

THE CONDOR A MAGAZINE OF WESTERN ORNITHOLOGY.



Volume XVII

July-August, 1915

Number 4

NESTING OF THE BOHEMIAN WAXWING IN NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

By ERNEST M. ANDERSON

WITH TWO PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

WHILE ON a general collecting trip in northern British Columbia during the summer of 1914, in the interests of the Provincial Museum, we rather unexpectedly discovered a breeding ground of the Bohemian Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrula*). Although a sharp look-out had been kept both by my companion, Mr. C. B. Garrett, and myself, throughout the month of June, no Waxwings were noted until the 7th of July, when an adult male was secured a short distance from "Hot Springs", situated on the east shore of Atlin Lake. Finding the specimen to be a male, I immediately hunted for its mate. A careful search was made for nearly two hours among the thickly growing spruce and pine trees, but in vain; it is quite probable that the bird shot had wandered some distance from its home, as no others were seen in the same section until well on in the fall.

Concluding that we were camped not far from the Waxwings' breeding grounds, we made an early start the following day in quest of their eggs. With the aid of a gasoline launch we were enabled to cover a wide extent of country, visiting many points on Atlin Lake, and some small isolated islands that otherwise would have been left unscanned. Our success on this occasion, therefore, was largely due to our adequate means of travel. After hunting all the forenoon without locating any Waxwings, we decided to renew our search farther down the lake during the afternoon.

Since no Waxwings had been noted near the lake shore or on adjacent islands, we headed our boat toward a group of small islands about a mile off-shore and varying from about three to ten acres in size. All were timbered with growth of stunted spruce, pine and aspen, with undergrowth consisting chiefly of thick willow bushes.

On approaching the first island to within a distance of about a hundred yards, we were welcomed, much to our delight, by several Waxwings flying from the shore. For the most part they flew directly towards the boat, then circled back to the island, apparently much alarmed at our presence. While on the wing the birds uttered a short succession of high-pitched, screaming notes, closely resembling in character, though not in volume, the cries heard on nearing a Pigeon Guillemot rookery on the seacoast. As soon as we landed most of the birds flew to an adjacent island. Only one pair remained, these being in full view about fifty yards distant, perched near the top of a small spruce tree. After a search of about fifteen minutes we found the nest, resting on two small horizontal branches, close to the trunk of a spruce tree, twelve



Fig. 50. NEST AND EGGS OF THE BOHEMIAN WAXWING, TAKEN AT ATLIN LAKE, BRITISH COLUMBIA. "NEST NO. 2"; PLACED ON THE OUTER BRANCH OF A SPRUCE TREE.

feet from the ground. It contained two eggs. Both the nest and eggs being carefully packed, together with the birds, which we had shot, we continued to search the island for other nests. We failed to locate any, however, save an old Waxwing nest near the top of a small spruce tree, about fifteen feet up.

Anxious to visit the neighboring island, we gathered our spoils and proceeded to its nearby shore. Shortly after climbing up the rocky bluff, three pairs of Waxwings were located perched on tree tops. This island being of larger size than the first one visited, and being also more thickly timbered, a thorough and careful search was necessary to find their homes. By watching the birds' movements, and closely scanning every tree from top to bottom,

we were rewarded, after about an hour's search, with all three nests, each containing a complete set of perfectly fresh eggs. Still eager to learn if any more bred in the vicinity, several other islands of various sizes were visited, but no more of the birds were seen. While travelling back to camp, a single individual flew along the shore of Atlin Lake, but as it was growing late in the evening it was not deemed advisable to land and search for the nest.

It seems highly probable that if other sections had been traversed as carefully, additional nests of this species would have been found. Areas similar to those visited are to be found over practically the whole extent of Atlin Lake, which ranges north and south for almost one hundred miles, the width

