

Late Nesting of the Black Phoebe.—On September 28, 1930, while enjoying a delightful outing on Eel River, near Benbow, Humboldt County, California, I found a pair of Black Phoebes (*Sayornis nigricans*) feeding young. The nest was located about eight feet up, on a rafter in a tumbled down shack. It was the usual nest of mud, reinforced with hair and dry grass, lined with fine dry grass, coarse hair and feathers.

Incidentally, I might mention that I saw two American Egrets (*Casmerodius albus egretta*) flying up the same river. Identification was possible by reason of the large size of the birds. They resembled the Great Blue Heron in size, though they were slightly smaller. Inhabitants informed me that they saw as many as five and six of the birds in the same locality, while local newspapers reported "large white cranes" in several places in Humboldt County.—J. THOMAS FRASER, JR., *Eureka, California, October 11, 1930.*

The American Egret in the Lower Sacramento Valley, California.—Since moving to Davis, in July, 1923, I have been especially interested in the numbers of the American Egret (*Casmerodius albus egretta*) to be seen in this region. My notes are admittedly fragmentary, since observations are not made with any degree of regularity, yet they seem to indicate that the species is "coming back".

The principal opportunities for observation have been in going from Davis to Sacramento by automobile or train across the Yolo Basin, by train across the Suisun marshes toward Carquinez Strait, and on occasional automobile trips through irrigated areas in the neighborhood of the Marysville Buttes. Altogether there are 25 entries in my notes for Egrets, since July 1, 1923. Six of these are by other persons; all of my own records have been checked whenever possible by size comparison with the ever-present Great Blue Heron, and at least some of the observations by others have similarly been checked. The smaller Snowy Egret does occur, as a recent record by Mr. J. A. Neff indicates, but the records given here are all believed to pertain to the American Egret. The notes, in summary, are as follows.

October 13 and 25, 1924: One bird on marsh near Teal Station southwest of Suisun.

April 6, 7, 10, and June 10, 1925: One to seven under Yolo Causeway, east of Davis.

March 5, 6, 7, 17, and April 9, 1926: One to 28 (March 6) under Yolo Causeway.

April 12, 1927: Two under Yolo Causeway.

May 13, 19, and July 11, 1928: One on each date under Yolo Causeway.

March 2, 1929: Four, in Sutter By-Pass, southwest of Marysville.

March 3, 1929: About 15 on marshes west of Marysville Buttes.

March 9, 1929: One on marsh southwest of Suisun.

January 20, 1930: Not less than 30 on marshes southwest of Suisun.

January 30, 1930: At least 15 on marshes southwest of Suisun.

March 7, 1930: At least 15 on marshes southwest of Suisun.

March 28, 1930: Five on marshes southwest of Suisun.

September 20-21, 1930: A total of 26, in rice fields east and west of Marysville Buttes.

October 12, 1930: "Nearly a hundred", in rice fields near Maxwell (J. H. Woodward).

October 15, 1930: "Close to 100", northeast of Marysville (J. A. Neff).

Mr. J. W. Marshall, long a resident of Yolo County, has told me that during his boyhood days in the late '70's or early '80's, white herons nested "by the hundreds" in groves of trees then standing along the banks of Putah Creek, between the present site of the University Farm and the present Dixon-Woodland highway. At that time the area bordering the creek was subject to periodic overflow and hence supported more riparian growth than at present. Mr. Thomas F. Tavernetti reports that a few white herons used to frequent trees along Putah Creek, immediately southeast of Davis, as late as about 1912. I have no means of knowing whether these records pertain to the larger or smaller species.

The changes in water relations in the Sacramento Valley in past years, putting winter flood waters under control and limiting the amount of water which spreads out to form "swamp and overflow lands", has affected aquatic and palustrine species

adversely by limiting the extent of their appropriate habitats; the egrets are one group so affected. Plume-hunters decimated these birds before they were extended legal protection. Now, even under adverse environmental conditions, it would seem as though the larger egret is increasing somewhat.—TRACY I. STORER, *University of California, Davis, California, October 27, 1930.*

Early Record of Birds in Arizona and New Mexico.—In a translation¹ of an account of the Espejo expedition of 1582-1583, which has been brought to my attention by Mr. Neil M. Judd, there is mention (p. 106) of an occurrence of parrots that is of some interest to ornithologists. In May, 1583, the Espejo party was in the Flagstaff region in Arizona and on May 5 descended a rough ravine "to a fine large river which runs from northwest to southeast. At this place the river is surrounded by an abundance of grape-vines, many walnut and other trees. It is a warm land in which there are parrots." The translators suppose the stream was Sycamore Creek (though it seems possible also that it may have been Oak Creek).

Accepting the identification of "parrots" as correct, which is borne out by the fact that they seem to have been an unusual sight as there is no mention of them elsewhere in the narrative, then it seems reasonable to suppose that we may have here early reference to the Thick-billed Parrot (*Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha*) at a point much farther north than it has been known in more recent years.

There is interest also in the frequent mention of turkeys brought to the party by the Indians, note of this beginning February 1, 1582, on the Rio Grande in the general region of San Marcial and continuing through their travels to Acoma, Zuñi, the Flagstaff region, and back again into New Mexico. North of Albuquerque at the Pueblo of "Ziaquebos", said to be Sia, the journal speaks of blankets of turkey feathers worn by women. In April there is casual mention of women and children tending flocks in the mountains which the translators suppose to mean flocks of turkeys.—ALEXANDER WETMORE, *United States National Museum, Washington, D. C., September 11, 1930.*

Concerning some Western Races of *Polioptila melanura*.—In connection with recent work on Sonora birds it has been necessary to examine critically series of black-tailed gnatcatchers from practically all sections of the range of this species. The results of such examination have indicated the desirability of reconsidering the Lower California forms and of discriminating a western race as distinct from that occurring in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas and northeastern Mexico.

Dr. Joseph Grinnell has recently (Proc. Calif. Acad. Sci., 4th ser., 15, 1926, pp. 493-500) reviewed the gnatcatchers of the Californias. He has shown the necessity for reducing *Polioptila californica* Brewster to subspecific status because of the presence of a transitional form connecting *californica* with the race found in the Cape Region, which latter is clearly a subspecies of *Polioptila melanura*. While I agree absolutely with Dr. Grinnell in the number of races to be found in Lower California and in the characters which he gives for distinguishing them, I most emphatically do not agree on certain details of ranges. Unfortunately a change of names thereby becomes necessary. The situation focuses on the Magdalena Bay birds which Ridgway (Birds of North and Middle America, pt. 3, 1909, p. 733, footnote) named *Polioptila margaritae*. The two specimens on which the name was based were, as Grinnell has pointed out, skinned from alcohol and the colors thereby rendered unreliable for subspecific comparison. The measurements, of course, were not affected.

I have recently had the opportunity of collecting small but representative series of gnatcatchers at various points along both coasts of Lower California, including the all-important Margarita Island in Magdalena Bay. The six specimens secured at Margarita Island by myself and other members of the party I am unable to distinguish on any basis from specimens from Cape San Lucas, La Paz and Espiritu Santo Island, while all of them differ decidedly from the gnatcatchers of the middle

¹ Expedition into New Mexico made by Antonio de Espejo 1582-1583 as revealed in the Journal of Diego Pérez de Luxán, a member of the Party. Translated by George Peter Hammond and Agapito Rey, The Quivira Society, Los Angeles, 1929.

² Contribution from the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena.