

July, 1926

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

accompanied by a parent, were discovered in nearby ground shrubbery. Here one of them, standing on a slanting rock and obviously concerned over my too close approach, bobbed its body in the same manner as do Canyon Wrens and Rock Wrens.

As this performance was repeated two more times while I was observing this youngster, the conclusion seems warranted that it was a manifestation of an inherited instinct or ancestral trait, which seems to become inoperative in mature birds of this species, while still surviving in the adults of *Catherpes* and *Salpinctes*. At any rate I have never noticed such a performance by adults of *Troglodytes*, although it seems probable that an occasional grown-up may retain a habit which most of them live down.

This trait may, of course, be rare among juvenals of this species, and they may be, only now, tardily beginning to manifest an inherent wren group tendency, already well developed in the two other groups before mentioned.—J. EUGENE LAW, *Altadena, California, March 25, 1926.*

The White-throated Swift in western Yolo County, California.—The White-throated Swift (*Aëronautes melanoleucus*) has been reported along the Sierra-Cascade range north to Mount Shasta (Merriam, N. Amer. Fauna, no. 16, 1899, p. 117) and in the inner coast ranges to Mount Diablo (Cohen, Condor, v, 1903, p. 119). Its presence in more northern portions of the inner coast ranges might therefore be expected, since these hills resemble, ecologically, the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada. On May 21 and 30, 1925, I saw and heard White-throated Swifts over Putah Cañon, on the Yolo-Solano County boundary, about five miles west of Winters; six birds were observed on the former date. The cañon wall at that point has basaltic outcrops which would afford suitable nesting places, while abundant forage is available in the air over the stream. Search for nesting locations has, however, thus far been unfruitful.—TRACY I. STORER, *Zoological Laboratory, University Farm, Davis, California, April 8, 1926.*

An Unsuspected Relationship.*—The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius varius*) does not get his living from grubs, borers and other insects, thus being a benefit to man, but from the green bark and sap of healthy, thrifty trees. Thus he has always been condemned as a pest that must be destroyed. He is not protected by game laws and is condemned to be shot. Father had us shooting them for injuring his fruit and other trees. I studied a long time before I found out why such a harmful creature was ever created.

Years ago the nurseryman and orchardist used to girdle their fruit trees to make them bear fruit. A tree too thrifty and growing fast bears sparingly; but by checking its growth, that is, stunting the trees without injuring them too much, by girdling them or cutting a ring of the bark around several branches, those branches set to forming fruit buds more than leaf buds. By being familiar with this method I traced up the benefits of the sapsucker. He girdles the fruit and seed bearing trees that a multitude of birds depend on for food at certain seasons and which build their nests near such trees to provide handy food for their young. So this busy little sapsucker is really providing for them all. Poor persecuted little blessing! That's what I now think of him.

Much of this lesson I learned by gathering seed. I learned long ago that it was not the fast growing and thrifty trees that bore the seed, but those stunted ones, or trees in which the growth had been checked in some way. By looking closer I found that most of them had a girdle of holes. Many species of birds depend on black cherry, mountain ash, choke-cherry, viburnum and other trees of berry bearing variety. By observing closely I noticed that all trees of the above mentioned kinds had some branches drilled or girdled, thus keeping some bearing wood at work each year. Any one ought to see that it is a very serious matter to remove one link from nature's chain; and killing off the sapsucker would be serious.—CHARLES DOUGLAS, SR., *Waukegan, Ill., May 1, 1926.*

The Magpie Nesting in Kansas.—On May 28, 1925, I found a nest of the Magpie (*Pica pica hudsonia*) along the Arkansas River and two miles east of the Colorado-Kansas line in Hamilton County, Kansas. The nest was fifteen feet from the ground in a leaning willow which was growing at the edge of the flood-plain of the river. The

* Transmitted by Professor W. C. Allee, University of Chicago.

structure was eighteen inches in diameter and was two feet high, with a light screen of small sticks over the top. Some mud had been used in constructing the base. The lining was composed of fine sticks, rootlets, and horsehair. An adult, which was brooding two eggs, flew off the nest when the tree was approached; but it immediately returned to the tree and began calling.

