

not, I am inclined to think that probably very many more of our common birds feed fresh food than we have been led to believe. It seems to me that it is worth the while of every observant bird student to give particular attention to this object of field observation, that we may have more knowledge on the subject.

ROUGE ET NOIR

By W. LEON DAWSON

MAY days lack one of being "so rare as a day in June"; but if oölogists had their way there would be sixty-one of them insted of thirty-one. Yet the luck of the oölogist is as variable as that of the proverbial fisherman, and certain favored hours are likely to stand out in memory from a background of profitless days. I am no believer in astrology, and do not court the sweet influence of the stars, but if anyone will explain to me why a body can find half a dozen choice birds' nests hand running one day and then hunt over the same sort of cover the day following only to return empty-handed, I—well, I will pay respectful attention. "Luck?" Yes, but what is luck? A mere name for our ignorance of causes. "Providence" is scarcely better in this connection, however devoutly uttered. All is Providence in a large, true sense, but we show disrespect to the Almighty if we charge him too strictly with interference among a mass of still unknown second causes. I think the explanation is rather psychological. We are keyed up to respond to certain impressions on certain days, and a "run of luck" follows. We go thru the same motions on a subsequent occasion, but we respond to different stimuli. Our eyes are veiled and our ears muffled to the sights and sounds that we are supposed to be interested in, nay, the very ones that we are striving desperately to interest ourselves in. The difference is inside us where we can't get at it. After all, then, perhaps "luck" is a good enough name for this variable and unbiddable psychological factor.

But it was in no mood of pale philosophizing that I dropt off the first morning trolley at Clover Creek, south of Tacoma, on the 12th of May last. A distant Chickadee "prospect" gave direction and excuse to this morning's jaunt, but there was no hurry. A delicious fragrance of the prairie air and the singing of birds in the fir groves invited dalliance. The Russet-backed Thrush (*Hylocichla ustulata*), belated, had just reported in from the South and was trying the copses with soft quits. A Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*), also days behind the schedule, piticked languidly. Warblers of rare breeds, chiefly Audubons (*Dendroica auduboni*), Black-throated Grays (*D. nigrescens*), and Hermits (*D. occidentalis*), lispt from the tree-tops; while one gorgeous Townsend (*D. townsendi*) came fluttering down the sides of a great green spire for close inspection. Within the grove itself Hammond (*Empidonax hammondi*) and Western Flycatchers (*E. difficilis*) gave a comparative trial of their different notes. That of *hammondi* is smart and slightly querulous, in contrast with the lazier, drawling note of *difficilis*. Moreover, it is always accented on the last syllable, *sewick'* or *cleotip'*, whereas that of *difficilis* begins rather explosively and continues with a musical sibilant drawl, terminating sharply but without accent, *psss' wit, psui' iut, or swee' ut*.

Our woods are never noisy like those of the East. Most of the vocal offerings, indeed, are all too modest. But we do not complain. It may be the fact that most of our species "catalog high" that makes us content. Certainly the sense of high

quality in our birds is ineluctable, even in those who know them best. So much of mystery still surrounds many of them, so much of aloofness characterizes the entire lives of some of them, that a mere list of their names stirs the blood and teases the oölogical imagination. For instance, besides the species already mentioned, all breeding locally, I heard at this time American Crossbill, Western Evening Grosbeak, Cassin Vireo, Anthony Vireo, Western Winter Wren, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Tawny Creeper, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Western Golden-crowned Kinglet, Macgillivray Warbler, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Northwestern Saw-whet Owl. (Has any oölogist personally collected all of these? J. H. Bowles, working in this section for thirteen years, has come the nearest to it, but he is still four numbers shy.)

