FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Watermelon as Warbler Food.—It is our custom to maintain pieces of ripe watermelon on a window food-ledge during the summer and early autumn. Many species of birds partake greedily of the red pulp, and occasionally even a dainty warbler finds it attractive.

On September 1, 2, and 3, 1928, a male Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica aestiva*, subsp.), in new autumn plumage, spent the whole of each day at or near the ledge, dividing his time between the branches of the surrounding shrubs and the watermelon. He ate the red pulp with apparent eagerness and delight, coming every few minutes for a few bites. That the warbler did eat the pulp was easily seen from the window, as bits of red were "masticated" before swallowing and at such times were glimpsed between his mandibles. A tiny rock pool a few feet away could have satisfied his thirst, had unflavored water sufficed.

On September 27, 28, and 29, 1929, another warbler duplicated the performance, except that it seemed less attentive to the watermelon in the afternoons, when the ledge and surrounding shrubbery were in shade. Fortunately, bird skins were available and when I laid specimens of Yellow (female), Tennessee, and Lutescent Warblers on the window sill a few inches from the live warbler, and the repeated returns of the latter gave ample opportunity for comparison, its identity as a Tennessee Warbler (*Vermivora peregrina*) seemed positive. It agreed in every detail with a female specimen of this species taken by me on Septembr 17, 1896, at Madison, Wisconsin: smoked line through the eye under a pale superciliary, greenish color tones dorsally, ventrally paler with whitish belly, absence of conspicuous edgings on wings, evenly-tapered acute beak.

During one of the absences of the Tennessee Warbler, as an experiment, I substituted halves of ripe tomato for the watermelon, pulling the pieces of the latter farther back on the ledge. On its next return, after a moment's hesitation, the bird thrust its beak into the cut side of the tomato and ate a bit of its pulp and then took another bite before apparently realizing the difference. Pausing, it spied the watermelon and went to it, and after that, so far as we saw, paid no further attention to the tomato.

It seems a safe surmise that neither of these warblers had encountered watermelon pulp before. So far as I know none of our American warblers have the watermelon habit. Perhaps, though, the adaptation is not involved. Birds are quick to detect the glisten of globules of water, which beckon to their thirst. A trial drink does the rest, when it is of watermelon and the bird is a warbler. And because sipping is too slow, when the food is so good, the warbler bites off the pulp to crush out the juice in its throat. But it does seem a little strange that the taste sense of a warbler to which bitter (?) worms and bitterer (??) spiders and gnats are prime delicacies, should find instant delight in the sweetness of watermelon. Perhaps there are specific palatal differentiations as between the sweet and the bitter worms. Will some one please come forward and taste worms?—J. EUGENE LAW, *Altadena, California, October 10, 1929.*

Prodigious Drillings of a Williamson Sapsucker.—On the morning of October 13, 1929, we discovered a young male Williamson Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*) in the pine wood near the Indian Caves, Yosemite Valley. When first seen the bird was at work drilling a hole in the bark of a great yellow pine. He was a shy bird and when we approached the tree where he was at work he flew to another tree some fifty yards away. After we chased him around through the tree-tops for some time we returned to the tree where he was first seen that we might make a study of the work done. Having had previous experience with sapsuckers of different sorts we knew them to be tremendous workers; still, we were amazed by the prodigious amount of work that had here been accomplished.

The tree in which the Williamson Sapsucker had staked his winter claim was a yellow pine which measured ten feet in circumference five feet above the ground. It was, perhaps, 150 years old and the bark was almost an inch thick. For seventy-five feet the trunk was quite free from limbs, nor were there any scars of old branches. There was, however, a series of concentric welts at intervals of from

two to four feet, and these swellings we presumed were caused by the healing over of ancient sapsucker drillings. From the bulging rings that distorted the normal symmetry of the shaft we judged that the tree had in decades past been sorely wounded by the ancestors of the bird that today harassed it.

Besides the evidence of ancient sapsucker work there were scars of more recent date. Scattered upward over a distance of some 90 or 100 feet there were many old pock-marks, these being the prospect holes of a Williamson Sapsucker that worked on the tree during the month of December, 1925.

Now we shall consider the fresh work (see fig. 46). The first series of drillings, five feet above the ground, contained 22 holes. Some of these holes were oozing sap, others were partly choked with congealed pitch. Four feet above these cuttings was another patch of sap-pits. This second area of checkerboard work ran parallel to the trunk, it was seven inches wide, eighteen high, and contained 121 sap-pits. Above the great patch of "sapcomb", and within a distance of ten feet, there were three more workings which averaged fifty holes each. In the five major projects,

Fig. 46. FRESH DRILLINGS OF WILLIAMSON SAPSUCKER IN YELLOW PINE IN YOSEMITE VALLEY, AS DESCRIBED IN TEXT.

and without considering the scattered drillings, there were close to 300 fresh sap-pits. Now all this was the work of a few weeks at most, and I am inclined to believe that it was really the work of a few days because it is not likely that a Williamson Sapsucker would be found in the Yosemite Valley before October 1. (Our earliest record previous to this is October 29, 1923.) Also on the last day of September we twice passed this tree and on that day nothing unusual was noted.

The sap-pits averaged ⅞ inch in depth. They were rectangular in shape, ¼ inch wide by 11/16 inch long, with the greatest measurement across the trunk. They were so closely bunched perpendicularly that seven pits were included in a space of 2½ inches, and side by side, the long way of the cutting, two pits were included in a space of less than two inches. With the sap-pits so thickly clustered the partitions between them were necessarily thin. The whole pattern resembled a section of coarse honeycomb tripe.

The plan of drillings would seem to indicate the workings of an abnormal bird. With so many tiers of holes one above another it would be quite impossible for a bird to drain the sap pockets without getting his whole underbody smeared with pitch. No single sapsucker could manage to keep such a vast number of holes open. At the time of our examination there was an excessive flow of sap from the main workings. All of the holes were bleeding and the lower tiers of pockets were overflowing. More sap was flowing than could be stored or consumed.—CHARLES W. MICHAEL, *Yosemite, California, December 1, 1929.*

Winter Nesting of the California Linnet.—On the afternoon of November 24, 1929, I found a nest of the California Linnet (*Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis*) in the neighborhood of Walnut Creek, Contra Costa County, California. I was attracted first to the nest by the male, in full breeding plumage, which showed concern about my presence near the corner of a house. Then the female linnet flew out from a climbing rose as I approached. In the nest were four eggs still warm from incubation. The nest was empty when examined on December 5, eleven days after it was found.—PHILBRICK SMITH, *Oakland, California, December 11, 1929.*

California Spotted Owl in San Diego County, California.—In these days, when ever-increasing numbers of campers and hunters leave practically no areas secure from human intrusion, with its possible effect upon natural life, it may be well from time to time to record the continued existence of bird species in localities where there is danger of their extermination. In this connection it is a pleasure to note that the California Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*) still persists in the limited wooded area on Palomar Mountain, San Diego County, California, in spite of changing conditions due to "cabin-site" and other "resort" activities. On August 17, 1929, Tennant Brooks, a young naturalist camping on Palomar Mountain, collected a Spotted Owl (evidently a bird of the year), which he attempted to mount. He later presented it to the San Diego Society of Natural History. It has been remounted and placed on exhibition in the Society's museum, as part of the "Identification Series of San Diego County Birds." To the writer's knowledge, no other record of a Spotted Owl from San Diego County has come to the notice of the San Diego Society of Natural History in at least ten years.—CLINTON G. ABBOTT, *San Diego Society of Natural History, San Diego, California, December 11, 1929.*

Vermilion Flycatcher on the Pacific Slope of Southern California.—The occurrence of the Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus mexicanus*) in the vicinity of El Monte, Los Angeles County, California, where willow association predominates, appears to be more frequent than is supposed. On January 27, 1923, I collected an adult male which was darting from the top of a half-dead willow and feeding on insects over water.

Again, on October 11, 1924, an immature male was collected. This individual was the only one which was readily approached, the others, being quite "nervous", and would fly for some distance, constantly out of gun range.

An adult male was observed on October 20, 1927, but it remained at too great a distance from the observer and was not procured. In the first week of December of the same year, a female was seen but was unfortunately lost in thick undergrowth after having been shot. The fifth bird of this species noted, an adult male, was shot on December 19, 1929, after a hot chase among the willows and surrounding fields.

It is my belief that the Vermilion Flycatcher is a rare but annual fall and winter visitant in this locality, as all five birds were observed within a radius of about a quarter of a mile. Two of the specimens obtained are now in my collection and the third was given to the late O. W. Howard.—J. STUART ROWLEY, *Alhambra, California, January 3, 1930.*

Notes on the Golden Eagle in Southern California.—The Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaëtos*), has always received much attention from bird students who have been fortunate enough to have the opportunity to observe it. There is thus a great mass of published data concerning its nests and life history. In going through my notes