

## PECULIAR DEATH OF CALIFORNIA BUSH-TIT

By G. WILLETT

WITH ONE PHOTO BY ANTONIN JAY

ON March 28, 1914, accompanied by Mr. Edward Ricketts of the California Fish and Game Commission, I was walking through a grove of scrub oak trees near Live Oak, Sutter County, California, when, about eight



Fig. 49. NEST OF THE CALIFORNIA BUSH-TIT; REMAINS OF ONE OF THE BUILDERS APPEARS AT LEFT OF ENTRANCE, WHERE IT HAD PROBABLY BECOME ENTANGLED IN THE WOOL, CHIEFLY COMPOSING THE NEST.

feet up in a young live-oak near the bank of a small stream, I noticed a nest of the California Bush-Tit (*Psaltriparus minimus californicus*). I was at once struck by the fact that the nest was an unusually handsome one even for this bird, which is well known for the artistic construction of its home. On approaching closer I saw that the nest, which was compactly and uniformly built, was well coated on the outside with white wool, probably gathered from nearby bushes where sheep had been grazing.

This beautiful and, to the writer, unusual covering of the nest was quite sufficient to invite still closer examination, and the most unusual feature was yet to be discovered. On drawing down the supporting branches to facilitate closer inspection, I was surprised to observe the tail and wing-tips of a bush-tit projecting from the side of the nest a couple of inches to the left of the entrance. Upon investigation I found that one of the little nest builders, for some reason which seems difficult to explain, had apparently attempted to tunnel through the side of the nest and, becoming entangled in the net-like structure to such extent that it could not free itself, had perished. The bird was thoroughly dried when found, so the nest was brought in and photographed (see fig. 49). The tail and wings of the dead bird will be seen projecting from the nest a little to the left of the entrance.

The nest contained five eggs, three of which were broken. They had apparently been deposited at least two weeks previously, which would indicate a rather early nesting date for the species.

*Los Angeles, California, May 6, 1914.*

## ON THE OOLOGY OF THE NORTH AMERICAN PYGOPODES

By DR. R. W. SHUFELDT

WITH FIVE PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

**T**AKEN collectively, the loons and grebes form a natural Supersuborder of birds, created to contain the Suborder *Pygopodes*, which latter is represented by two families, namely the *Colymbidae* or Grebes, and the *Gaviidae* or Loons.

In my paper on "An Arrangement of the Families and Higher Groups of Birds," which appeared some time ago in *The American Naturalist* (vol. xxxviii, nos. 455-456, Nov.-Dec., 1904), the loon family bore the name of *Urinatoridae*, which, be it known, is co-equal with the family here called *Gaviidae*; while the grebes, formerly called the *Podicipidae*, are, as an assemblage, now known as the *Colymbidae*. This constant changing of names, though doubtless necessary, is very inconvenient and confusing for the ornithologists of the present day; and every one will surely rejoice when avian nomenclature eventually becomes *fixed*.

For years the common loon was known as *Colymbus torquatus*; and now *Colymbus*, in modern American ornithological works, is only applied to the grebes, while the loons are all relegated to the genus *Gavia*. Why the last-named, as a family (*Gaviidae*), should, in a Suborder (*Cepphi*), be arrayed with the auks (*Alcidae*), as is the case in the classification adopted in the last edition of "The A. O. U. Check-List of North American Birds," is, to me, quite incomprehensible. Morphologically, a grebe and a loon are very much alike; while a loon is, structurally, quite a different bird from any species of auk known to me.

In the present article I am to present some notes I have made and illustrated with photographs of the eggs of our grebes and loons, much as was done in another contribution of mine, which appeared in a former issue of *THE CONDOR*<sup>1</sup>, devoted to the eggs of the North American limicoline birds.

1. SHUFELDT, R. W. An Introduction to the Study of the Eggs of the North American Limicolae. *THE CONDOR*, vol. xv, no. 4, July-August, 1913, pp. 138-151; illustrated by 54 reproductions of photos of eggs of the shore-birds.