

Bell Sparrows (*Amphispiza belli*) were sparingly scattered in pairs over the plain, and in July they were in family parties and easily the commonest bird.

In the former month Western Martins (*Progne s. hesperia*) were around the water-holes, as were several Tree Swallows (*Iridoprocne bicolor*), while Barn (*Hirundo erythrogastra*) and Cliff Swallows (*Petrochelidon lunifrons*) were setting up house-keeping in the village. Two pairs of Rough-winged Swallows (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) were found breeding in the bank along the bay, and as far as I can ascertain, this is the first time that the latter species has actually been found breeding on the peninsula, although it apparently does so clear to Cape San Lucas.

California Shrikes (*Lanius l. gambeli*) are common residents here, and far up into the mountains. The warblers were represented by one each of the Yellow (probably *Dendroica a. brewsteri*, although I am not sure), and the Black-throated Gray (*D. nigrescens*), both of which were seen in the pepper trees not a hundred yards from the shore.

Mearns Thrasher (*Toxostoma c. nearnsi*) is the resident subspecies beyond a doubt, but the three individuals which I saw in the heavier brush were so wary that I was unable to get a shot at them. The 1910 A. O. U. Check-list gives the range of this form as "Lower Sonoran Zone", but in the San Pedros, February 1908 I found them to be tolerably common nearly to the higher limit of the Upper Sonoran Zone where I discovered an incomplete set of two eggs and an unfinished nest. These were among straggling pines on the bench-land at over three thousand feet.

Pallid Wren-tits (*Chamaea f. henshawi*) were occasionally seen, and Western Gnatcatchers (*Polioptila c. obscura*) were common.

SOME COLORADO HORNED OWL NOTES

By EDWARD R. WARREN

WITH ONE PHOTO

MR. KEYES'S paper in the January CONDOR, "A History of Certain Great Horned Owls", brought to my mind my own experience with a family of the Western Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus pallescens*) near Paonia, Delta County, Colorado. While some account of these was published in the *Wilson Bulletin* for September 1903, (A Nest of the Western Horned Owl), I have ventured to rewrite my recollections, and add a few other notes thinking they may prove interesting.

Paonia is situated in the valley of the North Fork of the Gunnison River, at an altitude of about 5,700 feet. The valley itself is quite wide, with mesas on either side, and then low hills gradually increasing in altitude. In the valley, where not cultivated, are sagebrush and greasewood, with cottonwoods along the river; on the hills are cedars and pinyons. The soil is largely an adobe, which when eroded forms more or less substantial cliffs or bluffs.

The nest was in a niche in the face of an adobe bluff a couple of miles up the North Fork Valley from the town. This bluff was somewhere about forty feet high, and the nest-site a little more than half way below the top. I was told that the birds had nested there for several years. It was on the eighth of May, 1901, that I made my first visit. As my friend and I approached the bluff we saw one of the parent birds sitting at the mouth of the hole, but it flew away before I had a chance

to use the Reflex camera on it. We had brought a rope along with us, and going to the top of the bluff we found a fence post which some ranchman had left handy. We appropriated it and stuck it in a hole a prairie dog had dug; then making a loop in the rope to put a leg through, and taking a turn or two around the post, I started over the edge, my friend paying out the rope. On the first trial I missed the nest so far that I could not get to it, and went on down to the bottom, and then returned to the top to start over. The second time I landed where I wanted to, but it was not a pleasant trip; 'dobe is nice and sticky when it is wet, and makes beautiful dust when dry, and this was dry, consequently in these two trips I collected plenty of dust. It went down the back of my neck, into my pockets, boots, everywhere it could find an opening, and I had my doubts as to whether the plate-holders were tight enough to keep it out.



Fig. 42. YOUNG WESTERN HORNED OWL, ABOUT SIX WEEKS OLD

Arriving at the nest I found a shelf about six feet wide and four deep, sloping somewhat toward the outer edge. Crouching in the far corner were two young owls, just passing from the downy into the feathered stage. I had a camera sent down and made an exposure, the result of which I promptly christened "The Heavenly Twins" as soon as I had developed the negative. As their situation was not good for photographic purposes I tried to move them into a position where the light was better. They made no resistance to being moved, beyond snapping their bills, but one fluttered down to the foot of the cliff after I had moved it, so I went on down myself. The fall had not hurt it, as, while it could not fly, it could use its wings enough to break the fall.

At the bottom I made a few exposures, the bird assuming those graceful(?) attitudes which it is the habit of young owls to do in such circumstances, fluffing up its feathers and making itself as big as two. After examining it we left it where it was, thinking the parents would take care of it.

The next day we went there and found the young one in the nest, but no sign of the other. There was an adult in a tree close by, which a couple of Sparrow Hawks were mobbing. We took the bird from the nest home with us, making a cage from a large packing box, and I had good opportunity to study it for several days, until I left Paonia. If the picture I took of it at the house (Fig. 42) is compared with Mr. Keyes's owls on page 15 of the January CONDOR, it will be seen

that it is in about the same plumage as the bird on the left, and therefore presumably about the same age, forty-one to forty-five days. I had no data myself for making any sort of a guess at it.

