

stead of comporting themselves in the usual way, they gathered in flocks of from half a dozen to thirty or more individuals, and took to the high cottonwoods, going over the whole top of a tree after the methodical manner of a flock of nut-hatches or bush-tits, even hanging from the branches upside down when need be.

Although not encountered in any numbers, enough Bridled Tits (*Baeolophus wollweberi*) were seen in the valley bottom to point to the probability that the species occurs regularly in such situations. As there seem to be but few state records for the Gadwall (*Chaulelasmus streperus*), I record a female shot a few miles east of Phoenix, March 27, when there seemed to be more of the same species present among the large flocks of teal and Shovelers.

Ornithologically as well as otherwise, Arizona is a wonderful state, and a great deal remains to be done among the birds within its boundaries. It is almost a pity that its southern border offers so many inducements to the collector during the spring and summer, the consequence being that other parts of the state, and the south as well during the winter, have rather suffered for lack of systematic field work.

Covina, California, August 28, 1916.

MEETING SPRING HALF WAY

By FLORENCE MERRIAM BAILEY

III. (*Concluded from page 190*)

AS WE approached Mexico, not only were hackells more frequently seen, but yuccas became more common, sturdy little drum majors, four to twelve feet high, offering good nesting sites to Orioles and Thrashers. Cactus also increased in amount and variety. The beautiful magenta clusters of the ribbed *Cereus* and a small devil's head, with hooked spines, were among them. The thickets were becoming more dense, a veritable jungle of mesquite, huisache, butterfly tree, cactus, and yucca, suggesting the eleven foot rattlers that had been reported with such an air of verity. When Mr. Bailey was tempted in by some rare specimen, the old Texan cried excitedly, "You better come out of that thicket there's buggers there I tell you!" But a long black snake dispatched by the roadside was the worst 'bugger' encountered. Near a pond a plant resembling sunflower was found together with masses of a white nicotine that fairly smelled of tobacco.

Some of the migrants met with were near their southern breeding limits but the Veery seemed decidedly out of place beside Golden-fronted Woodpeckers and the two Doves, the Ground and the White-winged. In the mesquite thickets two of the common notes heard were those of the Golden-fronted Woodpecker and the Wood Pewee. The soft lulling notes of the Wood Pewee to us northerners brought up pictures of cool, high, heavily-roofed northern woods that contrasted strangely enough with these low, hot, thin-leaved mesquite, cactus, and thorn thickets, drolly spoken of as timber; but though the Pewee, which winters from Nicaragua to Colombia and Peru, breeds as far north as southern Canada, some of its numbers do breed as far south as southern Texas.

At our first lunch camp beyond Sauz Ranch a thunderstorm overtook us just as the Texan had lit the fire. He had gathered his firewood painfully, complaining, "There's plenty of that little bresh, but its mighty thorny I can tell you!" and loath to have to gather a second batch, when the rain began, slipped the bake oven over his fire. Fifteen or twenty minutes later when about two inches of rain had fallen and his fire was out, the old man, standing in the water remarked, facetiously, "A little more and this would have been a right smart rain".

While waiting for the roads to dry off a little we walked around among the bushes where the Thrashers and other birds were singing and the White-winged Dove was hooting like an Owl. In the cactus we found nests of Curve-billed Thrasher and Cactus Wren, while the Bullock Oriole, Chat, Yellow Warbler, Summer Tanager, Bewick Wren, Roadrunner, Shrike, and the small Texas Woodpecker added interest to the hour.

In going on we realized that we were nearing Mexico, for at a roadside store, where strings of garlic hung on the wall, we got two dollars of Mexican money for one of United States coin.

