

Haematopus ostralegus. Oystercatcher.

The eggs of this species vary in ground color from very light stone grey, cream, clay, light buff, medium buff and dark buff, to a good dark brown, spotted, blotched and streaked with blackish brown, occasionally medium brown, and exceptionally a very light yellow brown, and always with underlying markings of gray. Many eggs are finely streaked without any spots, while others have streaks and blotches combined, and large blotches of gray; others again have medium sized spots evenly distributed. The gray on these eggs is not the usual violet gray common to the Limicolae, but a deeper blue-black gray, similar to the color left by a blot of ink on white blotting paper. I know of no other eggs of the Limicolae that have this same shade of gray. The eggs have little gloss. The number of eggs is normally 3 but I have several times found sets of 4, and have heard of many others. These eggs vary greatly in size, from 2.55 x 1.75 to 2.10 x 1.50 inches; average measurements: 2.2 x 1.50. Eggs ovate in shape.

I have noticed that Ridgway, say in the phalaropes, gives 3 to 4 as the normal set of eggs, and also in other species. Surely it is common knowledge that the bulk of the Limicolae lay 4 eggs, and it would have been far better to have given the names of those species that normally lay less than this number, than to generalize as he does in his introduction to the Scolopacidae—eggs 2-4.

SOME FURTHER NOTES ON SIERRAN FIELD-WORK

By MILTON S. RAY

WITH FOUR PHOTOGRAPHS BY OLUF J. HEINEMANN

IT WAS on the ninth of June, 1910, that Mr. Henry W. Carriger and the writer gained the Forni Meadow at the base of Pyramid Peak. Inasmuch as Messrs. Barlow and Atkinson, exactly ten years before, investigated the avian possibilities of this region, a comparison of the joint findings may prove of interest. Our predecessors recorded twenty-five species of which we located all but three, the Hermit Warbler, Western Warbling Vireo and Pigmy Nuthatch. Carriger and I listed 36 species, and to an earlier summer and ever shifting distribution during migration, I attribute the cause of this more extended list.

Mr. Barlow records two nests of the Mountain Chickadee, one newly built, and one with eight fresh eggs. We also found a number of the nests of this species, but they all held small young. As Mr. Barlow records his *Tachycineta* with a question mark I may state all we noted were *T. bicolor*. Like Barlow we found no Sierra Grouse at Forni's above 6000 feet, but in similar country, northwest of Phillips' Station on June 12 we encountered a pair at an altitude of 8,500 feet.

Mr. Barlow, speaking of the White-crowned Sparrow, says*: "On June 10 these sparrows were evidently waiting for nest building which was impracticable until the bushes should become in leaf." I may add in this connection that of about twenty nests of this bird that I have found at various altitudes in the high Sierras three-fourths have been placed on the ground and the balance in the thick evergreen lodgepole pine saplings. Of the ground-nests many were not dependent on foliage for concealment, being hidden by dead branches or concealed at the

* Condor, II, 1900, p. 107.

foot of bare willows. Mr. Carriger on June 10, close to the cabin, found a ground-nest of the former type with five almost fresh eggs.

Other nests noted were: Two of the White-headed Woodpecker in dead tree trunks 8 and 10 feet up, both with small young. (The call of this bird is remarkably similar to that of the Cabanis Woodpecker.) One nest of the Audubon Warbler with two fresh eggs; a Mountain Bluebird's with five, incubation advanced; and one of the Blue-fronted Jay with two large young. Besides these, numerous nests of the Western Robin and Sierra Junco were noted, containing eggs and young in various stages, and one of the Western Wood Pewee uncompleted.

Near Seven Pines, on June 11, a loud, mingled chorus of bird cries drew us into a thick forest of pines and firs. Here we came upon a Western Red-tailed Hawk hovering just above a nest full of young Western Robins. The parent birds



Fig. 53. PHILLIPS' STATION, 7000 FEET ALTITUDE, SIERRA NEVADA, IN ELDORADO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

were darting viciously at the hawk's head endeavoring to thwart its murderous purpose, while assembled forest birds of various species contributed their moral and vocal support. At our approach the hawk took wing.