The youngster seemed to thrive fairly well in captivity. We picked out a tough old rooster and killed it for his benefit. The feeding was more or less simple. While the bird would sometimes take pieces which were offered him, I found in the end that the quickest method was to take him in hand, wearing gloves as a most necessary precaution against those sharp claws which he showed a perfect willingness, not to say anxiety, to test on one, and forcing open the bill, poke pieces of chicken down his throat until I thought he had a sufficiency for the time being. And I want to assure my readers that none of that chicken was wasted except the feathers, head, and legs. Everything else went down that bird's throat. Pieces of neck a couple of inches long were choice morsels. I was there until the thirteenth of May, it being the tenth when we first fed the bird, but during that time no pellets were cast up in the cage, which I thought rather strange as so many bones had been fed to it.

After I went away my friend kept the owl until it was well grown, and it finally escaped, but apparently hung around the neighborhood, and was shot while stealing chickens at a place close by. I suppose we were to blame for its having acquired a taste for the birds, and hence for its untimely end.

I rigged up a perch, and occasionally took the bird out to photograph and study. The following I copy from my notes made at the time. "It stands about twelve inches high. The body plumage is mostly down, but the wing and tail feathers are well grown, and about half out of their sheaths. The ear tufts usually stand up about one-half inch but sometimes three-quarters of an inch. The feet and legs are thickly covered with a yellowish or light buffy down. The whole of the body down, both above and below, is barred similar to the adult, and is fully two inches thick on the breast. This down is a light yellowish brown, but light gray on the tips. The wing coverts are brownish yellow, with dark, nearly black, bars a quarter of an inch wide. The primaries and secondaries are as dark as the bars of the coverts, with still darker bars. The tail similar. The face markings and feathers are just beginning to show." No material change took place during the few days I had the bird under observation, nor did it become especially tame.

In 1902 I was in that region again, but did not stay at Paonia, but several miles away. April 4 I made a trip to the nest site, and found a fresh eggshell at the foot of the cliff, but had no time for, nor way of investigating just then; however, I was glad to see this indication that the nest was occupied. Several days after, on the thirteenth, I was able to make another visit, seeing an adult at the nest as we came to it, but it flew away when I started down over the bluff on the rope. Even the post we had used the year before was still there. Very kind of that ranchman to leave it for me.

I found three young in the nest, the largest nearly as large as a domestic pigeon, the smallest about two-thirds the size of the largest. Possibly it was hatched on the fourth, the day I found the shell below the nest. This smallest bird was covered with down exclusively, but the other two had their pin feathers started. They snapped their bills at me a little, but made no other hostile demonstration. Photography was rather difficult work, for I had to stand near the crumbling edge of the shelf, and hang onto the rope for a support in case of the ground giving way, and manipulate the camera at the same time.

Such nest construction as there was consisted of a sort of platform at the back of the cavity, in such a position that the sun would not beat on it until late in the

afternoon (the cavity faced in a westerly direction), and this platform was apparently leaves and cedar bark covered with dirt. As a food supply there were the hindquarters of a cottontail rabbit, a pocket gopher (*Thomomys*), and three young Pinyon Jays, just about large enough to leave the nest. The heads of these latter were missing.

When I passed through Paonia in 1903, I had no time to investigate the nest, even if it was not probably too late in the season, June first.

While staying at Gaume's ranch in the northwestern part of Baca County, the last of May, 1905, a pair of Horned Owls had two young in a hole or small cave in the sandstone bluffs which formed the back of the corrals. I could see at times an adult and young bird, and at times both the young, sitting at the edge of the hole. I estimated this as thirty feet above the bottom of the bluff, and ten below the top. I did not visit the place itself, though I could have done so easily enough, but put it off too long, and then the time came for me to leave. I first saw the place May 20; on the 24th I found on the hill above and back of the nest a dead young owl. My notes say that its body was covered with down, and the wing feathers about half grown out. I did not see any birds about the nest after this.

The people at the ranch told me that the owls had never molested their poultry though there were many chickens of all sizes and ages running about everywhere below the nest. This seems rather strange, considering the reputation of the birds as poultry thieves, and for general destructiveness. Perhaps the owls appreciated the fact that their existence depended on their good behavior, and acted accordingly.

MAY NOTES FROM SAN JACINTO LAKE

By G. WILLETT and ANTONIN JAY

WITH THREE PHOTOS

ON THE morning of May 27, the present year, the writers left Los Angeles by automobile for a short ornithological trip, our objective point being San Jacinto Lake, or Mystic Lake as it is called on most maps, which is situated in west central Riverside County, California. This lake is in the San Jacinto Valley, at an altitude of about 1500 feet. It is in reality nothing more than a slough or sink, being only about two miles long and from a quarter to a half mile wide. In no part of it is the water more than waist deep.

Along the shores and for a hundred or more feet out into the water is a luxurious growth of marsh grass, which is a feeding ground for numerous birds that are partial to frog's eggs and pollywogs, mosquitos and other insects. It is also a breeding ground for coots, grebes and some of the ducks. At the east end of the lake are extensive tule beds, in some places so thick that they are almost impossible to penetrate. In these tule thickets are found the main nesting colonies, and the abundance and variety of the breeding birds makes this locality one of the most interesting of its kind in southern California. The lake has been previously visited by several ornithologists, among them being A. M. Ingersoll and W. B. Judson, who visited it in June, 1897, and O. W. Howard and H. J. Lelande, who were there in the summer of 1910. From information furnished us by them we were well posted in advance as to what birds we might expect to find there. We were