Thirty-five miles from the Mexican line we forded Rio Coloral, formerly one of the mouths of the Rio Grande. Here we found Spotted Sandpipers, a flock of White-winged Doves, a Fish Hawk catching fish, and a Mockingbird with a nest in a blooming tuni cactus. In this, the land of the Mockingbird, one of the birds would often start a moonlight chorus, birds of other kinds joining in as they awoke, the Cassin Sparrow being among the nocturnal choristers. These nocturnal concerts which have been described by other field workers, were among the most delightful features of our life in the open. In the thickets beyond Rio Coloral we found the Sennett Oriole and the handsome Green Jay, a Mexican bird just ranging up into southern Texas. Fresh deer tracks were also seen.

Twenty-three miles from Mexico we camped for a night near a Mexican hackell where we got *centimo leche*, saw women carrying big milk cans on their shoulders and Señors in pointed hats and Señoritas in black rebozas. In sight of camp Jack rabbits nibbled grass and ambled about trustingly. A Caracara flew by, at which, to our amusement, a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher dashed after him and pouncing down, rode on his back till they were out of sight. Texas Woodpeckers and Orioles were in evidence, and Cowbirds fed around the mules. But our camp was named Parauque Camp for the Parauque, a new bird to me, a Mexican bull bat that comes up into southern Texas and whose hoarse *pa-rau'-que* called us hurriedly from our camp fire. Out in the mesquites it would fly from one bare spot to another catching insects like a Poor-will.

The next day there was one long stretch of white daisies framed by mesquite, daisies smaller and with finer petals than the eastern flower but effective in the mass when turned toward the sun. In the main it was a day of blooming cactus, splendid masses of it in fuller bloom than we had found it before; a day that gave new meaning to the word cactus to me. Never again would it stand for spine-covered grotesque forms of vegetation. Does the desert bloom like a rose? No, it blooms like a cactus! Nature strews your path with thorns, it is true, but only to ensure the flowers, big generous blooms of gorgeous hues, bright lemon, soft saffron, dull orange, magenta, and glowing crimson. Seven species there were along our way. Lowly ground clusters

made glad the waste places, fairly excited us by their triumphant notes of color; low cactus trees held the eye as landscape centers, and great walls, twice our height, yellow with bloom, fairly radiated sunlight. Cactus Camp we dubbed our night's camp for it was beside an eight to ten acre patch of solid yellow flowered prickly pear.

In one cactus bush, oddly enough, a wood rat was sitting in an old Thrasher's nest that he had fixed over for himself. Another wood rat had decorated its house with one of Mr. Bailey's small traps, a rare specimen for its museum! On one side of camp was a small slough that would have been tempting for a swim had it not been for the alligator slides on its banks. The soft mud of the roads here was marked up with tracks of turtle, deer, and armadillo, and the ground in many places covered with miniature toads.

From the cactus strip we drove down through coast marshes, really river flats extending along both sides of the Rio Grande, where numerous small *Ammodramuses* kept flying up from the marsh grass, buzzing low over the tufts to drop down again out of sight.

After our long journey through country whose occasional houses were Mexican hackells, when approaching Brownsville we looked twice at an unfamiliar appearing building and then exclaimed, "Why, that house has boards on it!" so quickly had our eyes accepted Mexican standards. Fresh from the prairie with eyes trained to enjoy soft colors we came to a Mexican house whose dull pink wall harmonized well with its grape vine trellis, and the adjoining pink-walled chapel with its cross standing on the ground beside it. As we drove by a pretty little *Señorita* ran out and pointing to the road with a volley of Spanish held up three fingers. When we failed to comprehend, she grew embarrassed and ran back to the house full of shy laughter, but a guess that she was sent to collect the toll gate fare finally saved the situation.

As we entered Brownsville, May 1, after a hundred and eighty miles of level prairie, the jocose old Texan called out, "I can't see the town for these yere plegged houses!" Mexican hackells and palmetto roofed sheds and brush corrals were found in the heart of the town, but a public school building with piazzas running around two stories, told of the white population. A boy with a sling shot shooting Eave Swallows from a large colony nesting about a building had a modern air, and girls in shirt waists on bicycles offset *Señoritas* with blue or black rebozas over their heads. The principal industry of the town was apparently Mexican drawn work, though the manes and tails of the horses had been cut off by the makers of Mexican hair work!