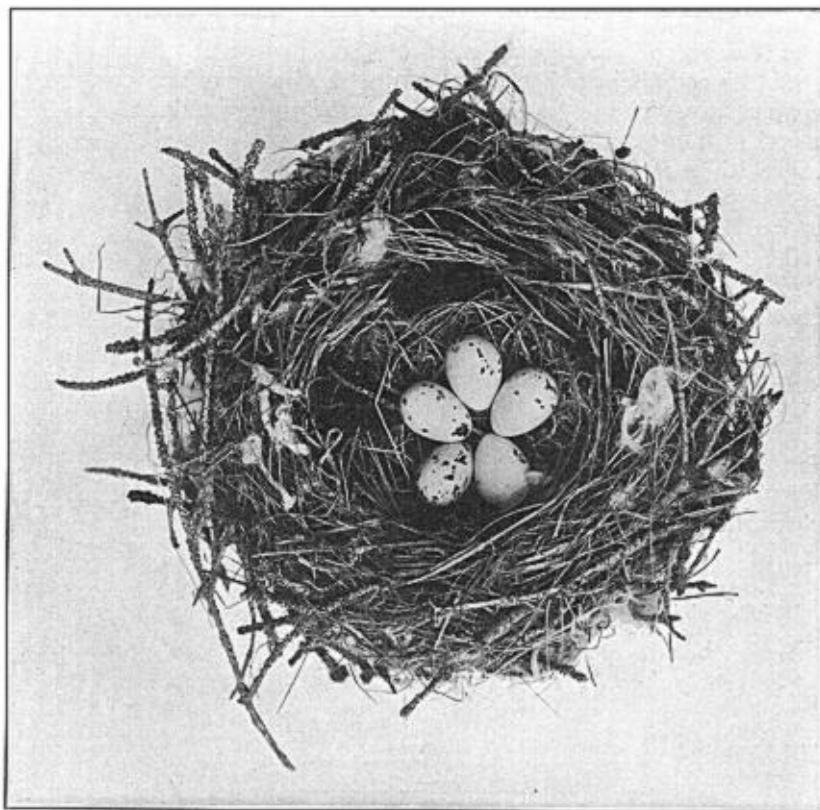


Fig. 51. NEST AND EGGS OF THE BOHEMIAN WAXWING, TAKEN AT ATLIN LAKE, BRITISH COLUMBIA. "NEST NO. 4", BUILT CLOSE TO TREE TRUNK.

varying from two to ten miles.

Unfortunately the photographs of the nests taken in the field were failures, the accompanying figures being from the specimens as they are at the Museum. These I hope will at least give a general idea of the appearance of the nest and eggs of the Bohemian Waxwing.

Following are detailed descriptions of the several nests and eggs. All were collected near Atlin, British Columbia, on July 8, 1914. Egg measurements are given in millimeters. The colors are according to Ridgway's *Color Standards and Nomenclature*.

Nest no. 1. The first nest found was saddled on two small horizontal

limbs of a spruce tree, the latter about twenty-five feet high, and with the trunk ten inches in diameter at the base. The nest was placed close to the trunk, at an elevation of twelve feet. It was composed outwardly of dried spruce and pine twigs, interwoven with dried grasses and cottonwood down. The lining consisted chiefly of finer grasses, with the inner walls scantily padded with dry bearded moss of a dark brownish color. The nest measures $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches in width, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in depth, with a cavity of $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches across the top, and $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches deep. The eggs, two in number, are both of a pearl grayish ground color, with a few faint pale blue markings, and with conspicuous spots of various shapes, of bluish slaty black, intermixed with a few clay colored spots. The eggs measure: 24x17.3 and 24.2x17.5.

Nest no. 2. This nest was well hidden on an outer branch of a spruce tree about eighteen feet above the ground. Of the four nests taken, this was the only one not placed against the tree trunk. It is similar to number one, both in size and structure. The eggs, five in number, were perfectly fresh. They are of the usual pearl grayish color, with small spots of bluish slaty black and of pale blue, with the clay colored spots almost lacking. The eggs measure: 22x17, 22x17, 22x17.3, 22.5x17.2, 22x17. (See fig. 50.)

Nest no. 3. Situated in a small spruce tree, eighteen feet up, and placed against the tree trunk. Nest similar to number one, both in structure and measurements. The nest contained four fresh eggs of a pearl gray color, spotted with bluish slaty black, pale blue, and clay colored markings, mostly toward the larger end. The eggs measure: 24x17, 23x17, 23.5x17, 23.3x17.

Nest no. 4. This nest was situated close to the trunk of a small slender spruce tree, fifteen feet up. It is similar to number one, differing only in having a scant lining of white fur of the Northern Hare (*Lepus americanus macfarlanei*). The nest contained five fresh eggs, of a pearl grayish color, spotted and blotched with blue slate, and with obscure pale blue markings, mostly toward the larger end. This set is not marked as heavily as any of the others. The eggs measure: 24.5x17.3, 25x17.3, 24.5x17, 25x17.5, 25x17. (See fig. 51.)

Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, April 20, 1915.

NOTES ON SOME BIRDS OF SPRING CANYON, COLORADO

By W. L. BURNETT

SPRING CANYON is a small opening in the first range of foothills seven miles southwest of Fort Collins. Viewing it from the standpoint of a mammalogist, this canyon has always been an interesting spot to me. While no systematic study of the birds found in this vicinity has been made by me, the following notes have been picked up from time to time. A half day or day now and then has been spent at the canyon, with the collection of small mammals the main object of the trips. Of such specimens we have taken some twenty species or subspecies, in the canyon proper and just outside. The place was named from a large spring that in years past flowed just at the entrance of the canyon, in early days a favorite camping spot for emigrants, as the old California trail ran nearby. Several years ago, a mighty flood rushed