

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Observations on the Spotted Sandpiper.—Mr. A. J. van Rossem's paper in the April *Auk* (XLII, 1925, p. 230) under this title is opportune in drawing attention to the practice of so many non-collecting observers in ascribing the female sex to the most solicitous individual of a nesting pair. In the case of the Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*), many published photographs of the sitting "female" are, obviously, from the more sparsely spotted breast, of the male bird. The following corroborative incident will illustrate how little the female has to do with the raising of the young.

One day in late July, 1919, wishing to make some life studies of the downy young of this species, I spent about an hour watching a male bird which I knew had recently hatched young. During the whole period the female remained indifferent, some hundred yards away. Finally locating two young birds, I confined them in a deep basket while I drew them. The male fluttered nearby in an agony of solicitude, and his cries attracted the attention of a migrating male which joined him and was almost as excited and solicitous as the actual parent. Not till then did the female join the group, and her actions were solely to attract the attention of the males. Puffing out her breast she ran from one to the other of the distracted males, stretching herself to her utmost height and uttering her courting trill, perfectly indifferent to the peepings of her offspring. It is probable that the reversal of the sexual duties in the Scolopacidae is much more prevalent than at present assumed to be, especially where the female is notably larger than the male.

At the present time, the middle of July, migrating Spotted Sandpipers in one's and two's are passing along the shores of Okanagan Lake. Nearly all are adult females, which have probably abandoned their spouses to the upbringing of their broods. The species in the more open portions of this region is reduced to about one-fifth of its former abundance, solely due to the depredations of Crows and Magpies. My friend Mr. C. deB. Green lives on a small lake admirably adapted to the Sandpiper's requirements; under the date of May 28 he writes me: "Practically all the Spotted Sandpipers left this lake after the Crow persecution. I see one solitary bird this year to date, and there used to be fifteen pairs on my lake alone. Three times last year I saw Crows capture large-sized young and tear them to pieces before the eyes of the screaming parents."—ALLAN BROOKS, *Okanagan Landing, British Columbia, July 17, 1925.*

Lewis Woodpecker Abundant in Napa County, California.—In Pope Valley and for a distance of several miles along Putah Creek, in Napa County, Lewis Woodpeckers (*Asyndesmus lewisi*) were present in very large numbers on March 28 and 29, 1925. We drove to the ranch of Mr. A. A. Shupp, about three miles beyond Pope Valley, in the afternoon of the 27th, going by way of Rutherford and Chiles. The 28th was spent on and in the vicinity of the Shupp ranch. While the weather was generally unfavorable for both birds and observer, being cold and rather windy, with occasional rains, Lewis Woodpeckers were everywhere in numbers. By actual count as many as twelve birds were in sight at one time. The country is well wooded and near the mountains. There are orchards and cleared fields near the highway in the flat land. In the fields there are many large oaks. Even in the meadows and fields, where Western Meadowlarks were present, they did not exceed in numbers the Lewis Woodpeckers in the trees. Meadowlarks alone compared with the woodpeckers in numbers, and then only in the more open places. Woodpeckers equalled all other observed birds combined, excepting meadowlarks, and taking in the whole terrain far exceeded the meadowlarks. Our friends on the Shupp ranch had arrived there about the middle of February. They said these birds had been present in about the same quantity ever since. While Lewis Woodpeckers are not rare in any part of California, they are generally a more northern species and I had not expected to find them abundant, even profuse, in central California. But here they were the predominant species. Their presence everywhere gave a very good opportunity to learn something about them.

Lewis Woodpeckers are easily identified in the field by readily recognized and conspicuous diagnostic features: large size, solid dark green back, gray collar and throat, pinkish breast, long dark bill and short tail. As soon as a few were identified and observed no one could mistake the others. They do not always perch vertically

on a limb or trunk but quite as often sit horizontally on the smaller branches, often at the top of the tree, and there remain motionless for considerable periods, after the manner of the Sparrow Hawk. The flight is crow-like. Near the ranch house there was a fence post, with a shallow notch in the flat top. This these birds used for opening acorns, which were fitted into the notch and opened with the bill. At almost any time a bird could be seen at this business, which evidently had been going on for a considerable time, because the ground about the post was covered with empty acorn shells. The top of the post was invariably left quite clean and free from shells, except when a bird was disturbed and forced away before the meal was finished and the table cleared. The use of this crevice or notch to secure acorns while being opened, suggests one of the reasons for the habit of the California Woodpecker, of placing acorns and nuts in holes drilled in wood and bark of trees. At least it is one of the advantages secured.

No evidence of nesting was found, but the birds were often seen in pairs and some of them probably breed in this region.—CLAUDE GIGNOUX, *Berkeley, California, April 8, 1925.*

Western Martin Colonies.—In the CONDOR for September, 1924, p. 195, Dr. H. C. Bryant mentions certain cities in which the Western Martin (*Progne subis hesperia*) colonizes. I should like to add the two colonies found at Santa Barbara and Balboa, respectively. The latter colony originated in 1919 with one pair of birds, according to J. P. Greeley, secretary of the Newport Bay Investment Company. The birds nested in the large boat-house and pavilion owned by this company, and from the first were given protection. English Sparrows and Linnets have been discouraged from nesting by the Company, and boys and others warned of molesting the martins. Early in July of 1920 I, personally, first discovered the martins there. Since then I have kept track of them and have found the colony increasing each year in number of breeding pairs. In July, 1924, there were fourteen nests. It is interesting to note that the nests are located on rafters over the boat slips, some of them being directly over water. The feeding parents do a good deal of their hunting over the waters of Newport Bay. The trash and "sweepings" cast out from the nests, especially in early mornings, make quite a litter on the dock, and consist mostly of the wings of dragon flies, damsel flies and some lepidoptera. The excreta seem to be carried away from the vicinity.

Dr. Bryant recalls a single pair of birds on Mt. Wilson; that colony also has thrived and is most vigorous and noisy in the breeding season, being one of the conspicuous features of the top of Mt. Wilson.

William L. and Irene Finley (*Condor*, xxvi, 1924, p. 7) ask if anyone has seen Western Martins nesting in bird houses. A friend informs me that in Sierra County, California, a colony nested in a bird box on the roof of the ranch barn, and did so for years. In the CONDOR for March, 1919, page 76, a colony is reported as nesting in the center of a town in bird boxes.

Believing with the Finleys that Western Martins will eventually adopt artificial nesting cavities, I assisted the Park Department of the City of Pasadena, California, in planning and locating a martin house. The local colony is at present nesting in the cornice of the Security Bank Building and we sought to place the house, for the sake of gaining success for the experiment, on the roof of the same building. Neither the Board of Directors of this nor of any other nearby down-town building would accept our donation for a sky-piece, basing their objections variously: unsightliness, wind-hazard, insurance, vermin and botheration. The house has lost a year's trial in the meantime, but is going up in Central Park in time for 1925 inspection. We feel that our chances for success are much lessened by the removal of three blocks from the selected haunts. The house follows government specifications, is equipped for lowering and inspection, but has not the sparrow trap-doors.—ROLAND CASE ROSS, *Dept. of Nature Study, Los Angeles City Schools, May 10, 1925.*

Pigmy Owl Killing a Quail.—Meeting Mr. Bentley of the forest service at the Portal Ranger Station, Chiricahua Mountains, on the afternoon of January 21, he informed me that on the previous evening he had been attracted by a commotion on the hillside nearby and upon investigation he had found a female Gambel Quail grasped by the