A small pink frame house with pink pillars was pointed out as the birth-place of the Mexican Republic, for here in his early days Porfirio Diaz had lived and planned the Mexican revolution. A larger house next door with white pillars and an air of prosperity was pointed out as the second home of the man with the iron hand.

In Brownsville, be it noted, no English Sparrows were seen. A number of native birds were found, among them the Buzzard, the Mexican Crested Flycatcher, Jackdaws, Martins, Barn and Eave Swallows, Mockingbirds and Titmice.

From Brownsville we ferried across the Rio Grande to Matamoras, the river, which was rising rapidly, swirling around cutting its banks at such a rate that it was plain to see how it had cut its way down from Rio Coloral. On both sides of the river the chief crops were then cotton, corn, and sugar cane, but oranges, lemons, bananas, and guavas were also seen growing. Both

Brownsville and Matamoras were formerly towns of great wealth, Matamoras having been the distributing center during the Mexican war; but externally the flat-roofed, one story adobes with their softly tinted walls and blinds were merely characteristic Mexican dwellings. The iron gratings for doors and windows may have hinted at vaults and safes of days of opulence but they also bespoke the southern climate where doors and windows must needs be open at night. The plaza and market place were characteristic and the picturesque old cathedral whose chimes could not be rung without the payment of a tax had bullet holes left from war times.

With all this foreign setting it was a surprise to find an enthusiastic botanist, a woman connected with the Presbyterian mission, actually teaching botany to the Spanish Señoritas. Would that some one could have taught them the birds!

Leaving Brownsville late in the day we were obliged to camp for the night within too easy reach of the town, for our road was as historic as the towns themselves, and although the tragedies of earlier days were now infrequent, we were warned by an old army officer to camp before dark well away from the road and to have no late camp fires to attract attention. In spite of the keen interest taken in our movements by the Brownsville Mexicans, however, the first night passed without incident; but the second night we camped in the mesquite which offers thin cover and in the middle of the night the camp guardian awoke to find two mounted Mexicans at the foot of his sleeping bag. With the instinct of an old timer who sleeps with his gun in his blankets, he had his finger on the trigger ready to shoot through the blankets when the men looking down on him—asked the road to Brownsville!

Farther on our way from the Mexican boundary we passed a party of sulen, hard faced Mexicans driving a band of suspiciously good looking horses, which reminded us of the locked gates of the cattle ranches. And later when we were crossing King's Ranch we met three horsemen so well mounted and armed that we imagined they might be looking for missing horses. The old Texan, however, said they were Mrs. King's soldiers and that probably "something had happened" down at the other end of the ranch and they were "going to see about it."

In spite of local tragedies we passed safely on our way, our only excitements supplied by the "varmints" of our old camp man. A cup of water poured down what appeared to be a gopher hole in front of the tent one morning brought out a tarantula, an inhabitant of the clay soil where as the Texan complained, "the mud growed to the tent pins". A second spider when trying to evade pursuit ran down a convenient sleeping bag, hence the name Tarantula Camp! Perognathus Camp commemorated a little pocket mouse who, when a floor without holes was being selected for the sleeping bags, popped out of a closed door in the ground and ran into the tent, and who, in searching for his door in the night tramped on our beds and finally got into a trap. There was also one Rattlesnake Camp, though two earned the name, and the shooting of a third rattler coiled in a trail almost led to serious consequences. The shot roused a band of range cattle, the most dangerous animals one encounters in the west, and with their keen hunting instinct they took after the hunter, who only escaped them by dodging into the chaparral as they came charging furiously along, heads and tails up. A Texas long horn at one ranch that we passed had a spread of horn measuring about five feet, for the old

Spanish stock which has nearly run out has gone to horns, in southern Texas. A ground squirrel was seen on our way north, and in one place a red coyote ran across the road ahead of us turning to look back over his shoulder.

