

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Call Note of the Female California Quail.—In September, 1911, a stroll through the Belvedere garden was suddenly interrupted by the calling of Quail (*Lophortyx c. californica*), and shortly four of these birds sailed across the road, scattering within a few feet of the observer.

One bird lit on the bare, horizontal trunk of a small live-oak and in such a manner as to permit the noting of every plumage detail of an adult hen. A cock soon came strutting along the gravelled path and, properly posing himself, gave the familiar call of "all is well." The supposed hen immediately replied in like manner, and in so doing not only assumed the call pose of the male, but also clearly showed the usual accompanying head and throat movements. The call was repeated several times, and the record is positive.

A similar experience was enjoyed in the same garden a few years ago, and within thirty feet of the foregoing observation, but unfortunately the details of the record were lost in the conflagration of 1906.

Were the females in question favored with individual vocal gifts or were they males in female attire?—JOHN W. MAILLIARD.

The Winter Range of the Yakutat Song Sparrow.—In a report on a collection of birds from the Sitkan district, Alaska, published by the writer (*Birds and Mammals of the 1909 Alexander Alaska Expedition*, Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., vol. 7, 1911, pp. 90, 91) *Melospiza melodia caurina* was mentioned as a migrant in the region. This impression was conveyed by the sudden appearance of the birds at points where they had been absent a few days before, their presence during a period of about three weeks, and their subsequent disappearance; and I still believe that these particular birds were transients, probably from points farther south.

Soon after the appearance of the paper referred to above, my companion on that trip, Mr. Allen Hasselborg, a resident of Juneau, expressed his belief to me, in a letter, that I was mistaken in my ideas, and that to his certain knowledge song sparrows remained through the winter on the beaches in the vicinity of Juneau and on the adjacent islands. In support of his statement he has just sent me, as a gift to the University of California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, eight song sparrows collected by himself. These were all taken on Admiralty Island: one at Gambier Bay, November 27, 1911, the others at Pybus Bay, one on December 9, three on December 10, and one each on December 11, 19, and 23, 1911.

In the accompanying letter he describes the beaches where the sparrows were found as of a limestone formation, worn full of little caves and crevices by the action of the water, and thus providing shelters for the birds. He asserts that on all such beaches in the region, song sparrows are to be found throughout the winter; as it happened, the points visited by us early in the season of 1909 did not possess such features, hence the absence of the birds.

He writes that the sparrows were distributed singly along the beaches at intervals of about two hundred yards, were exceedingly fat, and had their stomachs filled with a mass of unrecognizable slimy matter from the beach.

The eight birds collected (nos. 21292-21299, Univ. Calif. Mus. Vert. Zool.) are all examples of the Yakutat Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia caurina*). One of them in its brown coloration is not typical, varying decidedly in the direction of *rufina*; but the longer and more slender bill, larger size, and duller browns, all go to indicate a closer relationship to *caurina*.

The facts thus far accumulated make it seem probable that the breeding song sparrow of the Sitkan district, *Melospiza m. rufina*, leaves the northern part of this region entirely in winter. Just how far north it does winter is not known. The Yakutat Song Sparrow (*M. m. caurina*) is shown to winter at least as far north as Juneau, and as it has recently been taken as far south as Humboldt Bay, California (see Grinnell, CONDOR XII, 1910, 174) is, of course, to be looked for at all intermediate points. Its center of abundance during the winter months is not known.—H. S. SWARTH.

Unusual Nesting Date of Mourning Dove.—On December 5, 1911, while pruning an orange tree, I accidentally discovered a nest of *Zenaidura macroura carolinensis* containing two eggs too far advanced in incubation to save. One of the parent birds was

found dead on the ground under the tree, having beyond a doubt been suffocated during the previous week while the grove was being fumigated, as were a considerable number of other birds.—A. B. HOWELL.

Notes from the San Joaquin Valley.—Egret (*Herodias egretta*). In the latter part of October and along until about the middle of November of this past fall (1911) a flock of Egrets (*Herodias egretta*), consisting of some thirty individuals, took up its abode on the Rancho Dos Rios, near the mouth of the Tuolumne River, Stanislaus County, California. The receding flood waters of the summer had left several shallow ponds in the lowlands, and the Egrets would stand in these for hours, feeding, probably, on what few small fish were unable to escape. At other times they would retire to a plowed field and stand around in that for long periods, or perhaps perch on some dead water oaks near this field, giving a beautiful effect of a snow covered tree in summer against a dark green background.

When the water in these ponds evaporated to almost nothing, or perhaps because all the minnows were caught, the Egrets wended their way elsewhere, and but one or two have been in evidence since. This is the largest flock I have ever seen, and it is to be hoped is a sign of the species being on the increase.

Lincoln and Forbush Sparrows (*Melospiza lincolni lincolni* and *M. l. striata*). One hardly associates these sparrows with the idea of flocks, but during the last days of December, 1911, and through January, 1912, a sufficient number of these birds to call a "flock" have congregated in a small area on the Rancho Dos Rios. Usually they are only met with singly or in pairs, but in this particular spot one or two flush out of the tall grass at every step or two. The grass is very rank and three or four feet long, partially fallen, full of seed and damp underneath, being on land that is overflowed every summer at high water.

It is very difficult to get more than a glimpse of the birds in such a place; but four specimens were taken without moving more than twenty feet, as some of them flew into the branches of some scrubby willows and hesitated a moment too long before hiding.—JOSEPH MAILLIARD.

The Evening Grosbeak in Humboldt County, California.—It was on May 7, 1911, early in the forenoon; the day was dark and cloudy, with occasional heavy showers to break the monotony. I was passing through a spruce grove on the very edge of the bay, some six miles east of Eureka. While listening to the scratching of a towhee, my attention was called to the unmistakable call note of the Evening Grosbeak. It was faint, owing to the distance and the rustling of branches.

Traveling in the direction of the call, I soon came under several tall pines, in which were a number of the Evening Grosbeaks: Such a busy lot I had never before seen. They were first hanging to a cone, then hidden in a sort of mistletoe, from which they invariably flew to a nearby branch. There they paused a second and again resumed a position on the cone or within reaching distance of it. This seemed to be their chief attraction.

One flew out in the open air, then circled and lit on a branch not over twenty feet from where I was standing. He seemed to be looking at me, and sat very still for a few moments, then got busy as any of the others, seemingly satisfied with what he had seen. There were upwards of twenty feeding in the tops of the nearby trees.

I secured two specimens, a male and female. They proved to be the Western Evening Grosbeak (*Hesperiphona vespertina montana*).—C. I. CLAY.

The Anthony Vireo (*Vireo huttoni obscurus*).—About four or five years ago while passing over a wooded ravine, I heard an unfamiliar "tchweet, tchweet." At a distance the sound is not unlike "sweet, sweet." On nearer approach it grows more liquid. The bird eluded all my efforts to obtain a description of it, save that the song came from a tiny throat.

Each succeeding spring I followed day after day for weeks my "tchweet, tchweet." I learned that if I once located the song, I might expect it daily in the same vicinity for many weeks. I also learned that if the bird gave its full succession of notes, I might not hear it again for many minutes. The interval might be prolonged into an hour, but the song was sure to come. In the height of the home building season, Anthony may repeat his "tchweet, tchweet," nearly 200 times in succession. Ordinarily twenty or less will satisfy him.