stems lined with rootlets, contained four heavily incubated eggs. The cavity was so shallow that the head of the bird that occupied it was about on a level with the lower part of the entrance.

The region about Shaver proved to be a most interesting one to me on account of the presence of several birds that one would hardly expect to find. One afternoon, while endeavoring to explore a willow-grown swampy area at the head of the lake, I came upon a small colony of Bi-colored Blackbirds (*Agelaius gubernator californicus*) all in very bright plumage. One male especially was unusually handsome and seemed anxious to display his colors to the best advantage, frequently making short flights into the air only to return to the place from which he started. While balancing on a partly-submerged log listening to the blackbirds

a chance glance upward revealed a Turkey Vulture drifting slowly across the sky. It almost seemed that once again I was down in the valley prowling about in the willows and brush along the Gould Ditch; yet I knew of half a dozen nests of Sierra Juncos within a few hundred feet of the lake and only a few moments before had been examining several nests of Western Robins in some small evergreens near the shore.

While standing there in the warm sunshine listening to the characteristic "h'-wak-a-ree" of the blackbirds I was suddenly reminded that the San Joaquin Valley, with its vineyards and canals, was many miles away, for from a clump of small pines nearby burst the harsh scolding notes of a Blue-fronted Jay. A moment or two later the soft but rather melancholy call of a Plumed Quail floated down to me from a pine-clad hillside.

Fresno, California.

THE MOURNING DOVE (*ZENAIIDURA CAROLINENSIS*) IN CAPTIVITY

By E. W. GIFFORD

ON February 15, 1908, I purchased two of these beautiful doves, said to be cock and hen respectively. The smaller of the two, which I took to be the hen, was without a tail when I received her, but soon began growing one. The tail grew very fast, a difference in length being distinguishable daily. The birds were confined to a small summer-house, about five feet in diameter, until about the middle of April. About March 11 they began making their mournful cooing notes.

On April 12 I placed these birds in an aviary with a ground area of four hundred square feet. They seemed quite delighted with the change, and immediately went to feeding with several Barbary Turtle Doves in the short grass. About a week later I saw the smaller of the two, which I had thought was a female, in the act of cooing. Then I awakened to the fact that I had two cock birds. Had I been more familiar with the species I should not have been deceived by the difference in size.

In May and June they cooed incessantly during the day, and often in the middle of the night, especially if it was moonlight. It was also along about this time that the two males were seen fighting in the evenings. Both were in beautiful fresh plumage.

On June 16 I purchased two more of these birds, both proving to be females. Inside of three or four days, one of them became very much attached to one of the cock birds, and it was amusing to see the unladylike manner in which she followed him about and shook her wings. Occasionally he would give chase, only stopping to coo when very close, and that very seldom. The two males would at this date pursue each other with great viciousness.

By June 24 the two females had mated with the two males. At this time one pair had a nest on top of a box placed in a peach tree; it consisted merely of a few sticks and straws. An egg was laid in it on June 23.

The other pair had a nest on a shingle nailed on the beam of a board fence on the west side of the aviary. The males did all the carrying of nesting material in both cases, the females usually sitting on or near the nest. When selecting the nesting site, the male would go to a likely place and squat down, raising the tail and lowering