Desolation Valley was crossed and Lake-of-the-Woods reached on June 11. A glance at the accompanying check-list will show the effect sparse timber and bare granite wastes have on birdlife. We noted but 20 species and nearly all of these were recorded at or near Lake-of-the-Woods, which lies at the valley's edge.

On June 12, while crossing a swampy forest tract at an elevation of 7000 feet, near Phillips' Station, I spied a pair of Ruby-crowned Kinglets engaged in nest building. Carriger soon joined me and we watched the birds for some time. We were interested to learn that in constructing their new nest at the top of a

small lodgepole pine the birds were using the material of last year's abode, which hung from the tip of a lofty pine branch a hundred feet away.

While a much more restricted area, to lower elevation and more time afield I attribute the fact that we recorded a greater variety of birdlife at Phillips' Station than at Forni's. We found many nests at Phillips' but none were of any great rarity, being limited to those of the Western Robin, Sierra Junco and Audubon Warbler with both eggs and young, those of the Mountain Chickadee with young only, and of the Sierra Hermit Thrush and Western Wood Pewee with eggs or building.

On June 15, after our return to Bijou on the shore of Lake Tahoe, I found a deserted submerged nest of the Wilson Phalarope (*Steganopus tricolor*) at Rowland's Marsh, with four eggs. The shells of these on examination proved to be very flexible; whether the condition was due to some peculiarity of the eggs



Fig. 54. DESOLATION VALLEY, 8000 TO 8500 FEET ALTITUDE, NEAR PYRAMID PEAK, EL DORADO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

themselves or to the water in which they had lain for some time, I am not prepared to say. The day following, southwest of Bijou, I located a nest of the Ruby-crowned Kinglet with four pipped eggs and three young, just out. Three other nests of this bird, one found June 23 at Phillips' with seven eggs, one June 28 near Star Lake and another near the Sierra House July 1, each with seven young, show this number to be a quite common complement. A nest of the Common House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis*) was noted June 18, two eggs out of which were rather uniquely marked, the usual blackish spots and scrawls being replaced by those of a light brownish.

From June 19 to 24 was consumed in making a second journey to Pyramid Peak to collect a nest, previously found, of *Leucosticte*. With the exception of this, few notable nests were taken on the trip. One of the Sierra Junco was

noted in Glen Alpine Gorge with the large and uncommon complement of five eggs. At no place on either trip to the peak did we find Sierra Grouse more abundant than about Lake Lucile, elevation 8200 feet. About Phillips' on June 24, young-of-the-year Pileolated Warblers were seen.

On June 26, after we had again returned to Bijou, I secured on the west side of Lake Valley a very dark plumaged Western Red-tailed Hawk. The skin was sent to Mr. Joseph Grinnell at Berkeley, who writes as follows concerning it: "The bird is an immature female of *Buteo borealis calurus*, and is catalogued as no. 13991 of the collection of the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. In its dark phase of plumage it resembles examples from elsewhere in California in similar stage. It does not seem possible to correlate this depth of coloration in certain individuals with altitude or with any other circumstance I can think of."



Fig. 55. NEST OF SIERRA JUNCO, ON SLOPE OF PYRAMID PEAK ABOVE FORNI'S, ELDORADO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

In Cold Creek Canyon on June 28 I found my first occupied nest of that elusive nester, the Thick-billed Sparrow. It held four large young and was placed a foot up in thorny deer brush bordering a cattle path. It was a bulky structure made of sticks and twigs, next to which was placed a generous quantity of bark strips and lastly an inner lining of fine grasses. After reaching the nest the parent birds soon put in their appearance and showed great solicitude, fluttering at times almost within reach of my hand.

