

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

On the Acorn-storing Habit of Certain Woodpeckers.—In a recent article in the CONDOR, Dr. William E. Ritter gives an interesting discussion of the habit of the California Woodpecker of inserting acorns and sometimes pebbles into small holes drilled for their reception in the bark and dead wood of trees. During a two years stay in British Honduras the writer had a good opportunity to observe this same curious instinct in a closely related form, *Melanerpes formicivorus albeolus*. These extremely industrious birds not only store acorns in the same manner as the California Woodpecker, but also deposit them in great quantities in hollow trees and similar places. I have seen a hollow pine tree with a cavity six to eight inches in diameter filled for a distance of nearly twenty feet with acorns dropped into a good sized hole at that distance above the ground. Acorn-filled trees of this sort I found not uncommon. Sometimes an opening at the bottom showed the earlier acorns deposited, completely decayed and crumbling to dust. They must have been there for several years, and probably were not brought by the same birds that completed the accumulation. I often saw the woodpeckers bring the acorns and drop them into these "acornaries".

I lived for some time in an old house in which the roof of an upper veranda had been supported by timbers six inches square. These had been injured by termites and rendered unsafe, and had then been boxed with heavy boards of the proper width. Later the termites had completed their work of destruction and had almost entirely removed the timbers, leaving the hollow boxing. The woodpeckers had made holes near the tops of some of these and used them for acorn storage. One that I noted was filled for a distance of at least four feet, as could be seen where the boards had sprung apart slightly, and possibly much farther.

In these cases it would be utterly impossible for the birds ever to make use of the acorns in any way, yet they go on generation after generation laboriously gathering them. Furthermore, in an even, tropical climate like that of British Honduras, where there can be but little variation in food supply from season to season, it is difficult to see how, under any circumstances, such a habit could be of any great advantage; but even granting that it is so in cases where the accumulation is accessible, these instances show how an over-developed instinct may lead to actions not only useless but highly absurd.

So far as the California Woodpecker is concerned, Dr. Ritter's conclusions are in all probability correct. This suggests the possibility that the Central American bird was derived from the more northerly form or from northern ancestry, which acquired the instinct under conditions like those now existing in California, and that, as it pushed gradually into the tropics, it retained the instinct long after it had ceased to be of any utility. Such speculations, however, are of doubtful value.—MORTON E. PECK, *Willamette University, Salem, Oregon, June 8, 1921.*

The Brown-headed Nuthatch in Oklahoma.—The Brown-headed Nuthatch (*Sitta pusilla*) does not seem to have been heretofore recorded from Oklahoma. On July 5, 1920, I saw one bird of this species on a southern yellow pine near Cedar Creek in Pushmataha County. Although the specimen was not taken, there could be no doubt as to its identity since I had ample opportunity to study the bird at close range through field glasses; and, moreover, this locality is well within its expected range, as it has been found in Texas, Arkansas and Missouri.—MARGARET M. NICE, *Norman, Oklahoma, April 7, 1921.*

The Water Ouzel in Arizona.—The scarcity of published records of the occurrence of the Dipper, or as I would personally prefer to call it, the Water Ouzel (*Cinclus mexicanus unicolor*), in Arizona seems to make it desirable to add to these records. On first coming into southern Arizona a few years ago from a locality where I had come to know this bird well and to expect it along the tumbling mountain streams, I confidently looked for it along the principal permanent stream in the Santa Catalina Mountains, but was disappointed. It did not appear to be present either in the lower portion of this canyon (Sabino) or along the headwaters and upper stream where the eastern brook trout has been successfully introduced, and where conditions appeared