At 8 a. m. I shook off the dreamy mood and set out thru a level bit of woodland for the distant Chickadee's nest. Almost immediately a scrub oak (*Quercus garryana*), killed by the shade of the more rapidly growing fir trees, obstructed my path with a vision for which I have been toiling for years. A bark scale, sharply sprung from the parent stem of the oak tree, here some five inches in diameter, was fairly bursting with its oölogical secret. Anchored at the top but free at the bottom, its wrinkled skirts were not ample enough to conceal the copious twigs with which a pair of Tawny Creepers (*Certhia f. occidentalis*) had filled its hollow. These twigs bristled out in every direction, like a Russian peasant's whiskers, and challenged the offices which I was not slow to fulfill. The nest was barely within reach from the ground, and at the first cautious introduction of a finger, the female flitted. I felt something soft and downy; I fell back, and, believe me, nearly fainted. Young! After all these years! But no; it could not be. It was too absurd! I would try again. The soft downy things proved to be catkins bedded in the broad brim of the nest (for the nesting cavity must needs be completely filled). The nest proper was in the center of the mass, deeply cupt ($1\frac{3}{4}$ inches deep), and held four eggs, well advanced in incubation. The semilune formed by the top of the nest, i. e., the shape of the available cavity in cross-section, was five inches from point to point, and two and a quarter in thickness, while the depth of the accumulated material was ten inches. The birds' tastes were quite indiscriminate, since the inside of the cup alone displays the following materials: cowhair (red and black and white), feathers, horsehair, moss, fine bark, macerated weed-stems, chips, fir needles, bits of white cloth, ravelings, string, cocoons, spider-egg cases, catkins, moth-wings, and vegetable fiber.

Half an hour was consumed in packing away the nest and eggs. Five minutes later an excited Chickadee, a Chestnut-back (*Penthestes rufescens*), emerged from a tiny hole, "made by one of the Cerambycid beetles", at a height of ten feet in an old fir stub. The tree had been struck only from force of habit, and no attention would have been paid to results, had it not been for the sharp wing-burst of the flushing bird. The nest contained six eggs, fresh, as the event proved, but so blackened by contact with the mother's breast as to look quite unpromising. Since the advent of the fire-spreading animal, man, the birds have been obliged to accept charred stumps as part of the order of nature, and the contact of feathers and charcoal cuts no inconsiderable figure in local oölogy. Fortunately the eggs could be washed, if the bird couldn't. The nest was a simple affair of moss and rabbit fur, set in a tapering cavity, with its brim only two inches below the entrance. But for all it was so simple, some ten minutes were spent in digging it out, and as many more at the base of the stub where the packing of eggs had to be laboriously rearranged.

My task completed, I rose, stretcht, yawned,—and the old *Grouse's* nerves gave out. Not ten feet from the stub on which I had been working, a Sooty

Grouse (*Dendragapus obscurus fuliginosus*) had been sitting on nine eggs. She had allowed me to pass within four feet of her in approaching the stub; she had seen me gesticulating strangely, overhead, and she had not budged. But that yawn! Evidently there are limits to Dendragapine patience!

A little fracas with the Crows (*C. b. hesperis*) was probably responsible for the next bit of luck, which occurred half a mile farther along on my halting course. The black sentries had discovered the bird-man slipping across a bit of clearing and had hurled prompt anathemas at his devoted head. The excitement had died down somewhat when the fourth miracle happened. The Creeper, dear, gossiping soul, the "me too" of the lesser bird-world, had evidently popt off her eggs for a moment to see what was doing. Her curiosity satisfied, she bethought herself of duty and—I accidentally caught her with the tail of my eye just as she lost herself to view by a sidling motion upon the blackened face of a fir tree. There was nothing at that distance to suggest a nesting site, and I should have past the tree a dozen times without noticing that a portion of the bark, some four feet from the ground, was slightly sprung, or that there was room behind a certain crack for a bird to disappear. Only when the tree was viewed from a particular angle could the aperture of about one inch be observed on one side of a section of bark otherwise adherent; and only close inspection could have discovered the nest in its snug quarters. An inquiring finger laid on the edge of the nest brought out the occupant, who affected the greatest surprize at my presence; but only the careful removal of a square foot of hev'y bark disclosed the four tiny eggs, which occupied the depths of the hair-lined inner cup. Of these eggs one was a runt, handsomely ringed about the smaller end and of about half the size of one of the others, being in fact a little smaller than a Rufous Hummer's egg (measuring .43×.36 inches, as against .50×.33 for the Hummer. The remainder of the set averaged .57×.45, while the average for the first set found was .63×.45). Near the larger end of this midget egg was a small contusion, undoubtedly made by the bird—a claw-hole perhaps—altho the underlying membrane was unbroken.