Returning, near the Sierra House, I found a nest of the Mountain Song Sparrow in a meadow at the foot of small willows, with three young, one of which was a partial albino, it having the entire under parts pure white and iris light reddish. Further on, near Bijou, I came upon a chipmunk in the act of destroying a nest of eggs of the House Finch. June 30 and July 1 were spent in

willow thickets along Trout Creek. Here I found the Traill Flycatcher (*Empidonax trailli trailli*) and the Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica aestiva brewsteri*) very abundant, six nests of the former and four of the latter being located. Those of the flycatcher were all placed in willows close to the water at an average height of four feet above the ground and were remarkably similar in construction, being made of bark strips, grasses and vegetable fibers, and lined with horsehair. All the nests held either three or four eggs, which varied from fresh to some well along in incubation. The nests of the warbler, being a much earlier nesting bird, contained both eggs and young in various stages.

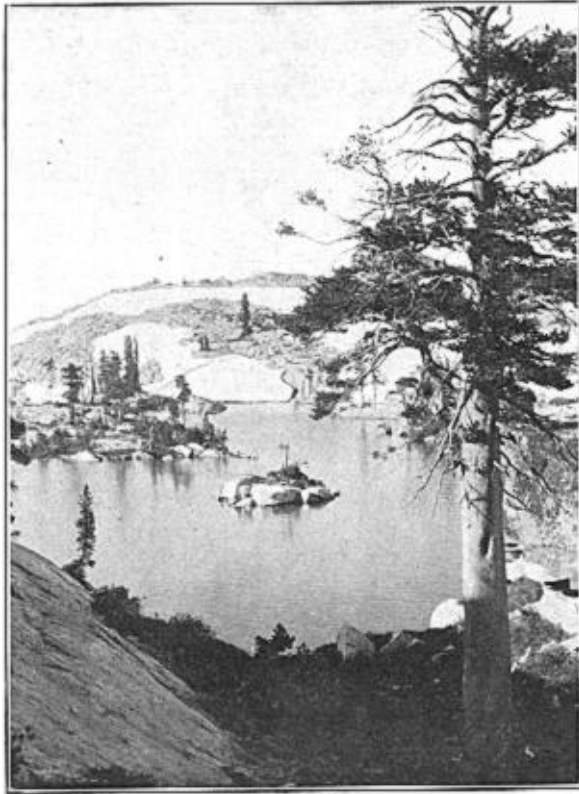


Fig. 56. ONE OF THE ALPINE LAKES IN DESOLATION VALLEY, NEAR PYRAMID PEAK, CALIFORNIA

The last nest, which I found late in the afternoon of July 1, important only on account of the extremely late date, was one of the Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*) in a sand bank six feet above water and dug to a depth of four feet seven inches. The eggs, seven in number, were but slightly incubated and lay on a bed of small fish bones. The sitting bird did not leave until I was almost through excavating. Previous nests of the bird in the Lake Valley region have all held large young by the first of June.

