

The call note of the Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*) sounded from a grove of trees three hundred yards away. A "bee line" toward the source of sound brought me up against a six foot fence with three strands of barbs on top. Fortunately the bird was but forty feet beyond and was easily observed with the field glass for a period as it captured insects.

Parts of May, June, and August of the past summer were spent in the Arizona range of *Piranga rubra cooperi* and a considerable series of females and juvenals was examined, hence that subspecies was quite well visualized in my mind. The bird under observation was in dull plumage of very dark shade, and with distinct reddish brown cast particularly on the crissum, just such a tone of plumage as is seen in females and young of *P. r. rubra*, and was apparently identical with the individual of the race collected in the Arroyo Seco in Los Angeles on March 2 [not "10"], 1919 (L. Miller, Condor, XXI, 1919, p. 129). On August 29 of the same year an adult male of the same subspecies was collected at my home on Arroyo Seco. Both specimens were deposited in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at Berkeley. It is not out of order to expect the Summer Tanager, then, on rare occasions during either the northward or the southward migration, and the bird under observation is judged to be of that race. During the remainder of the morning the call notes were heard on two other occasions. The note of the Hepatic Tanager is entirely different.—LOYE MILLER, *University of California at Los Angeles, November 22, 1931.*

Wholesale Poison for the Red-wings.—The following notes, formerly withheld from publication, are printed as a result of the announcement in the press, of a war of extermination against crop-eating birds in Stanislaus County, California (see p. 54). The notes were written by me on May 21, 1931, in the so-called Nigger Jack area, twelve miles north of Marysville in the Sacramento Valley, California, on the farm of Wilbur Smith. The local representative of the Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture, stationed in the district under orders to develop effective methods for the large-scale destruction of blackbirds by poison, had chosen this site to experiment upon.

The ground selected for the "experiment" consisted of several acres of cat-tail rushes growing in water of various depths, fringed on certain aspects by a miniature forest of willow trees, growing in clusters and up to twenty or more feet in height. This ground, too, was flooded at the time, so that the trees stood in six or eight inches of water. The whole was surrounded by fields of hay and grain, or fallow ground prepared for similar crops or for rice, with a single muddy slough where Great Blue, Anthony Green, and Night herons, Egret, Bittern, Black-necked Stilt and Coot were feeding at the time of our visit. Perhaps owing to the disturbance which had been created by the vast rookery of Tri-colored Red-wings, the song birds were few and restricted almost entirely to Song Sparrows and Yellow-throats. At the time when the work had been initiated, two or three weeks before, the number of nesting blackbirds had been immense. The number of birds which crossed a single very limited sight-line past one corner of the swamp had, during one period of observation, been about 170 a minute.

I do not care to record in detail the minutiae of the technique employed, further than to say that grain poisoned with strychnine was placed on a small area of clean plow-ground close to the swamp, following several baitings with clean grain, which had attracted the birds and accustomed them to feeding on the spot. When the poison was finally placed, the effect was appalling. Great numbers died at once on the poison-ground, where within a very small radius 1700 dead birds were tossed into a central pile. Later the surface of the shallow water beneath the willows became an almost solid floor of floating bodies where the observers hesitated to enter because of the stench which hung in the quiet air. Weeks later the bases of the cat-tails were awash with countless dead. At the time of our visit, May 21, the remainder of the grain was still doing its work, for fresh as well as decayed birds were still in evidence, often hanging, caught in the branches or clinging with the death grip of one foot, from the trees and from the nests in the rushes.

The destruction of adult birds, however, was much the smaller fraction of the total effect. As is often the case in large Tri-color rookeries, the nests were roughly divisible into groups. Only in two extremely small areas in the rushes had the eggs

not hatched. Elsewhere the vast majority contained either new-hatched young or fledglings nearly ready to leave the nest. The enormous number of nests in the willows (a single tree contained 34) were not closely investigated. In the rushes, one might have spent a day forcing his way through the tall, dense greenery, with from two to five or six nests continually within reach, yet leave untouched larger areas where no locomotion but swimming was possible. Yet judging from the small fractions I had time to cover he could hardly have found a dozen nests in which the young were alive and vigorous. Of the hundreds of broods I saw, all, practically speaking, were either dead (the vast majority) or feebly alive in some stage of starvation or grilling and parching by sunburn. A few evidently healthy adults were still passing in and out of the swamp, but the usual noisy cloud of enraged parents no longer hung over the invader's head.

"Estimates" of numbers of birds, where the whole flock cannot be seen at one time, are among the most absurd of the wild guesses on which naturalists too often rely, and the writer dislikes making one in the present case. We have, however, some basis in the laborious and extremely complete counts which have been made in similar rush or tule swamps where we have banded the nestlings. On May 30 and 31 of the same year, for example, we banded 2150 nestlings in rookeries whose total area would amount to a negligible fraction of the one in question, and which were much less densely inhabited. Applying this rough unit of measurement as best I can, and including the adults, a total of 30,000 birds destroyed seems to me very conservative. All were of the uniquely Californian species, *Agelaius tricolor* Audubon.

In the present case it is my intention to chronicle, not to discuss. A single point, however, my field experience with the Sacramento red-wings inclines me to press. This species possesses a limited and peculiarly vulnerable breeding range, largely in the populous and agricultural Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys. The rookeries are large and correspondingly few, and with the technique employed in this case, the total extermination of the bird, or the reduction in numbers which spells extermination, would be a matter of the utmost immediate simplicity; nay, considering the policy of concealment which too often shrouds the movements of this branch of the Government, this very thing may be taking, or have taken, place at this moment.—T. MCCABE, *The Faculty Club, Berkeley, California, August 17, 1931.*

EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

The regular biennial membership roster of the Cooper Ornithological Club will be printed in the coming May issue of the *Condor*, which will go to press on or before April 15. Corrections of address, or any other information pertaining to membership, should be sent to Mr. John McB. Robertson, Buena Park, California, who is compiling the manuscript for the roster.

It is proper for the Editors of the *Condor* to make acknowledgment from time to time of helps received from fellow Cooper Club members in the publishing of our magazine. We are therefore glad now to make record of the services of Miss Selma Werner in preparing the Index for the last year's volume—just as she has done for the several years preceding. Also we have been helped in following-to-copy on proofs by Miss Margaret W. Wythe and Miss Susan E. Chattin.

At the Detroit meeting of the American

Ornithologists' Union, October 19, 1931, the West was again given recognition, this time in the election to Membership of Mr. Clinton G. Abbott, Director of the Natural History Museum of San Diego. Four other members were elected: Mr. Oliver L. Austin of North Eastham, Massachusetts; Mr. W. Wedgwood Bowen of Philadelphia; Mr. Bayard H. Christy of Pittsburgh; and Mrs. Margaret Morse Nice of Columbus, Ohio. Since much of Mrs. Nice's bird work has been done in Oklahoma, we are almost justified in claiming her election, too, as a "plume" for the West.

The death of Dr. David Starr Jordan took place at Stanford University, September 19, 1931, when he was past eighty years of age. For many years he was a Cooper Club member, and in other ways he showed warm interest in ornithology. This was most in evidence when Jordan was a young man, as set forth in the