

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Fly-catching Birds.—While there is but little in my note books relating to fly-catching activities of birds other than the true flycatchers, the paragraph on this subject by Tracy I. Storer, in the "Field and Study" columns of a late CONDOR (vol. XXI, no. 3, May-June, 1915, p. 125), induces me to offer some examples which interested me greatly at the time of their occurrence. One of these happened while I was sojourning, in the role of a convalescent, at Arrowhead Hot Springs, San Bernardino County, California, in May, 1916. On several mornings, as I was sitting in the large lounging hall of the hotel there and trying to pass away the idle hours by gazing at the landscape, my attention was attracted by the peculiar actions of a San Diego Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia cooperi*) which would frequently fly up from a near-by hedge and apparently endeavor to enter a room at the end of the veranda by means of a closed window, in spite of the glass. This became such a regular occurrence that one warm morning I moved outside with my field glass to watch the game, thinking that it must be a very stupid bird not to have learned by repeated failures that the glass was beyond its powers of penetration. Much to my surprise the bird proved to be feasting upon house flies that nightly congregated upon the window pane, made warmer than the surrounding walls by the artificial heat of the room, and which were rendered sluggish by the chill of the early morning temperature.

The bird would fly up from the railing of the veranda, pick a fly or two off the glass, and return to its look-out perch to locate more, disappearing now and then probably to a not far distant nest as carrying capacity became strained, but returning for further supplies until the increasing warmth of the morning revived the flies sufficiently so that they could go about their regular business of the day.

Another especially interesting case took place toward the end of June (1919) in the Bohemian Grove, near Monte Rio, Sonoma County, California. One day, as I was sitting at my typewriter in my camp, the sound of humming wings made me look up, as such a sound is not often heard inside the grove, and a female Allen Hummingbird (*Selasphorus alleni*) was seen but a few yards away, hovering about ten feet above the ground. Dancing in a broad beam of sunlight glancing through the trees just beyond her was a rather scattering swarm of medium sized flies of some sort, a little smaller than a house fly. Suddenly the hummingbird shot into their midst and picked out *eight flies* in rapid succession, poising in the center of the swarm and making a short dart at each victim. These flies seemed to be rather large sized prey for so small billed a bird and eight of them apparently sufficed, for the bird flew away and did not return.

The Nuttall Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys nuttalli*) sometimes indulges in the pastime of catching some sort of insects in such a manner as possibly to come under the head of fly-catching. I have seen this bird take insects by jumping into the air after them, with a sort of fluttering wing motion to assist them, although never quite flying after the victims. Most, if not all, of the other varieties that I have noted indulging in this exciting pastime have been enumerated in Storer's list.—JOSEPH MAILLIARD, *San Francisco, July 14, 1919.*

A California Specimen of the Sandhill Crane.—The Sandhill Crane (*Grus mexicana*) is of sufficiently rare occurrence in California at the present time to make it seem worth while to place on record the capture of a specimen from any part of the state. The close resemblance between the Sandhill and the Little Brown cranes renders it difficult to judge from sight records alone as to the relative numbers of the two species, but there is good reason to believe that while the Little Brown is still fairly numerous as a winter visitant to some sections of California, the Sandhill occurs in very small numbers at any season. Thus, for example, the extensive collecting of water birds carried on by R. H. Beck, for the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology in the vicinity of Los Baños, Merced County, during the winter of 1911-12, produced several specimens of the Little Brown Crane, but none of the Sandhill. Mr. Beck had opportunities of examining the bags of market hunters of the vicinity, from whom he obtained specimens of many species of water birds, so that his failure to procure examples of the Sandhill Crane means the ab-

sence of that bird from the bags of many hunters, not merely from that of one collector alone.

With all the collecting that we have carried on in California, it was but recently that this Museum received its first specimen of the Sandhill Crane. Two cranes were sent in by Mr. Al. Chavis, one Sandhill and one Little Brown, both shot on the Hall Ranch, near Corcoran, Kings County, California, November 17, 1918. The birds were shipped in the flesh, and prepared as study skins at the Museum. The Sandhill is an adult male, the Little Brown an immature male. That is, the latter still retains much of the rusty, immature plumage, and has the top of the head feathered, though it is apparently fully developed as to weight and measurements.

It was probably two days after the birds were killed that we received them, and the colors of eyes and of the naked skin on the head may have changed somewhat since death. These colors, however, are here noted as they appeared when the specimens arrived, comparison being made with Ridgway's "Color Standards and Color Nomenclature" (1912). Measurements are in millimeters. Stomach examinations were made by Dr. H. C. Bryant, of this Museum. Details of the two birds are as follows:

Grus mexicana, male adult (Mus. Vert. Zool., no. 29547). Weight 11 lbs., 15 oz. (no fat whatever upon the bird). Length (legs extended), tip of bill to tip of toes, 1552 mm.; length, tip of bill to tip of tail, 1170; spread wings, 2105; wing, 541; tail, 193, culmen, 151; tarsus, 239; middle toe and claw, 98. Number of rectrices, 12. Iris yellow, close to salmon-orange; the eye was somewhat sunken and filmy when examined. Feet and claws, black; upper mandible, black; lower mandible, black basally and at tip, dirty grayish at middle. Naked skin on top of head close to pomegranate purple. The last mentioned area was of a particularly difficult color to match, as it was blotchy and uneven, and the character of the skin made close comparison impossible. The best that could be done was to give the color as it appeared in general effect at a little distance, regardless of differences in detail caused by papillae, etc. Stomach contents: Vegetable matter, 100 per cent; about 325 kernels of wheat and 6 kernels of barley, together with some hulls. Much of the grain had sprouted, as though taken from a grain field where it was beginning to come up.

Grus canadensis, male immature (Mus. Vert. Zool., no. 29548). Weight, 7 lbs., 11 oz. (bird very fat). Length (legs extended), tip of bill to tip of toes, 1270 mm.; length, tip of bill to tip of tail, 940; spread wings, 1780; wing, 455; tail, 150.5; culmen, 93; tarsus, 207; middle toe and claw, 89. Number of rectrices, 12. Iris dark; naked edge of eyelid, dirty whitish; feet and claws, black; bill blackish. Stomach contents: Vegetable matter 100 per cent; about 180 kernels of wheat, with an abundance of wheat hulls and bits of straw, as though gleaned from a stubble field.—H. S. SWARTH, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, April 30, 1919.*

Sharp-shinned Hawks and Small Birds.—May I make a small correction in Mr. Law's account of the incident he relates on p. 27 of *THE CONDOR* for January-February, 1919? The hawks were Sharp-shinned not Cooper, the third female was a bird of the preceding year in the first plumage, and it, together with the male, was also shot, making a clean sweep of these pestiferous destroyers.

At the risk of being quoted as an awful example by the ultra-protectionists of the "balance of nature" school, I must repudiate any desire, whether prompted by curiosity or otherwise, of seeing an *Accipiter* raise a brood—I know too well at what a sacrifice of small bird life this result would be achieved.—ALLAN BROOKS, *Okanagan Landing, B. C., August 4, 1919.*

Notes from Inyo County, California.—Several weeks of the month of March, 1919, were passed by me at Lone Pine, Inyo County, California. Birds, while numerous as individuals, were hardly so in species, and only the following seem worthy of note:

Pipilo crissalis senicula. A pair was discovered in vine tangle bordering a boggy field one mile south of Lone Pine, March 22. The female of this apparent pair was secured.

Amphispiza nevadensis canescens. Careful search of congenial locations for this species failed to disclose any individuals until March 21, when one was secured. After this date it was fairly common.