Bunker in his "Birds of Kansas" (Kans. Univ. Sci. Bull., vol. 17, 1913, p. 150) gives the Magpie as a rare winter visitant in western Kansas. Goss gives the species as "formerly a resident; rare," in his "History of the Birds of Kansas". The authority for that statement is given in Goss' "Revised catalogue of the birds of Kansas" (1886, p. 35) where it is stated that this species was found nesting in Graham County, Kansas, in the summer of 1873 or 1874 by a Mr. Jeff Jordan. The birds were not seen after 1875.—JEAN LINSDALE, *Berkeley, California, April 28, 1926.*

A New Race of Say Phoebe, from Northern Lower California.—Specimens of the Say Phoebe arriving late last fall from the San Pedro Martir district of Lower California showed themselves at once to differ from anything previously contained in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. Comparisons have now been concluded with abundant material from Upper California, and also with an essential series of specimens from the Rocky Mountain region and Great Plains, loaned me from the National Museum through the willing aid of Doctors Wetmore and Richmond.

It is found that the birds from the east base of the Rocky Mountains, whence ("Arkansas River") *Muscicapa saya* Bonaparte was named, are just like the predominant type of Say Phoebe in California, Nevada, Arizona, and on the Mexican plateau. I concur with Swarth (Condor, xxviii, 1926, p. 45), as to the desirability of recognizing a northern race, *Sayornis sayus yukonensis* Bishop. Since the way seems to be clear as regards synonyms (see Ridgway, Birds N. and Mid. Amer., Part IV, 1907, pp. 603-604), it is in order to name a southern race which is apparently resident in Lower California.

Sayornis sayus quiescens. San José Say Phoebe.

Type locality.—San José, 2500 feet altitude, latitude close to 31°, about 45 miles northeast of San Quintin, Lower California, Mexico.

Type.—Male adult, in full fresh annual plumage; no. 46260, Mus. Vert. Zool.; September 27, 1925; collected by J. Grinnell, orig. no. 6341.

Diagnosis.—In general characters similar to *Sayornis sayus sayus*, but tone of coloration paler, this paleness being in the direction of ashy gray rather than light brown.

Range.—So far as now known, only an area in northwestern Lower California on the Pacific drainage from the Sierra San Pedro Martir west to the sea-coast. Life-zone chiefly Upper Sonoran. Specimens examined, 7, from the following localities: San José; San Telmo; Santo Domingo; Arroyo Nuevo York. All these localities lie between latitudes 30° 30' and 31° 30'.

Remarks.—No specimen of Say Phoebe out of 63 comparable skins from California duplicates in tone of color any of the six fall and winter skins at hand from the "San Quintin district" of Lower California. The pervading ashiness of these latter specimens contrasts with the brownish tones of *sayus*, most especially on the whole dorsum; the head of *quiescens* above the malar level is distinctly slaty; the outer surface of closed wing is varyingly "pale smoke gray" (of Ridgway, 1912) on the feather-edgings, to "light grayish olive" on the central portions of the coverts, while the more or less concealed darker portions of the secondaries are slaty rather than dark brown.

Wear and fading bring extreme "scorching" of coloration in Say Phoebes, especially in those from the Colorado and Mohave deserts; but this adventitious type of pallor involves a tint of tan, not the ashy tint characteristic of *quiescens* in unworn, unfaded condition. These two types of "paleness" must be distinguished, of course. In this connection, I find the following statement by Dr. L. B. Bishop (Auk, xvii, 1916, p. 116) accompanying his description of *yukonensis*: "Specimens of *saya* from Lower California and Arizona are the palest . . .".

With regard to dimensions, I am unable to see any outstanding character correlated with any portion of the general range of the Say Phoebe. None of the Lower California specimens, however, has quite as long a wing as some of the Rocky Mountain specimens of *sayus* and as most of the examples at hand of *yukonensis*. Without taking actual measurements, I judge whatever difference as does obtain in averages would be small, negligible as regards practical taxonomic value.