LIST OF SPECIES NOTED IN THE CENTRAL SIERRA NEVADA
BETWEEN JUNE 9 and 14, 1910

	Phillips' Station, 6500 to 7600 feet	Forni's, 6000 to 9000 feet	Desolation Valley, 8000 to 8500 feet
1 <i>Actitis macularius</i> . Spotted Sandpiper.....	x		x
2 <i>Oreortyx picta plumifera</i> . Mountain Quail.....	x	x	x
3 <i>Dendragapus obscurus sierrae</i> . Sierra Grouse.....	x	x	x
4 <i>Accipiter atricapillus striatulus</i> . Western Goshawk.....	x		
5 <i>Buteo borealis calurus</i> . Western Redtail.....		xx	x
6 <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i> . Golden Eagle.....	x		
7 <i>Dryobates villosus hyloscopus</i> . Cabanis Woodpecker.....	x	xx	
8 <i>Xenopicus albobarvatus</i> . White-headed Woodpecker.....		xx	
9 <i>Sphyrapicus varius daggetti</i> . Sierra Sapsucker.....	x	xx	
10 <i>Sphyrapicus thyroideus</i> . Williamson Sapsucker.....	x	x	
11 <i>Colaptes cafer collaris</i> . Red-shafted Flicker.....	x	x	
12 <i>Chordeiles virginianus hesperis</i> . Pacific Nighthawk.....			x
13 <i>Stellula calliope</i> . Calliope Hummingbird.....	x		x
14 <i>Nuttallornis borealis</i> . Olive-sided Flycatcher.....	x	x	
15 <i>Myiochanes richardsoni richardsoni</i> . Western Wood Pewee		x	x
16 <i>Empidonax wrighti</i> (presumably). Wright Flycatcher....	x	xx	
17 <i>Cyanocitta stelleri frontalis</i> . Blue-fronted Jay.....	x	x	
18 <i>Nucifraga columbiana</i> . Clarke Nutcracker.....	x	x	
19 <i>Hesperiphona vespertina montana</i> . Western Evening Grosbeak	x		
20 <i>Pinicola californica</i> . California Pine Grosbeak.....	x	x	x
21 <i>Carpodacus cassini</i> . Cassin Purple Finch.....	x	x	x
22 <i>Loxia curvirostra bendirei</i> . Sierra Crossbill.....		xx	
23 <i>Leucosticte tephrocotis tephrocotis</i> . †Gray-crowned Leuco- sticte.....		x	
24 <i>Spinus pinus pinus</i> . Pine Siskin.....	x	x	x
25 <i>Zonotrichia leucophrys leucophrys</i> . White-crowned Sparrow	x	x	x
26 <i>Spizella passerina arizonae</i> . Western Chipping Sparrow..	x	x	
27 <i>Junco oreganus thurberi</i> . Sierra Junco.....	x	x	x
28 <i>Melospiza melodia montana</i> . Mountain Song Sparrow....	x		
29 <i>Melospiza lincolni lincolni</i> . Lincoln Sparrow.....		xx	
30 <i>Passerella iliaca megarhyncha</i> . Thick-billed Fox Sparrow..	x	xx	
31 <i>Oreospiza chlorura</i> . Green-tailed Towhee.....		xx	
32 <i>Zamelodia melanocephala capitalis</i> . Black-headed Grosbeak..	x		
33 <i>Piranga ludoviciana</i> . Western Tanager.....	x	x	x
34 <i>Iridoprocne bicolor</i> . Tree Swallow.....		x	
35 <i>Vireosylva gilva swainsoni</i> . Western Warbling Vireo.....	x		
36 <i>Dendroica aestiva brewsteri</i> . California Yellow Warb- ler.....	x		
37 <i>Dendroica auduboni auduboni</i> . Audubon Warbler.....	x	x	x
38 <i>Wilsonia pusilla chryseola</i> . Golden Pileolated Warbler..	x	xx	x
39 <i>Cinclus mexicanus unicolor</i> . American Dipper.....	x		
40 <i>Troglodytes aedon parkmani</i> . Parkman Wren.....	x		
41 <i>Certhia familiaris zelotes</i> . Sierra Creeper.....	x	xx	x
42 <i>Sitta carolinensis aculeata</i> . Slender-billed Nuthatch.....	x	xx	
43 <i>Sitta canadensis</i> . Red-breasted Nuthatch.....	x	xx	
44 <i>Penthestes gambeli</i> . Mountain Chickadee.....	x	x	x
45 <i>Regulus calendula calendula</i> . Ruby-crowned Kinglet.....	x	xx	
46 <i>Hylocichla ustulata ustulata</i> . Russet-backed Thrush.....	x		
47 <i>Hylocichla guttata sequoiensis</i> . Sierra Hermit Thrush....	x	x	
48 <i>Planesticus migratorius propinquus</i> . Western Robin.....	x	x	x
49 <i>Sialia currucoides</i> . Mountain Bluebird.....		x	

xx Not recorded by Barlow.

† Observed only above 9300 feet elevation.