This bird, by the way, must indeed have been a chronic gossip, for her eggs were all infertile, and the contents of two of them were so badly hardened as to require soaking before removal. Her narrow quarters may conceivably have caused her some discomfort, for the maximum space between trunk and bark was one and three-eighths inches,—so narrow, indeed, that the wood itself was allowed to do duty for two sides of the inner receptacle.

By this time the collector was embarrast with riches. My modest thought at the outset had been to take along enough paper and thread and cotton to take care of the anticipated Chickadee's nest. When I blundered upon the Tawny Creeper's nest, that would, of course, be *the* find of the day; so the nest was wrapt very carefully in tissue and thred, and the eggs were double-wrapt in cotton. The Chickadee, fortunately, made light demands upon my resources; but the Grouse—Ho! Ho! that was frankly impossible! The nest did get the last sheet of tissue paper, but the eggs were gathered up, Castle Garden fashion, in a handkerchief, and cached under the first convenient log. The advent of the second Creeper's nest was serious. There was simply nothing for it but to let it go bare with the last wisp of thred. When a Shufeldt Junco flusht incontinently in the woods beyond, I groaned—but shouted for joy when callow young were found in place of eggs.

The real goal of the trip was an old oak stub, sticking up out of the water of a forest-girt lake, where I had seen a Chestnut-backt Chickadee working in a knot-hole some two weeks previously. I made my way out gingerly over the driftwood

and hit the stump a resounding thwack—but there was no answer. No Chickadee responded to rude and repeated summonses. Violet-green Swallows there were, however, darting about the top of the stub, and altho it was early in the season for them, it seemed worth while to investigate. The stump was some twelve feet high by one and one-half feet in diameter and destitute of bark,—as slick as grease and impossible to climb outright. So sticks of various lengths were cut and leaned against it. By and by the Chickadee's fortitude failed her and she emerged, chattering disgustedly.

This nest was unusual. An old knot-hole about eight feet up had been re-workt by the birds, and gave access to a large cavity half filled with rotten punk. This cavity the Chickadees had undertaken to fill up to the level of the entrance with mosses, cow-hair, and other soft substances. The nest proper was, therefore, deeply cupt in the center of a level expanse of this material some seven inches in diameter, and the six fresh eggs which it contained had quite the handsomest frame in the annals of Chickadee art.

The Violet-green Swallows had nothing to offer beyond a feather-lined cavity. Here was luck enough, however, for one stub. When the Chickadee's eggs were stowed away in the bursting can, and the homeward course begun, it was high noon—the meridian of a red letter day. Science? Not a bit of it! Luck! Sheer luck, all of it!

But to show that fortune has no favorits in the bird business, I must epitomize another day. On the 21st of May I returned to this same range filled with the highest anticipations, and prepared to camp, if need be, for a week. Weather conditions were perfect and myself apparently in the highest spirits. Work began at 4 a. m. and the quest was pursued unremittingly till 5 p. m. Hermit Warblers abounded and Black-throated Grays challenged from every other tree, with lesser breeds in proportion—yet never an egg did I find, and I went home disgusted at the end of a black day. Psychological conditions? Perhaps. "Luck", certainly. Brothers, we are gamblers. *Rouge et noir!*

A SUMMER TRIP TO THE NORTHERN SANTA BARBARA ISLANDS

By G. WILLETT

ON the evening of June 4, 1910, a party of Cooper Club members, composed of V. W. Owen, Antonin Jay, J. S. Appleton and the writer, left San Pedro on the 32-foot launch "Niedra", Capt. E. R. Hall, for a two weeks' trip to the four northern islands of the Santa Barbara group.

Our expectations were to canvass the four islands thoroly from an ornithological standpoint; but owing to inclement weather our operations were mostly confined to the islands of Anacapa and San Miguel. We were able to land on Santa Rosa for a couple of hours only, and we past by Santa Cruz entirely.

We arrived at Anacapa Island at 8:00 a. m., June 5. Black Petrels and Dark-bodied Shearwaters were common at sea and near the arch rock at the extreme east end of the island two pairs of Xantus Murrelets (*Brachyramphus hypoleucus*) were seen on the water. We were unable to find any nests of this bird; but I believe that it may occasionally breed on some of the islands of this group.

Tufted Puffins, Baird and Farallon Cormorants were breeding on the cliffs and