

## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Young Sparrow Hawks and a Screech Owl in the Same Nest.**—The students of Elk Grove Union High School, Sacramento County, California, found a case during their bird banding operations this spring which leads them to believe that depression had hit at least one family of birds in the Sacramento Valley, if crowded housing conditions are an indication.

The case history is as follows. On May 23, 1933, one of the science students brought to school to be banded, four young Sparrow Hawks (*Falco sparverius*) and a young Screech Owl (*Otus asio*). Upon inquiry we learned that the five birds were from the same nest, which was about twenty feet from the ground in



Fig. 46. COMPOSITE BROOD, OF FOUR SPARROW HAWKS AND ONE SCREECH OWL; ELK GROVE, CALIFORNIA, MAY 23, 1933.

a hole in the dead limb of a eucalyptus tree. (See fig. 46.) How the owl came to be in the hawk's nest, or how long it had been there, or whether the sparrow hawk parents had taken possession of the owl's hole are questions which will remain unanswered. The facts known are that at the time the birds were taken from the nest, and for some days before, the parent hawks had been in charge of the brood.

The hawks were nearly ready to fly and were quite aggressive, attacking with their claws when disturbed, and eating ravenously the hamburger fed them by the students. The owl was not so lively and ate only after much coaxing. We banded the hawks with the following numbers: A444186, A444187, A444188, A444189; the owl with band number B645962. The birds were taken back to the nest the same afternoon and the parent hawks returned almost at once.

On May 31 the nest was visited by two of the boys and all five young were there. They were heard the next day when the parents came to the nest with food. On the afternoon of June 2 three of us visited the nesting place armed with camera and hamburger. One parent hawk, sitting on a limb beside the nest, flew as we approached. To our disappointment the nest was empty except for the remains of a gopher and blackbird. During the next hour we attempted to photograph the young hawks which we saw at various times in different trees, on telephone wires, and on the roof of the barn. Three were seen at once. At no time did we locate the owl, which was apparently hiding from the glare of the sun. The five birds had evidently flown on the same day or within a couple of days of each other. Reports a few days after our visit stated that the hawks

were still in the vicinity of the nesting site.—FLORENCE ANNE SUMNER, *Elk Grove, California, June 21, 1933.*

**Do Black Phoebes Eat Honey-bees?**—On June 15, 1928, I put up a male specimen (1862 of the Nature Study Collection, Los Angeles City Schools) of the Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*) which was assertedly killed by the sting of a bee. Mr. Carl Philippi, Principal of the Paducah Street School, Los Angeles, related the circumstances as an eyewitness.

The phoebe had been frequenting the grassy front court of the school for some time past and had become an object of interested observation to pupils and teachers. Mr. Philippi keeps a hive of bees in this same court, situated close to the ground. While watching the phoebe, my informant says, he saw it go into an agitated flutter after one of its forage flights and shortly fall to the ground. He picked up the still living bird and found a bee sting lodged in the roof of the bird's gaping mouth. This he removed, but the phoebe soon died. Although the sting was not brought to me, Mr. Philippi's long experience with bees and their stings is sufficient to validate his identification.

Is the introduced honey-bee such a new faunal element in the habitat of Black Phoebes that there is no racial experience to direct behavior? And if so, is the honey-bee frequently attacked by the phoebe, and with what success? Apiaries are frequent in the territory occupied by Ash-throated Flycatchers (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), but with this exception, it is my impression that the Black Phoebe more than any other California flycatcher comes into direct association with the honey-bee, both wild and hived. I judge this on the common predilection of both bee and phoebe for water pools, canyon walls, lush verdure and cultivated greenery.

The Black Phoebe has expanded in territorial occupation with the advent of man's culture of the earth. In spite of the unsociability of the phoebe toward its kind, I feel that the numerical abundance is not consonant with the enlarged habitat now available to the species. It is not the thinness of distribution that is remarkable, for that is probably psychologically the phoebe's nature, but rather the great gaps and unoccupied areas. Are there factors affecting the Black Phoebe population adversely in its newer associations?

F. E. L. Beal in his "Birds of California in Relation to the Fruit Industry" (Part II, 1910, p. 37) says: "Hymenoptera (bees, wasps, ants) amount to over 35 percent of the yearly food. . . . The great bulk of this item is made up of wild bees and wasps." In Farmer's Bulletin 630, U. S. Department of Agriculture (revised 1923, p. 22) Mr. Beal states that wasps make up the largest single item. Yet in both the above citations evidence of honey-bee consumption is denied. "Not a trace of a honey-bee was found in any stomach," of 333 examined. Mr. W. L. McAtee, in charge of Food Habits Research, United States Biological Survey, in answer to my query wrote on June 27, 1932: "We do not yet have a record of the Black Phoebe eating a honey-bee."

I wonder if Black Phoebes should try to eat honey-bees, would they be successful enough at it to live until collected and promoted to the records as honey-bee eaters? The wild wasps and bees they eat are presumably small fry, yet the phoebe kills husky moths and millers of greater bulk than a worker honey-bee, one species being in body much larger than the drone honey-bee. In Mr. McAtee's letter referred to above, he says that honey-bees have been found "in the stomachs of the eastern Wood Pewee and in those of vireos." Nevertheless, it remains a question: Does the black phoebe eat honey-bees? To this I invite the evidence and observations of Cooper Club members.—ROLAND CASE ROSS, *City Schools, Los Angeles, California, March 22, 1933.*

**Band-tailed Pigeons in Southern California.**—During recent, frequent trips into the Angeles National Forest, Los Angeles County, I have had occasion to make some observations concerning the Band-tailed Pigeon (*Columba fasciata*). I herewith present my observations:

Pacoima Canyon (near Dillon's Ranch), November 5, 1932, approximately 50 pigeons observed among live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*). This flock was seen throughout the day.