On the way north, among the choice southern birds seen were Black-crested Titmice, the exquisitely tinted pink and gray Pyrrhuloxia, a pair of tiny Verdins about one of their big globular nests, Red-eyed Cowbirds sitting on the roadside fences, a White-tailed Kite on a bush in a salt flat, and a small flock of the Black-bellied Tree Ducks standing high on their long legs on small tufts in a pond surrounded by pink water lilies; while on a cool looking pond over whose shimmering water dragon flies were wavering, the diminutive bluish gray Mexican Grebe, found only between southern Texas and Panama was seen swimming about, appropriately enough, among blue and white water lilies.

A number of nests were found in passing. On May 4, eggs were seen in a White-winged Dove's nest, and young in a Jackdaw's nest; on May 5 a Sennett Oriole's nest with four eggs was found in a yucca, a remarkable basket shaped nest hung by a handle from the bayonets of the yucca. The same day a Mockingbird's nest with four eggs was found in a blooming cactus, a Caracara's nest was discovered in the top of a small round oak with fuzzy-headed nestlings, and in a huisache a family of half grown Cardinals were being fed; and on May 6, a Desert Sparrow's nest was found in a low bush with large feathered young.

While the bulk of migration had passed, on May 6, two Whooping Cranes were seen going through their maneuvers in the sky; on May 8 a Wilson Phalarope, a beauty in full breeding plumage, was watched swimming about on a flood water pond; on May 9, a flock of two or three hundred Dickcissels was seen on the fences; on May 10 a large flock of Mourning Doves were passed on a fence; a Black Tern was seen over a lake, and several species of Sandpipers on a narrow strip of pond; besides a few other northerners seen on different days, among them a few Ducks, Thrushes, and Warblers, notably the Black-throated Green, the Blackburnian, and Redstart on May 11, at Petranilla Creek.

The prairie flowers as we went north also underwent a remarkable change. Although we made the whole trip of about three hundred and sixty miles from Corpus Christi to Brownsville and return in seventeen days, not only had the great waves of migration passed north but in places the prairie carpet had changed completely during the interval. An entire set of social plants had gone out of bloom and been replaced by others. In one section we were nearly a day with a newly laid carpet of yellow tar weed that gave a softly tinted picture, the yellow green floor having a wall of dull green mesquite and a roof of soft blue sky. Between Petranilla Creek and Corpus Christi where, on April 24, the ground had been pink with evening primroses, on May 11 it was covered with white mint as far as the eye could see in all directions. The change was so complete that it was positively startling.

But one gets to expect big things of the prairie—waves of flowers, passing throngs of birds, overhead the starry host of heaven, and round about the encompassing clouds. One moonlight night we camped among huisache trees and slept on a bed of daisies, and after the moon set the sky grew fuller and fuller of stars till one could but marvel at their myriad host. Silent night! What infinite peace Nature offers her children! On one of our days when there

was open prairie from horizon to horizon and the blooming white floor and the uplifted song of the Meadowlark had put us in tune, we had a characteristic prairie cloud effect. We were encircled at first by low white cloud flecks in the blue and then as they grew and grew, by encompassing white clouds that seemed to travel with us, till, after crossing a gulch we came up on the other side, seemingly right up into the clouds when, as forest trees rise in a fog, the white host loomed up, white challenging spirits before our path.

Washington, D. C., April 6, 1916.

NESTING OF THE LECONTE THRASHER

By J. R. PEMBERTON

WITH TWO PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

IN THE CONDOR (Vol. vi, 1904, pp. 95-98) M. French Gilman has given us a rarely good and complete account of the nesting habits of the Leconte Thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*). It was with much pleasure that I was able during the spring of 1916 to observe the many interesting characteristics attrib-



Fig. 53. NEST OF LECONTE THRASHER. HALF OF THE CHOLLA CACTUS HAS BEEN TORN AWAY TO EXPOSE THE STRUCTURE.