

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Nesting of the California Pigmy Owl in Yosemite.—On May 19, 1925, the nest of a California Pigmy Owl (*Glaucidium gnoma californicum*) was located, in a cavity of a black oak standing within seventy feet of the highway and close to the LeConte Lodge. The entrance was about four inches in diameter, a circular hole some thirty feet from the ground, where the base of a small lateral branch had decayed away in a large upright dead limb. The nest within was somewhere well below the entrance.

There was little difficulty in distinguishing the two birds of the pair, as the breast plumage of the female was of a darker shade, and her tail shorter, evidently worn so by the confines of the nest. As incubation was only then in progress, it would seem too short a period in which to be thus affected, and the fact might be taken to indicate an earlier nest. Later the tail acquired its normal length.

The only note of the female was a soft twitter used indiscriminately, as when in protest to noisy pugnacious neighbors or when on the wing flying to her mate in response to his summons. His call invariably announced food, and was the well known whistle of a single note given three times, rarely four, and the interval before repeating, of variable duration, extending into minutes. On one occasion only was the long trilling call heard, and possibly it might have come from some other member of the tribe. He seldom went near the hole, and generally refrained from alighting in the tree, but called from a nearby oak grove, the lower fringe of growth that covers the talus slope from the cliffs. She often responded promptly from the hole, flying toward his general direction and, when definitely located, darting at him, seizing the offering in an apparent clash of wings, and either remaining to eat it or, as the case might be, carrying it back to the hole. Sometimes her exit would be delayed, obviously due to her inability to catch the sound, and occasionally she was obdurate and refused to appear.

The first evidence that the young were receiving solid food was on June 10, when the female carried a lizard to the nest. As far as observed, the male never took part in feeding the young. No pellets or refuse of any kind could be found under the tree.

On June 21 a young bird appeared at the opening, and it was soon apparent that there were no others. From that time on to July 1, when the nest was deserted, it sat daily at the entrance. During the following days the bird remained near at hand, and gradually worked up the talus slope. The young bird appeared from the first fully developed, with no immaturity noticeable in the plumage. It was never fed at the entrance, but was first crowded back out of sight by the mother. On one occasion when she was away, and the young one sat there as usual, the male arrived with food and alighted in a neighboring tree. The young bird showed no recognition of the frequent calls; in fact the two acted as though oblivious of each other, and nothing took place during the half-hour they were under observation.

Between the day the nest was discovered, May 19, and July 1, an interval of forty-three days, nineteen identifications were made of the food material brought by the male and received by his mate. The list consists of eight lizards, five birds, and six small mammals, apparently mice. While this may represent fairly the main diet, it should be borne in mind that our occasional inability to recognize the prey was particularly applicable to smaller objects. The lizards were easily distinguished with their long dark tails hanging down behind the owl when at rest, and even more conspicuous when in flight.

Of the birds, the first to be recognized was a warbler, probably a female Calaveras, and later, on June 19, a male Calaveras was carried into the hole. On the 27th a fledgling of some small kind was noted, and on the following day, another of a larger species with noticeably long legs, and too immature to have left its nest.

There was nothing to indicate any nocturnal activity of the owls; in fact during the three months from May 1 to August 1 not a single call at night was heard. An early call soon after daybreak was not uncommon, and the last was never later than at dusk. During the latter half of June, the female spent much of her time in the trees near the nest, often roosting on a certain high dead branch. Here she was exposed to attacks, to which she generally showed indifference, perhaps snapping

occasionally; but once, when patience ceased to be a virtue, she pursued a noisy robin. The male was dedicated to the chase and would leave immediately after delivering his plunder. Naturally his arrivals were extremely irregular. The best record noted was on June 7 when, besides an early call, he brought in between 7 A. M. and 2 P. M. two lizards and two mice.—F. C. HOLMAN, *Berkeley, California, November 28, 1925.*

"Evidence" in the Case of the House Wren.—On page 242 of the November CONDOR there appears editorial comment on the soundness of Mr. Baldwin's statements on the fallibility of evidence from a legal standpoint, in the case of the House Wren. With all deference to Mr. Baldwin, both as a naturalist and a lawyer, I would like to point out that in his own evidence in defence of the wren he admits that most birds mob it or recognize it as an enemy. Is not this very strong evidence of its destructiveness? Other birds do not attack Catbirds, Robins, Red-headed Woodpeckers or other species which he considers should share the odium attached to the House Wren, nor do they in my experience recognize the English Sparrow as an enemy except when he is actually engaged in destroying their homes.

This almost universal recognition of House Wrens, Jays, and Grackles by most small birds as objects to be attacked and vituperated is surely the best of all evidence of their destructiveness, based on centuries of experience by the sufferers. Also the fact that Mr. Baldwin has numbers of birds nesting in the vicinity of his wren boxes is not actual evidence that he would not have many more if the wrens were not encouraged. In this connection the experience of Dr. A. A. Allen with his nesting Screech Owls should be considered. The resident nesting population was not appreciably lessened in spite of the tremendous slaughter perpetrated in the immediate vicinity by the owls.

I am not a lawyer but as a humble juror I could say of Mr. Baldwin's plea, "no evidence for the defence."—ALLAN BROOKS, *Nanaimo, British Columbia, November 21, 1925.*

Nesting of the Great-tailed Grackle in New Mexico.—There are but few authentic records of the occurrence of the Great-tailed Grackle (*Megaquiscalus major macrourus*) in New Mexico. Mr. R. T. Kellogg has collected the bird near Silver City (Condor, vol. 24, 1922, p. 30), and it has been reported from the Rio Grande Valley, near Las Cruces.

In all of my travels, extending over a period of more than ten years, I have not seen the bird in the Rio Grande Valley, either of New Mexico or Texas; but I have known of a single occurrence at Fort Stockton, Texas, about 250 miles southeast of El Paso. On July 21, 1924, I collected a female, in the molting plumage, in the Pecos Valley of New Mexico, about 35 miles south of Carlsbad; this was the first time I had seen the bird in the state.

On July 24, 1925, to my surprise, I found a breeding colony of these birds in a marshy, cat-tail filled draw, eight miles south of Carlsbad. At the point where these birds were located the Carlsbad-Malaga Highway parallels the railway line, only a wire fence separating the two right-of-ways. While passing along the road I noticed a male grackle, with the conspicuous drooping tail, flying low from a nearby cotton field to the cat-tail filled drain I had just crossed about 200 yards back. I stopped my car and walked back to the draw. On the roadway is only a low concrete bridge, while just above is a twelve-foot trestle where the railway line spans the drain. The thick cat-tails extended above and below as far as I could see, from a few feet wide at places to more than 150 feet at the widest points.

By the time I had reached the trestle a half dozen of the adult grackles, which were protesting my intrusion, were in sight, perched on the low telegraph posts and wires (which offered excellent look-outs) and on the cat-tails nearby. Great numbers of Red-winged Blackbirds were also sitting about. The unusual luxuriance of the cat-tails offered excellent protection for the birds; a little water was visible here and there in the bogs where the cattle had eaten down the grass. As I moved about quietly, I discovered several young grackles in the cat-tails, almost as large as the parent birds and flying easily. The adult birds that arrived after I returned to the nesting site, held food in their beaks. It was difficult to determine just how many birds were