

would be a decided help if we could have a law that would impose a slight fine on the fumigator for every bird so killed,—merely a nominal sum, say five cents a bird. This would be sufficient to make the workmen swing a lantern in among the foliage and shake the tree gently in order to scare out the feathered lodgers. In order to obtain results, it would of course be necessary for a warden to make occasional and unexpected visits to the orange groves during the fall of the year.

Covina, California, January 17, 1914.

AN ASIONINE RUSE

By WILLIAM LEON DAWSON

IN her excellent article, "With Asio in the Greenwood", in a recent number of *Bird-Lore*, Florence Merriam Bailey describes the behavior of a Long-eared Owl which she had been watching closely for some time in the vicinity of its nest. The old Owl stood guard so quietly one afternoon that she seemed on the point of going to sleep. "The next moment", Mrs. Bailey records, "to my great astonishment, she darted to the ground as swiftly as a Kingfisher dives for a fish he has been carefully locating from above. A shriek—and then a silence! Up she flew surrounded by a noisy mob of Bronzed Grackles, three Orioles and a Blue Jay. When the excitement had subsided a little the Blue Jay flew off with a sad reflective cry", due to the proximity of her own brood. "And yet", concludes Mrs. Bailey, "the victim was probably a wood mouse, or some such small vermin".

This episode reminds the writer of an experience enjoyed by him while in camp on the banks of the Walla Walla River in Washington—May 3rd, 1907, it was—and a recital of the circumstances may possibly, although not certainly, throw some light on the identity of Mrs. Bailey's "mouse". I was seated at a height of twelve or fifteen feet from the ground in a willow tree beside a nest of young Long-eared Owls,—one of a line of four nests which I had been watching for several days. The youngsters were "freezing" faithfully, as usual, all except the runt, which still favored the cowering pose. The male parent had delivered himself of a series of quaint execrations, "*Morach moraaouw, werek werek wraaow; wreck wraaa*", and had quitted the scene in disgust.

The female had caterwauled and cajoled and exploded and entreated by turns, all in vain. Matters seemed to have reached an *impasse*, and silence had fallen over the landscape. I had time to note the sage-pinks bright with morning dew, and the subtle, soothing gray-greens of the sage itself, as it rose in billows over the slopes of the closely-investing hills. All of a sudden the Owl left her perch, flew to some distance, and pounced upon the ground, where she could not well be seen through the intervening foliage. Upon the instant of the pounce arose the piercing cries of a creature in distress, and I, supposing that the bird, in anger, had fallen upon a harmless Flicker, which I knew dwelt in that neck of the woods, scrambled down instanter and hurried forward. The prompt binoculars revealed neither Flicker nor mouse. There was nothing whatever in the Owl's talons. The victor and the victim were one and the same, and I was the dupe. Yet so completely was the *play* carried out that the bird fluttered her wings and trod vigorously with a rocking motion, as though sinking her talons deeply into a victim. I was astonished. Nor should I believe the evidence of my eyes to this day if I had not witnessed the same play repeatedly thereafter. The Owl

thought she had me going, and I humored her to the point of absolute personal satisfaction. There was never trace of fur or feathers or gore on the deserted stage. The distress cries, always convincing, were never overdone, but ceased, as they should, after the first onslaught; yet if I did not yield a prompt obedience to the lure, the Owl looked about reproachfully, and then redoubled her demonstrative wrestle with her alleged quarry. It was noteworthy in this connection that while other birds usually paid little heed to the notes of this Owl, however terrifying in volume or tone, this distress cry commanded instant attention throughout the woods. The small birds began to chatter sympathetically, while Crows and Magpies rallied as though at the blast of a bugle. In fact, some nimble Magpie, as often as not, interrupted the play before it was half finished. This was the clew, if clew were needed, to the explanation. Your humble servant was a big Magpie, who at the sound of conflict might be expected to rush forward and snatch the prize from the victor's grasp. Clever, wasn't it! And, parenthetically, your Magpie is evidently exactly up to that game, even if the stupid man failed to play to his lead.

The illusion of this decoy ruse (whose further psychology I leave who will to explicate) was most complete; and even inside knowledge of the facts could not lessen the wonder how this Owl could so perfectly reproduce the shrieks of former victims.

Possibly,—though the writer suggests this in all modesty, not knowing the full circumstances attendant upon the other episode,—possibly, Mrs. Bailey's Owl also carried her wood mouse in her throat.

Santa Barbara, California, January 8, 1914.

SOME DISCOVERIES IN THE FOREST AT FYFFE

By MILTON S. RAY.

WITH EIGHT PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

AS PLANS for a sea-island trip allowed but a very short and early visit to Sierran territory this year (1913), I selected Fyffe, at an elevation of 3700 feet in El Dorado County, in preference to points of higher altitudes. Fyffe has become rather famous, ornithologically, from the work of Barlow, Carriger, Welch and others, and in fact in this respect it is one of the best known sections of the great Sierran chain. While the fact of the region having been so well worked rather suggested the advisability of going to less known localities, I relied on the chance that here, no doubt, as elsewhere in the Sierras, the bird-life would be found varying from year to year in both abundance and variety; and owing, too, to the fact that each worker afield possesses methods peculiarly his own, that one might still be able, perhaps, to add something new to the region's fund of accumulated bird-knowledge. Besides this, too, I was desirous of treading in reality those well worn paths of fellow workers, that I had already followed on printed page and in tantalizing photograph. My previous acquaintance with Fyffe was limited to glimpses of the region while passing en route to Lake Tahoe, and to a few hours afield on June 2, 1901. On this occasion, while about all I located was a nest with four eggs of the Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*) fifty feet up in a lofty pine, nevertheless I gained an insight into the