

with two eggs, and two with one apiece. A chick was in the process of emerging from its egg as I watched. When I returned from inspecting other nests, it had freed itself. The color of its skin was purplish blue.*

The question whether this is a new colony of nesting pelicans formed since the days when Loomis and Beck studied this region, or whether these gentlemen never discovered the nests because of the island's inaccessibility, seems at present to be undetermined. Perhaps, judging from the meagre numbers, the colony has come into existence only recently, assembled from migrating or winter-visiting birds.—LAIDLAW WILLIAMS, *Carmel, California, July 26, 1927.*

Freak Nesting Site of a Magpie.—During a walk on the morning of June 5, I had occasion to cross the Frenchman River by the railway bridge nearby. As I was stepping over the ties I heard the "wheezing" of young birds right under my feet. Getting down on my knees and peering through an inch space between two cross girders that were level with the ties I could see, just below, five or six nestlings with mouths agape. I took them for young crows and had no time just then to wait for a parent bird to appear; but on visiting the nest a week later I could tell by the black and white feathering that they were Magpies (*Pica pica hudsonia*).

The nest is directly under one of the rails and between two ties. It is supported by two intersecting braces and protected from above by the aforementioned girders. The usual "dome" is, therefore, absent, being both unnecessary and impossible in the restricted space available; and altogether there is not much nest, but for security it could scarcely be improved upon. The parent bird would come and feed the young while I was standing overhead, but would not venture so far when I stood looking up from below.

It would have been interesting to know whether the sitting bird maintained her position during the deafening roar of a passing train, only about 18 inches above her head, though the regular service is not more than one train per day. Under the rail opposite is another, half finished nest which was apparently abandoned in favor of the present site.—LAURENCE B. POTTER, *Gower Ranch, Eastend, Saskatchewan, Canada, June 14, 1927.*

Can Hawks Prevent Mouse Plagues?—An editorial note in the May issue of the CONDOR (XXIX, 1927, p. 172) supports Mr. Wyman's contention that the control of mouse or other rodent plagues lies in protecting their natural enemies, both winged and four footed. Now, while I am most anxious to see useful hawks protected it is more than doubtful that either these or mammalian mouse destroyers can prevent the plagues that periodically occur in many species of rodents.

I spent a large part of the year 1923 in California, in the San Joaquin Valley and the southern portion of the Sacramento Valley. Hawks were especially plentiful and a few were seen lying dead by the roadside, the victims of ignorant gunners, but only a few. At Snelling, Merced County, only some 180 miles north of the region where the mouse plague occurred in the latter part of 1926, hawks were more numerous than I have seen them at any point in North America in the last forty-six years, and my wanderings during that period cover a pretty wide field. On January 2, 1923, just four years before the height of the mouse plague I counted 120 hawks of the *Buteo* type in the air at once. This was not a migrating assemblage but just a normal concentration near a roosting point. Redtails constituted the majority of this gathering, Ferruginous Rough-legs, the "notably scarce or altogether wanting" California Squirrel Hawk, were well represented, and a few Red-bellied Hawks completed the list. All of these are notable mouse catchers and in addition Marsh Hawks and Sparrow Hawks were abundant and seen at all points in the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys.

Owls of several species were also numerous as well as coyotes, skunks, coons and weasels. In fact never in my life have I seen such a notable abundance of mouse catchers, including feral domestic cats in extraordinary numbers. Yet only four years later comes this devastating plague of rodents!

* On August 4, 1927, Dr. Louis B. Bishop with some friends and myself visited the island. We found eight young pelicans, all covered with down except where the juvenal plumage was coming through at the primaries, secondaries and scapulars, and on the head and tail.—L. W.

As a matter of fact mouse plagues as well as a swarming abundance of other rodents, rabbits, voles, lemmings, etc., may occur almost anywhere and are probably the result of some special abundance of food coupled with a freedom from disease for a number of consecutive years. Then disease comes and the species is all but exterminated. Such irruptions of rodents have been recorded in history from the earliest times, centuries before the decrease of raptorial birds and mammals.

In the subarctic regions the periods of abundance and scarcity in such rodents as voles, lemmings and hares is cyclic in spite of the abundance of their natural enemies. The wonderful work of the Biological Survey has shown how rodents may be controlled, even to the point of extermination over wide areas. In time they will be able to cope with any outbreak; let us help their efforts in every way and not place undue trust in the feeble domination of the natural enemies of rodents. In time, when bacterial inoculation may be the means employed to reduce rodents the abundance of hawks and owls may be distinctly harmful, as the infected mammals which should be spreading disease would be the easiest victims to predatory birds and mammals.—ALLAN BROOKS, *Okanagan Landing, B. C., July 10, 1927.*

EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

A most worthy undertaking is that just launched by the United States Biological Survey, to obtain a monthly census of water-fowl at selected points throughout North America. Doctor Oberholser is in immediate charge of this activity, and these auspices guarantee an energetic, well-organized effort toward a definite object. Too long has dependence in the formulating of game laws been left to hearsay, to the testimony of the casual sportsman, and to mere impression on the part of the better informed. Now, we are in line to get accurate, quantitative data—if Dr. Oberholser can be given adequate support by numerous good field observers who are in proper geographic locations. We recall as a fine type of such observation, Kibbe's study of the ducks on Lake Merritt, Oakland, as published in the *CONDOR* for March, 1925. Details of this new plan to obtain a nation-wide census of ducks and other water-fowl can be obtained by addressing Dr. H. C. Oberholser, Biological Survey, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. Let Cooper Club members aid him to the full extent that individual circumstances permit. Accurate knowledge of the numbers, distribution, and migration of our important game species is an absolute prerequisite to any proper move toward the conservation of this valuable national asset.

It should go without saying that the pages of the *CONDOR* are freely open for discussion on both sides of any ornithological question. Such discussion can be vigorous without, of course, verging at all on the personal. For example, in the present issue we (editorially) welcome Major Brooks' plain expression of his views on mouse plagues versus hawks—this despite the fact that "we" (the Editor personally) dissent from his statements and conclusions in just eight different points, by count! This is a two-sided question, and we urge that such of our readers as have definite evidence or logical opinion to offer, on whichever side these bear, contribute their offerings to our "field and study" department.

MINUTES OF COOPER CLUB MEETINGS

NORTHERN DIVISION

JUNE.—The regular monthly meeting of the Northern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Thursday, June 23, at 8:00 p. m. In the absence of president and vice-president, the Club requested Mr.